**ST. FRANCIS 24/7 CALL CENTER: (321) 269-4240**

St. Francis REFLECTIONS® Hospice
Established 1977 • Licensed 1990

# Atherosclerotic Heart Disease

Atherosclerotic heart disease is characterized by the buildup of fatty deposits (plaques) in the arteries, leading to reduced blood flow and oxygen to the heart. This condition can lead to angina (chest pain) and heart attacks.

## Common Symptoms:

**Symptoms may differ from person to person**

- Chest pain or discomfort, especially during physical activity
- Shortness of breath, particularly during exertion
- Fatigue with exertion
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Heart palpitations or irregular heart rhythms

## Causes:

**Potential causes:**

- Many factors contribute to the development of atherosclerotic heart disease including high cholesterol, smoking, hypertension, and diabetes.

## Hospice Considerations:

In advanced stages of atherosclerotic heart disease, patients often experience recurrent symptoms that significantly affect quality of life. Hospice care emphasizes comfort and support.

- **Advanced Symptoms:** Patients may experience persistent angina, severe fatigue, and increasing difficulty in breathing, often becoming homebound and reliant on caregivers.
- **Symptom Management:** When managing symptoms such as severe chest pain, shortness of breath, and edema becomes critical, requiring careful assessment and medication adjustments.
- **End-of-Life Care:** When the patient and family decide to prioritize comfort and quality of life over further medical treatments.

## ST. FRANCIS 24/7 CALL CENTER: (321) 269-4240

## Symptom Management Tips:

- **Monitor Heart Symptoms:** Regularly check for any new or worsening symptoms, such as chest pain or shortness of breath.
- **Pain Management:** Administer prescribed medications and use heat packs or gentle massage for comfort.
- **Oxygen Therapy:** Ensure proper use of supplemental oxygen as prescribed and monitor episodes of breathlessness.

## How to Help:

- **Patient Tips:**
  - **Practice Relaxation Techniques:** Use mindfulness, meditation, or gentle music to help manage anxiety and stress.
  - **Engage in Light Activities:** Participate in light walking or gentle stretching, as tolerated, to promote circulation.
  - **Keep a Journal:** Write down feelings, symptoms, and daily activities to help communicate needs to caregivers.
- **Caregiver Tips:**
  - **Monitor Medications:** Keep a schedule for medications and ensure adherence to treatment plans.
  - **Support Healthy Living:** Encourage heart-healthy lifestyle choices, such as nutritious meals and light physical activity (as tolerated).
  - **Provide Comfort:** Create a peaceful and comforting environment, particularly during moments of distress or discomfort.

St. Francis Reflections is always available to assist with any questions or concerns 24/7

**321-269-4240**