



American Heart Association®

Addressing
Recurrent Pericarditis

RECURRENT PERICARDITIS

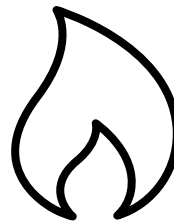
Pericarditis is inflammation of the pericardium, the sac that surrounds – and protects – the heart.

Recurrent pericarditis occurs when you get pericarditis after previous symptoms have gone away for at least four weeks. Recurrent pericarditis can cause life-threatening complications if left untreated. It is a chronic condition in some patients, meaning they will likely need to take medicine, limit physical activity or make other lifestyle changes for months or even years.

RECURRENT PERICARDITIS AFFECTS

15–30%

of people who experience a first episode of pericarditis.



Episodes of pericarditis are commonly referred to as “flares.”

UP TO 90%

of first-episode pericarditis cases are “idiopathic” meaning we don’t know what causes it. If pericarditis comes back (a recurrence), it’s often due to persistent inflammation in the body. This can happen because:



- The original flare wasn’t fully treated



- Your immune system continues to drive inflammation, either through an autoimmune or autoinflammatory process



The primary symptom is chest pain

It gets worse when you cough, take deep breaths or lie down, and it gets better when you sit up or lean forward.

Proper treatment is key. Visit heart.org/recurrentpericarditis for more information.