

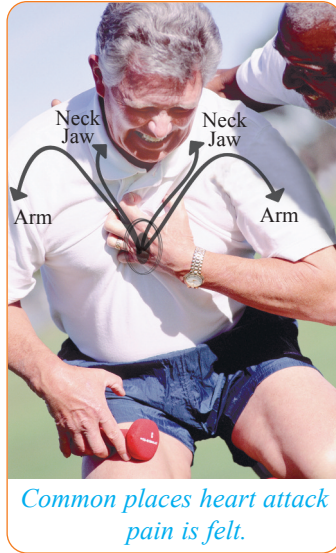


Heart Attack

A **heart attack** happens when the heart does not get enough blood supply for a period of time. Part or all of the heart muscle dies.

Signs & Symptoms

A heart attack may have warning signs. (See box below). It can occur without signs, too. This is called a “silent” heart attack.



Causes

- The most common cause is one or more blood clots that block an artery in the heart. Often, a blood clot forms in an artery already narrowed by plaque.
- Having a heart attack in the past increases the risk for another one.
- Spasms occur in the large coronary artery. This can be triggered by: Heavy physical exertion, such as shoveling snow; exposure to cold; severe emotional stress; and having a heavy meal. These triggers are more likely to affect persons who are not active.
- Cocaine or amphetamine abuse can cause a sudden heart attack. This can happen in persons with no signs of heart disease.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Common Warning Signs

- Feeling of pain (may spread to or be felt in the arm, neck, tooth, jaw, or back), tightness, burning, squeezing, or heaviness in the chest. This lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Chest discomfort with:
 - Fainting
 - Feeling lightheaded.
 - Nausea.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Sweating.

Other Warning Signs

- Unusual chest, abdominal, or stomach pain.
- Dizziness; nausea; trouble breathing; jaw or arm pain without chest pain.
- Fast or uneven heartbeat or pulse.
- Sweating for no reason, pale, gray, or clammy skin.

Signs More Likely in Women Than Men

- An uneasy feeling in the chest with: Unexplained or extreme anxiety; unusual fatigue or weakness; fluttering heartbeats; or severe indigestion that doesn't go away with an antacid.

{**Note:** If any of these signs occur, **call 9-1-1**. Then, give “**First Aid for a Heart Attack Before Emergency Care**” listed on next page.}



Treatment

A heart attack is a medical emergency!

Treatment works best when it is given within 1 to 2 hours after symptoms start. Treatment includes:

- Medicine(s) to keep blood from clotting.
- “Clot busters” to dissolve blood clots in heart arteries.
- Tests to diagnose the status of the heart and arteries.
- Angioplasty, stents, or bypass surgery, if needed.

Prevention

- Follow prevention measures in **Heart Disease** at www.HealthyLearn.com.
- Take medications, as prescribed.
- Don't shovel snow or carry heavy objects, especially if you are not physically fit.
- Don't use amphetamines and/or cocaine.

Heart Attack, Continued

Questions to Ask

Do any of these problems occur?

- Any **heart attack warning sign** listed on previous page.
- For a person with angina, chest pain does not respond to prescribed medicine or go away in 10 to 15 minutes.



{Note:

Call 9-1-1 without delay! Then, give first aid listed below as needed.}

Self-Care / First Aid

- Call **9-1-1** or your local rescue squad right away! Call when warning signs start. Don't wait to see if the pain goes away.

First Aid for a Heart Attack Before Emergency Care

- **CHECK for a response.** (See Step 2 at www.HealthyLearn.com.) Do **CPR** (see at www.HealthyLearn.com), as needed.
- If the person uses and has nitroglycerin, place one tablet under the tongue. Give as many as 3 tablets in 10 minutes.
- Give the person a regular (325 mg.) aspirin or 4 children's chewable aspirins (81 mg. each) to chew on. Give the aspirin *after* calling **9-1-1**. Ask the **9-1-1** dispatcher if aspirin should be taken.

{Note: Don't use aspirin if the person is allergic to it or has a condition that makes using it risky.}

- If you can't call **9-1-1**, drive the person to the hospital right away. If you are having heart attack signs, don't drive yourself unless you have no other choice.
- Loosen clothing around the neck, chest, and waist. Don't let the person lie down, especially if he or she has breathing problems. A half-sitting position is better. Put the legs up. Bend them at the knees. Put a pillow or rolled towel under the knees. Support the back.
- Reassure the person that you have called for medical help and will stay with him or her until it arrives.
- After a heart attack, follow the doctor's treatment plan.