

# Angina Drugs

Angina is a presentation of coronary artery disease. Due to the narrowing of the blood vessels supplying the heart, the patient would experience chest discomfort or chest pain when the amount of physical activities increases, such as walking up the stairs or walking a distance. In severe cases, it triggers myocardial infarction, which is fatal.

## Use of the Drugs

The commonest angina drugs are nitroglycerins, isosorbide mononitrates and dinitrates. Nitroglycerins are taken under the tongue and can be easily absorbed. By dilating the blood vessels, they can increase the blood supply to the heart and are therefore very effective in relieving and controlling the symptoms of angina.

Compared with nitroglycerins, isosorbide mononitrates and dinitrates produce the same but longer effect. These oral drugs are mostly taken for preventive purpose.

Headache and face flushing may appear after medication but they would usually subside in a few minutes. If headache aggravates or the side effects persist, inform your doctor right away.

Nitroglycerins can only be sold in dispensaries with registered pharmacists.

## Advice on Medication

The following should be borne in mind when taking nitroglycerin under the tongue:

1. Take the drug as soon as symptoms appear. Do not wait until an acute pain occurs.
2. Hold the pill under the tongue until it is completely dissolved.
3. To avoid dizziness or temporary headache, you should better sit down when taking the drug.
4. Do not swallow the pill. Remain calm if you do swallow one. Take another pill and hold it under the tongue.
5. If angina does not subside five minutes after taking the pill, take another one.
6. If angina persists after another five minutes, take a third pill. If it still does not work, the patient should, accompanied by his/her family members, seek urgent

consultation at the accident and emergency department.

## **Life Adaptations**

Patients with coronary artery disease should change for better lifestyle: stop smoking, avoid high-cholesterol food, keep optimal body weight, stay happy, do moderate exercise regularly and adhere to the follow-up schedule. If you suffer from other diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, seek proper treatment to reduce the risk of angina attack.

## **Storage of the Drugs**

Nitroglycerins contain volatile ingredients that may lose their effects easily. To ensure efficacy, they should be stored under the following conditions:

1. Place the pills in a dark brown glass container and keep it tightly-screwed.
2. Do not put cotton wool or other drugs in the same bottle storing nitroglycerin pills.
3. Store the drugs in a dry and cool environment and avoid humid places such as bathroom cabinet. Do not store them in a refrigerator either. Carry your drugs in bags but not pockets close to your body.
4. Discard any unused drugs two months after opening. Make sure that you have kept enough pills to meet urgent need.

Lastly, always keep your drugs properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.

## **Warning Signs**

If angina aggravates or extends to the neck, the arms or the lower chin with sweating, shortness of breath and nausea, it may be a presentation of myocardial infarction.

You should go to the accident and emergency department without delay.