

Squeezing 'pants' good fit for some heart patients

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Silvia Larson, registered nurse, monitors William Vogel receiving EECP therapy for his angina at Penn State Hershey Heart and Vascular Institute's Nyes Road clinic in suburban Harrisburg.

(PhysOrg.com) -- Squeezing into a tight pair of pants can be a painful experience, but a new type of "pants" recommended for certain heart patients actually squeezes back and provides pain relief.

Called enhanced external counter pulsation (EECP), the outpatient therapy uses three sets of blood pressure-like cuffs wrapped around the legs and buttocks that inflate and deflate with the patient's heartbeat. The squeezing action increases [blood flow](#) and oxygen to the heart and other organs, often reducing or even eliminating symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath and fatigue.

To receive the therapy, patients recline on a special table that houses the

unit's pump. They remain on that table for an hour while the cuffs or pants squeeze their lower body with each heartbeat. A full course of EECp therapy requires patients to receive these treatments daily for seven weeks.

Studies have shown that 75 to 80 percent of patients completing a course of therapy experience prompt and significant reduction in their symptoms and improvement in their activity levels. For the majority of patients, these benefits persist for more than two years.

EECP therapy is typically prescribed for patients suffering from chest pain (angina) caused by insufficient blood supply to the [heart muscle](#) (ischemia) due to of a narrowing of, or blockages in, the coronary arteries. EECp is an established, noninvasive treatment that is FDA-approved as a safe and effective alternative or addition to [heart bypass surgery](#) and balloon angioplasty in certain patients. Research shows this therapy appears to be beneficial for patients with hard-to-treat [heart disease](#) and ischemia.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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