

# Chest Pain Differentials Resources

## Differential Diagnosis – Chest Pain

	Process	Location	Quality	Severity	Timing	Factors
Pericarditis	Irritation of parietal pleura adjacent to pericardium	Precordial, may radiate to tip of shoulder and to neck	Sharp, knifelike	Often severe	Persistent	Worsen: breathing, changing positions, coughing, lying down, swallowing Relieve: better sitting forward
Dissecting Aortic Aneurysm	A splitting within the layers of the aortic wall	Anterior chest, radiating to neck, back or abdomen	Ripping, tearing	Very severe	Abrupt onset	Worsen: hypertension
Pleural Pain	Inflammation of the parietal pleura (pleurisy, pneumonia)	Chest wall overlying the process	Sharp, knifelike	Often severe	Persistent	Worsen: breathing, coughing, movements of the trunk Relieve: lying on the involved side
Reflex Esophagitis	Inflammation of the esophageal mucosa by reflux of gastric acid	Retrosternal, may radiate to back	Burning, may be squeezing	Mild to severe	Variable	Worsen: large meal, bending over, lying down Relieve: antacids, belching
Chest Wall Pain	Variable, often unclear	Often below left breast or along costal cartilages	Stabbing, sticking or dull, aching	Variable	Fleeting to hours or days	Worsen: movement of chest, trunk, arms
Anxiety	Unclear	Precordial, below left breast or across anterior chest	Stabbing, sticking or dull, aching	Variable	Fleeting to hours or days	Worsen: may follow effort, emotional stress