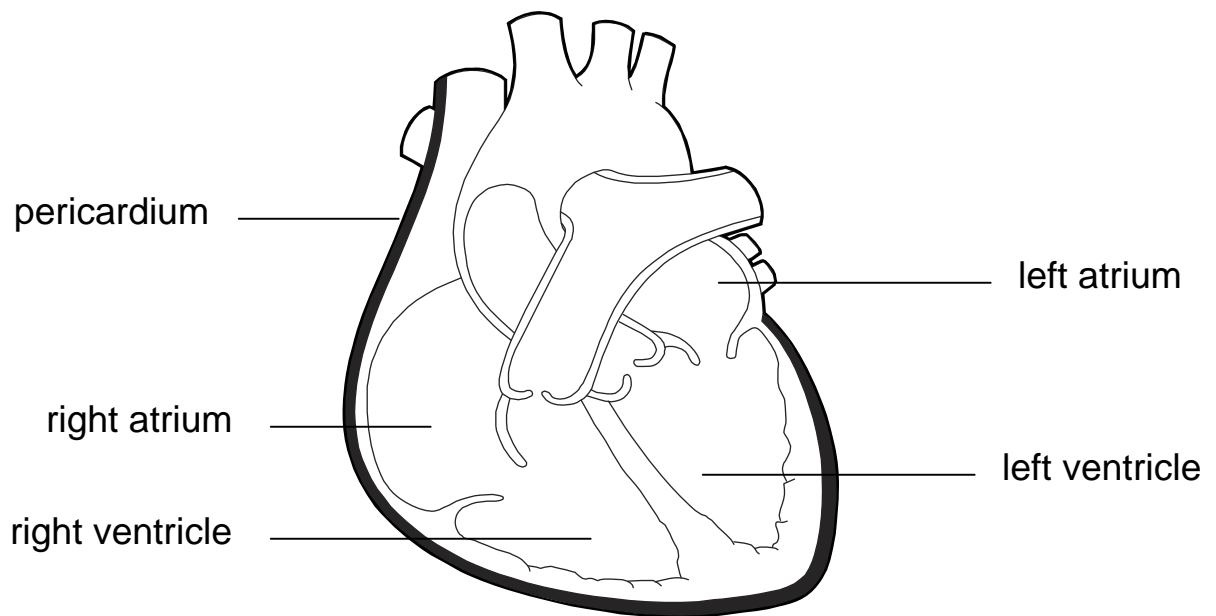


Pericarditis

What is pericarditis?

The pericardium is a very thin double-walled sac that surrounds and protects the heart. The sac is filled with a small amount of fluid that acts as a lubricant.

Pericarditis is a swelling or inflammation of the pericardium around the heart.



How did I get pericarditis?

Pericarditis can be caused by:

- infection such as viral, bacterial, fungus and tuberculosis
- radiation therapy or chemotherapy
- surgery, such as heart surgery
- heart attack
- kidney problems
- cancer
- trauma

Your doctor or nurse will explain what might be causing your pericarditis.

Will I have any pain or discomfort?

Yes, you may have mild to severe pain. The pain may be dull, sharp or aching and may go across your back.

The pain or discomfort is often worse with certain movements, such as when you lie down, turn in bed, cough, take a deep breath, or swallow.

Will I feel anything else?

You may also feel:

- short of breath
- fever, chills
- unusually tired
- nausea and vomiting
- fast heart beat

How will I know this chest pain or discomfort is not angina?

It is often hard to tell the difference between angina and pericarditis pain. Always let your nurse know if you are having any kind of chest pain or discomfort, as soon as it happens. We will work together to find the cause of your chest pain or discomfort.

How will my doctor know if I have pericarditis?

Your doctor or nurse will listen to your heart with a stethoscope and hear an abnormal "rubbing" sound. Your doctor may then order a 2-dimensional echocardiogram also called a 2-D Echo, an electrocardiogram also called an ECG, and several blood tests.

How is pericarditis treated?

Treatment depends on the cause. Treatment often includes bed rest until the pain, discomfort and fever are gone as well as pain control medications.

Antibiotic or anti-inflammatory medications may also be used.

It is important to rest and increase your activities as advised by your doctor.

Severe pericarditis may cause severe pressure on the heart muscle. Extra fluid may need to be removed by needle aspiration or surgery. Needle aspiration means that a long needle is inserted into the space and extra fluid is pulled out.

When treatment is successful, the inflammation and extra fluid around the heart will go away in 2 to 6 weeks.