

During a heart attack minutes count!!

Seeking medical attention quickly and getting prompt treatment will greatly improve your chances for a good recovery.

What is a heart attack?

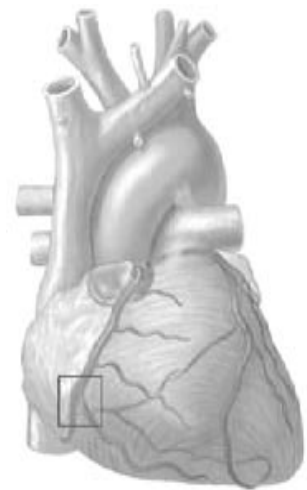
A heart attack occurs when there is an interruption of blood flow through the arteries that feed the heart muscle. This leads to damage to the heart.

What causes a heart attack?

Your coronary arteries deliver oxygen rich blood to your heart muscle and allow it to pump blood to your body. Coronary arteries are normally smooth on the inside, but can become damaged and rough allowing cholesterol and fatty plaque to build up within the artery wall. This is known as atherosclerosis. A heart attack occurs when the plaque narrows a coronary artery to the point where a blood clot forms and blocks the artery completely. Reducing the amount of time the coronary artery is blocked will limit the damage to the heart.



Detail: Blockage in right coronary artery



Remember, minutes count!

Heart attack symptoms?

The most common symptoms are pain or discomfort. This discomfort may occur in the following areas:

- ♥ Chest/Upper Abdomen – An aching sensation, heaviness, tightness, pressure, squeezing or burning. The intensity may range from a mild aching to a severe crushing pain which can spread to the arms, back, neck or jaws.
- ♥ Arms – Mild to severe aching, heaviness or numbness in the left, right or both arms which may or may not be associated with chest discomfort.
- ♥ Neck or Jaws – Mild to severe aching, tightness or choking sensation which may spread from the chest.

You may also experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- ♥ Sweating (often a cold, clammy sweat)
- ♥ Heartburn, nausea, or vomiting – especially when it doesn't seem to be associated with food.
- ♥ Light-headedness or feeling of weakness.
- ♥ Shortness of breath.
- ♥ Anxiety or feeling of doom.
- ♥ Pale or gray skin color.

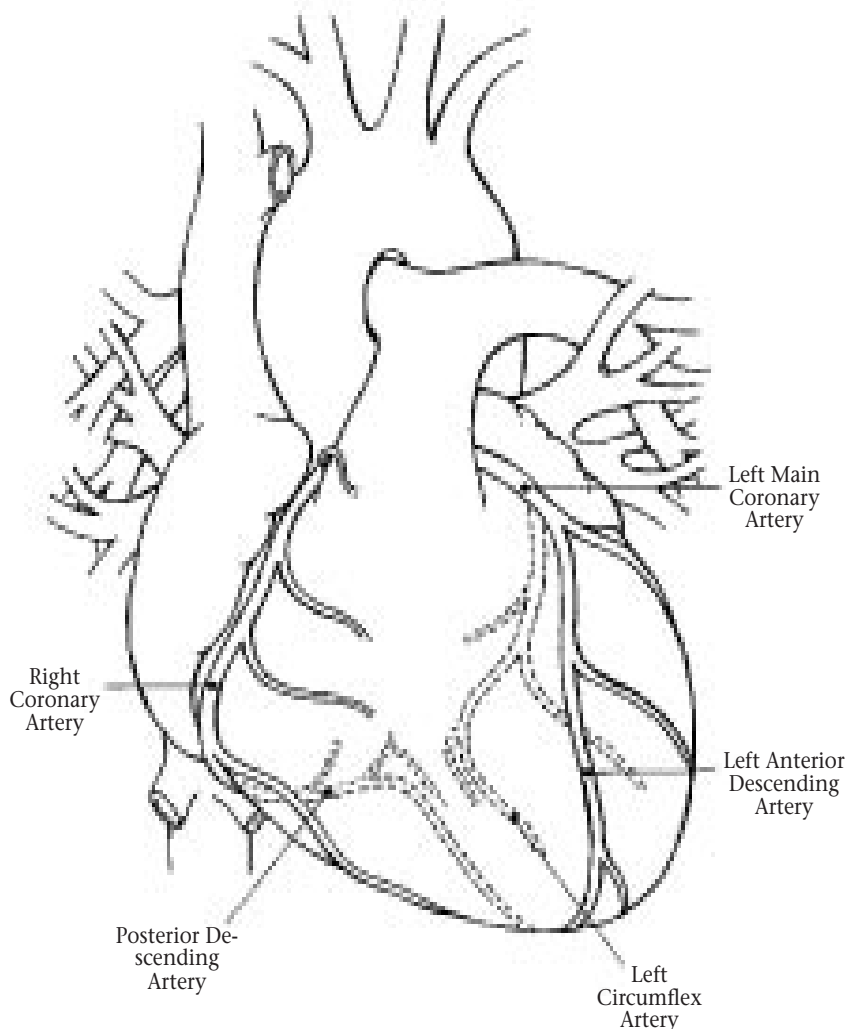
What to do if you have heart attack symptoms.

- ♥ Call 9-1-1. Don't waste time, minutes count!
- ♥ Do not drive yourself to the hospital.
- ♥ Rest quietly in a comfortable position.
- ♥ Take nitroglycerin as prescribed by your doctor.
- ♥ Take an aspirin. (Unless your doctor has told you not to take aspirin.)

What to expect during your hospital stay.

Once a heart attack has been diagnosed, a combination of the following treatments may be used:

- ♥ Oxygen
- ♥ Medication to:
 - ♥ Relieve or decrease your pain or discomfort
 - ♥ Dissolve and prevent further blood clot formation in the coronary arteries
 - ♥ Decrease the workload on your heart
- ♥ Cardiac catheterization with possible angioplasty/stent



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Rev. 03/03