

Why heart patients get chest pains in cold

DURING winter, heart patients often ask the bewildering question, "Why am I suddenly experiencing angina pectoris (chest discomfort) during my walks outdoors?"

Two physiologic mechanisms have been implicated.

First, inhaling cold air may cause a reflex that temporarily constricts the heart's (coronary) arteries. It may also increase the amount of blood pumped with each heart beat. In the presence of cholesterol-narrowed coronary blood vessels, these stresses may provoke chest pain or discomfort.

Second, a cold environment evokes your body into a temperature regulation reflex. The skin's blood vessels constrict to conserve body heat. Their narrowing increases blood pressure and the heart's demand for oxygen, thus more readily provoking angina pectoris.

TEMPERATURE ALONE, however, is not an accurate index of cold stress. Wind removes the layer of air your body has heated around you to keep itself warm.

Thus, you need to consider the



fitness
Barry Franklin

"wind chill factor," which measures the cooling power of moving air. For example, at 10 degrees Fahrenheit in a 20-mile-an-hour wind, the cooling effect is equivalent to calm air at 25-below zero. (See chart).

To prevent angina and excessive exposure to cold during activity in winter weather, these recommendations may help:

- Wear a cold weather mask or scarf to avoid inhaling or cold air and exposing your face and neck. Such measures are often effective in reducing the symptoms of angina during activity in cold weather.

- Be extra careful when the wind is blowing. Wind chill equivalent temperatures of 25-below (Fahrenheit) or lower can mean increasing danger, including freezing

of exposed flesh. And temperatures under 74-below are hazardous.

- Beware of wet clothing. If your skin or clothing gets wet, your body will lose heat much more rapidly. For this reason, you should change wet clothing, particularly socks and gloves.

- Dress appropriately. Avoid overexerting for activity in the cold to prevent overheating and excessive sweating.

- Wear several layers of light, loose clothing that can be shed or replaced as body heat changes. Between each layer there is trapped air which, when heated by the body, acts as an excellent insulator.

The insulating properties of wool are widely recognized. It is one fabric which, when wet, still keeps the

Estimated Wind speed (in mph)	Actual thermometer reading (in degrees Fahrenheit)					
	30°	20°	10°	0°	-10°	-20°
EQUIVALENT TEMPERATURE						
Calm	30	20	10	0	-10	-20
10	16	4	-9	-24	-33	-46
20	4	-10	-25	-39	-53	-67
30	-2	-18	-33	-48	-63	-78
40	-6	-21	-37	-53	-69	-86

Figure the wind chill factor by picking a temperature and reading down to see how cold it feels at various wind speeds. Adapted from Patient Care.

body warm. Most other materials, when wet, actually draw heat away from the body and pass it into the air.

- Avoid staying in one position too long when it's cold. Exercise increases heat production by contracting the skeletal muscles. Thus, body temperature can generally be maintained even in subzero conditions, as

long as one stays moving. If you start to shiver to generate heat, get in out of the cold as quickly as possible.

- Protect certain body areas. Body heat is most easily lost from parts that have a large surface area to mass ratio — for example, the hands and feet. Keep them warm and dry. Finally, wear a hat — a tre-

mendous loss of body heat can occur from an uncovered head.

Barry A. Franklin is director of cardiac rehabilitation and exercise laboratories, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology, Wayne State University School of Medicine.

Elderly shrouded in myth

AP — Stereotypes associated with growing old are the biggest handicaps facing senior citizens today, researchers and government officials said during the 1988 Governor's Conference on Aging.

"That older people are not as sexual, not as bright and grow more

crochety and more conservative are just that — myths," said psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers, who presented the opening address to approximately 600 registrants.

Brothers argued that those who are sexually active will continue to be so even in their 90s. "All you need

is good health and an interesting partner," she said.

Brothers also said people tend to become smarter and nicer as they grow older.

Politically, both liberals and conservatives tend to move toward the middle, she added.

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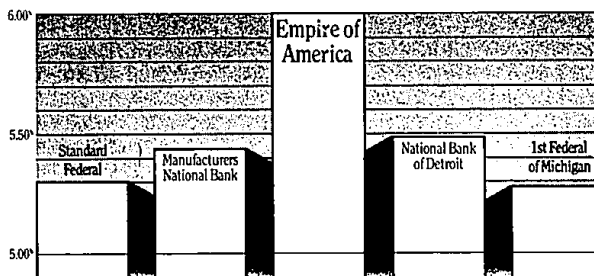
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The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and made possible by support of The Du Pont Company. Its presentation in Detroit is made possible in part by Du Pont Automotive Products and Cadillac Motor Car. Additional support has been provided by the State of Michigan, the City of Detroit, and the Founders Society.

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