

# Heart attack

A person experiences a heart attack when there is a sudden partial or complete blockage of one of the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle. As a result of the interruption to the blood supply, there is an immediate risk of life-threatening changes to the heart rhythm. If not corrected quickly there is also a risk of serious, permanent heart muscle damage. To reduce the chance of sudden death from heart attack, urgent medical care is required – **every second counts**.

A heart attack is usually sudden and onset may occur at rest or under exertion. A heart attack is different from – but may lead to – cardiac arrest.

## Recognition

The casualty may experience one or more of these symptoms:

- ◆ Pain, pressure, heaviness, tightness or discomfort
- ◆ In the chest, neck, jaw, arm/s, back, shoulder/s
- ◆ Nausea, a cold sweat, dizzy or short of breath.

Discomfort or pain in the centre of the chest may start suddenly or come on slowly over minutes.

It may be described as pain, pressure, heaviness, tightness or discomfort. The pain may be severe, moderate or mild. The pain may be limited to, or spread to, the neck, jaw, arm/s, back or shoulder/s.

Some people are more likely to describe atypical or minimal symptoms and include:

- ◆ The elderly
- ◆ Women
- ◆ People with diabetes and/or chronic inflammatory conditions (eg rheumatoid arthritis)
- ◆ Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders, Māori and Pasifika people.

These people should seek urgent assessment by a health care professional if they have any warning signs of a heart attack, no matter how mild.

### Will you recognise your heart attack?

**Warning Signs Action Plan**



**Do you feel any**

pain    pressure    heaviness    tightness

**In one or more of your**

chest    neck    jaw    arm/s    back    shoulder/s

**You may also feel**

nauseous    a cold sweat    dizzy    short of breath

**Yes**

**1 STOP** and rest now

**2 TALK** tell someone how you feel

**If you take angina medicine**

- Take a dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Still have symptoms? Take another dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Symptoms won't go away?

Are your symptoms severe or getting worse?

or

Have your symptoms lasted 10 minutes?

**Yes**

**3 CALL 000** and chew 300mg aspirin, unless you have an allergy to aspirin or your doctor has told you not to take it

Triple Zero

- Ask for an ambulance.
- Don't hang up.
- Wait for the operator's instructions.

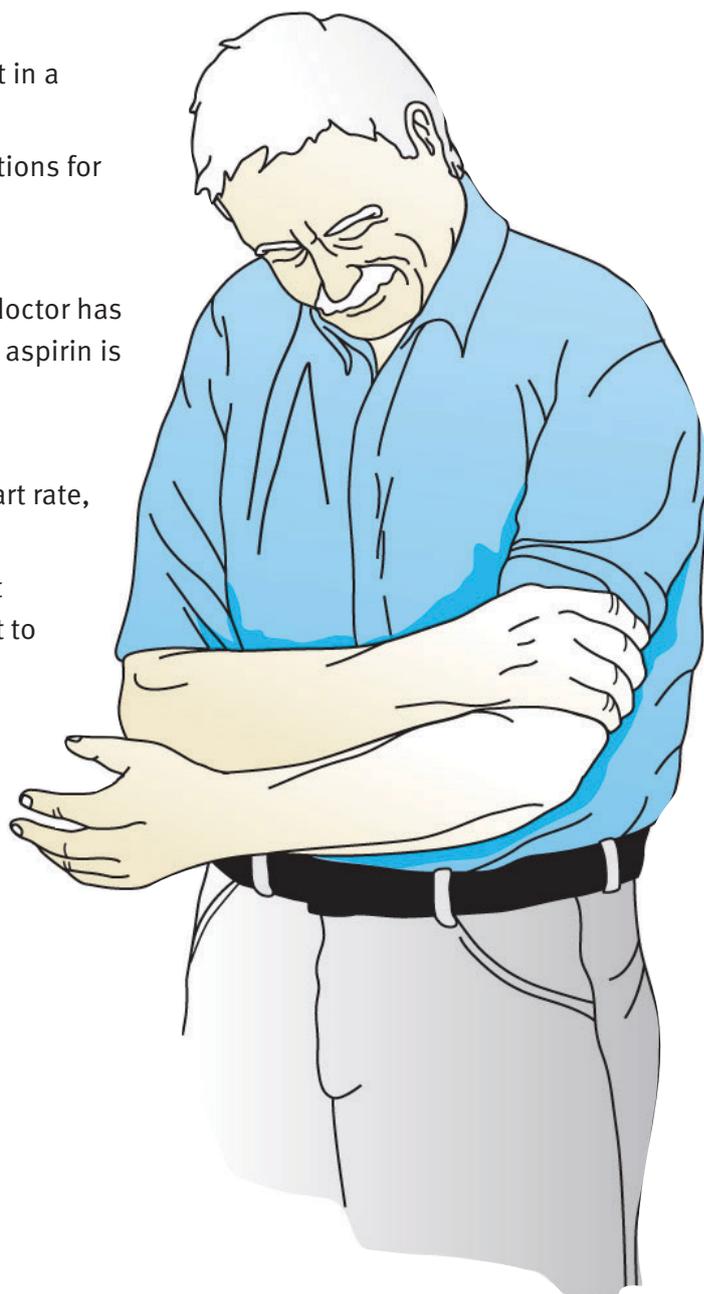
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## Management

- ◆ Encourage the casualty to stop all activity and rest in a position of comfort
- ◆ Assist the casualty to take any prescribed medications for Angina, as per their doctor's instructions
- ◆ Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance
- ◆ Give Aspirin 300mg (if no known allergy, or their doctor has told them they cannot have aspirin) – dissolvable aspirin is preferred (chewed)
- ◆ Stay with the casualty until the ambulance arrives
- ◆ Monitor and record vital signs (breathing rate, heart rate, level of consciousness)
- ◆ If practical and resources allow, locate the closest automated external defibrillator (AED) and bring it to the casualty.

If the casualty is unresponsive and not breathing normally, commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



**The Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) encourages you to be prepared for an emergency.  
Enrol in a QAS first aid course to learn vital life-saving first aid skills.**

**Enquire online at [www.ambulance.qld.gov.au](http://www.ambulance.qld.gov.au) or call **13 QGOV (13 74 68)****