

SUSPECTED HEART ATTACK

Causes

A heart attack occurs when the blood flow that carries oxygen to the heart is blocked. The heart muscle becomes starved for oxygen and begins to die.

Symptoms

Symptoms of a heart attack can vary from person to person. They may be mild or severe. Women, older adults, and people with diabetes are more likely to have subtle or unusual symptoms. Symptoms in adults may include:

- Changes in mental status, especially in older adults.
- [Chest pain](#) that feels like pressure, squeezing, or fullness. The pain is most often in the center of the chest. It may also be felt in the jaw, shoulder, arms, back, and stomach. It can last for more than a few minutes, or come and go.
- Cold sweat.
- Lightheadedness.
- Nausea (more common in women).
- Indigestion.
- Vomiting.
- Numbness, aching, or tingling in the arm (usually the left arm, but the right arm may be affected alone, or along with the left).
- [Shortness of breath](#).
- Weakness or fatigue, especially in older adults and in women.

First Aid

If you think someone is having a heart attack, FIRST CALL 911 AND THEN:

- Have the person sit down, rest, and try to keep calm.
- Loosen any tight clothing.
- Ask if the person takes any chest pain medicine, such as nitroglycerin for a known heart condition, and help them take it.
- If the pain does not go away promptly with rest or within 3 minutes of taking nitroglycerin, call for emergency medical help.
- If the person is [unconscious](#) and unresponsive, and not breathing or does not have a pulse, call 911 or the local emergency number, then begin [CPR](#).
- If an infant or child is unconscious and unresponsive, and not breathing or does not have a pulse, perform 1 minute of CPR, then call 911 or the local emergency number.
- If the person is unconscious and unresponsive, does not have a pulse, and an automated external defibrillator (AED) is immediately available - follow the instructions on the AED device.

Many experts recommend chewing and swallowing a full dose aspirin (325 mg), after calling 911 or the local emergency number. Only do this if you are not allergic to aspirin and do not have any condition that could make taking aspirin dangerous for you. The 911 operator can help you decide whether or not to take aspirin.

Do Not

- DO NOT leave the person alone except to call for help, if necessary.
- DO NOT allow the person to deny the symptoms and convince you not to call for emergency help.
- DO NOT wait to see if the symptoms go away.
- DO NOT give the person anything by mouth unless a heart medicine (such as nitroglycerin) has been prescribed.