

CHEST PAIN IN CHILDREN

What Parents Need to Know

Chest pain in children is common and is usually **NOT related to the heart**. Most cases are caused by harmless conditions and children have normal, healthy hearts.



Only a small percentage of children with chest pain have a **serious heart problem**. Most have normal hearts.

COMMON CAUSES OF CHEST PAIN IN CHILDREN



1. MUSCULOSKELETAL (Most Common)

Pain from muscles, ribs, or chest wall.

- Sharp or aching pain
- Worse with movement or deep breathing
- Tender when pressing on the chest
- Often occurs after exercise, coughing, or sports

Examples:

Muscle strain, Costochondritis, Minor chest wall injury



2. RESPIRATORY

Pain related to the lungs or breathing.

- Asthma
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Pleurisy (inflammation around the lungs)

Symptoms May Include:



Cough

Wheezing

Fever

Shortness of breath



3. GASTROINTESTINAL

Pain coming from the esophagus or stomach.

- Acid reflux (GERD)
- Esophageal irritation
- Gastritis

Symptoms May Include:



Burning chest discomfort

Pain after meals

Sour taste in mouth

Pain when lying down



4. ANXIETY & STRESS

Emotional stress can cause real physical chest pain.

May Be Associated With:



Panic attacks



School stress



Hyperventilation



Difficulty sleeping



RED FLAGS – SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Seek evaluation if chest pain occurs with:

- ✓ Fainting or near fainting
- ✓ Exercise-related chest pain
- ✓ Palpitations (fast or irregular heartbeat)
- ✓ Severe shortness of breath
- ✓ Bluish lips or skin
- ✓ Dizziness
- ✓ Family history of sudden cardiac death
- ✓ Known heart disease
- ✓ Pain spreading to the jaw, neck, or arm
- ✓ Fever with chest pain



HOW DOCTORS EVALUATE CHEST PAIN?

Your child's doctor may perform:

- ✓ Detailed history
- ✓ Physical examination
- ✓ Blood pressure and oxygen level check
- ✓ Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG)
- ✓ Echocardiogram (heart ultrasound) if needed
- ✓ Chest X-ray in selected cases

Most children do NOT require extensive testing.



TREATMENT DEPENDS ON THE CAUSE



Musculoskeletal Pain

- Rest
- Stretching
- Warm compresses
- Anti-inflammatory medications if recommended



Asthma or Lung Problems

- Inhalers or breathing treatments
- Treating infections



Acid Reflux

- Dietary changes
- Avoid spicy or acidic foods
- Smaller meals



Anxiety-Related Pain

- Reassurance
- Stress management
- Healthy sleep and exercise habits



WHEN TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM

Seek urgent medical care if your child has:

- ✓ Chest pain with fainting
- ✓ Trouble breathing
- ✓ Severe persistent pain
- ✓ Blue lips
- ✓ Collapse
- ✓ Fast irregular heartbeat
- ✓ Pain during exercise



Dr. Shabib Alhadheri, MD

Advanced Pediatric Cardiology

1478 W Elliot Rd, Suite 102, Gilbert, AZ 85233

Phone: 480-855-1339

Website: www.apcardio.com

