

Information for patients when the cause of their chest pain is uncertain and who need further investigation

The result of your tests:

You have not had a heart attack

The blood tests we have taken today have shown that there has been no damage to your heart

Your exercise treadmill test was inconclusive.

We have not been able to definitely say whether your pain is a cardiac (heart) problem or a benign (non cardiac) cause. Not being able to give a diagnosis after these tests is not uncommon.

The treadmill test does not always provide all the answers. We have therefore asked a Cardiologist (Specialist heart doctor) to see you.

If you have any further questions relating to these results please telephone **0114 2715969**,
9.00am to 5.00pm,
Monday to Friday, to speak to one of the chest pain nurses.

Alternatively telephone the hospital switchboard, on 0114 243 4343 and ask them to bleep the chest pain nurses on bleep 807.

What does this mean?

The medical team are not quite sure what is causing your pain; they know that more tests are required to find out. The important thing to remember is that there are many causes of chest pain, and most of these are not serious or life threatening.

In the cardiology clinic only some of the patients having tests turn out to have angina (heart disease). Other patients have what is called benign chest pain, which is not caused by the heart.

What will happen next?

In your case the medical team have decided, because of the continuing uncertainty, to arrange an out-patient appointment with the consultant cardiologist. This should take place within the next 3 weeks. You will receive a letter within one week informing you of the date and time of this appointment. If you fail to receive a letter please contact the chest pain nurse on the number above.

What happens at my outpatient appointment?

During your outpatient appointment the cardiologist will ask specific questions and, if it is necessary, they will also arrange more tests and investigations.

After this visit it is hoped that we will be able to provide you with a more definite diagnosis and a plan for managing any condition that may be diagnosed.

In the meantime there is no need to change your lifestyle or avoid physical exercise or other activities unless you have been given specific advice to do so.

When will I get my results?

If you need to have some more tests, the cardiologist will arrange to see you again once they are complete. At this appointment the cardiologist will tell you the results of your tests and discuss with you what the results mean.

What if my pain turns out to be cardiac?

If your symptoms do turn out to be due to heart disease, the cardiologist will discuss with you the causes and symptoms of heart disease and the treatment you will need.

For further information see: www.bhf.org.uk/hearthealth.

The British Heart Foundation also provides leaflets that are available at G.P. surgeries and pharmacies.

What if it doesn't turn out to be cardiac?

If your symptoms have a benign cause then this will be discussed with you and appropriate treatment organised. Common benign causes include spasm or indigestion in the gullet or muscular pains in the chest.

What do I do whilst waiting for my outpatient appointment?

If your symptoms get worse or you become concerned about a change in the symptoms then you should seek medical advice immediately by telephoning your general practitioner or dialling 999. However, remember that you should attempt to live as normal a life as possible. You should remain active and eat a healthy diet. There are also several things that you can do to improve your general health and fitness. These are detailed over the page.

What you can do now ...

- **If you smoke – stop!** This is the most important thing that any smoker can do to improve their health. By giving up smoking, within 5 years you can reduce your risk of having a heart attack to approximately half compared to what it would be if you continue to smoke. For practical advice on stopping, contact your GP, contact the NHS Smoking Helpline on **0800 169 0169**, or have a look at their website at www.givingupsmoking.co.uk.
- **Keep working.** Most people with chest pain of whatever cause should be able to continue in their usual job. Some changes to what you do at work and how you do it may be needed. This applies particularly if you have a strenuous job. If you have concerns it may be beneficial to talk to your G.P. Staying at work however can help to keep your heart healthy.
- **Be more physically active.** Physical activity can help to keep your heart healthy and it helps to keep your weight down. Most people feel generally better when they are fit.

The type of activity recommended for the heart is moderate, rhythmic exercise, such as brisk walking, cycling or swimming. Intense exercise such as weight lifting and press-ups are not recommended, and vigorous competitive sports may be dangerous if you have a heart condition.

Find out what you can easily manage, and then gradually increase the amount of activity you do. Plan a weekly exercise programme based on walking and then gradually increase the distance you walk each day, writing it down on an activity chart. It is important that you plan your activities – use a diary to plan each week.

- **Control high blood pressure.** If you have high blood pressure it is important to control it. Things to help you achieve this include:
 - losing weight
 - increasing physical activity
 - cutting down on alcohol and salt intake
- **Watch your Cholesterol.** If your blood cholesterol is high, you can greatly benefit from reducing it. Cut down on fats in general especially saturated fats which are found in meats and dairy produce and replace with food containing unsaturated fat. Try and eat more foods containing starch for example bread, pasta, rice or cereals. Losing weight and taking exercise will also help. For further information see: www.bhf.org.uk/hearthealth.

The British Heart Foundation also produces information booklets that can be found in many G.P. surgeries and pharmacies.

- **Eat fish and fish oil.** Eating oily fish such as herring, kippers, mackerel, pilchards, sardines, salmon, fresh tuna, trout and anchovies twice a week may help to prevent blood clots from forming in the arteries that supply the heart. It may also reduce the risk of a stroke.
- **Eat more fruit and vegetables.** People who eat more than 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day are less likely to have heart disease. There is no evidence however that taking vitamin tablets has the same effect.

- **Control your weight.** By keeping close to your recommended weight for your height you will keep your blood pressure down and reduce the amount of work your heart has to do. Remember that losing weight involves both eating healthily and increasing physical activity.

The British Heart Foundation provides information, advice and even recipe books to help you lose weight and stay healthy: see www.bhf.org.uk/hearthealth or phone **020 7935 0185**.

- **Reduce stress.** Identify situations that make you feel stressed at home or at work and try to avoid them if you can. Use a stress-reducing technique that suits you, such as yoga, relaxation tapes, or physical exercise. *'Manage Your Mind'* (Butler, G & Hope, T; Oxford University Press) is an excellent book that can help you to manage the stresses in your life.

If you prefer the web, have a look at:

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

or

www.sheffield.nhs.uk/health

for local information