

# Heart attack



**IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000) FOR AN AMBULANCE.**

**DRSABCD** Danger ► Response ► Send for help ► Airway ► Breathing ► CPR ► Defibrillation

The DRSABCD Action Plan is the first step when providing first aid. Use this to assess the immediate situation.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS<sup>1</sup>

The warning signs of heart attack vary. Symptoms can start suddenly, or develop over time and get progressively worse.

People can have just one symptom or a combination of symptoms. The patient can feel discomfort or pain in the centre of the chest. This chest pain can:

- start suddenly, or slowly over minutes
- be described as tightness, heaviness, fullness or squeezing
- be severe, moderate or mild.

Chest pain may spread from:

- discomfort in the neck or a choking or burning feel in the throat
- an ache, heaviness or pressure around one or both shoulders
- pain, discomfort, heaviness or uselessness in one or both arms
- an ache or tightness in/around the jaw
- a dull ache between the shoulder blades
- pain, heaviness, tightness or crushing sensation in the centre of the chest.

However, not all patients feel chest discomfort (more than 40% of women do not experience chest pain).

The patient can also feel:

- short of breath
- nauseous
- faint or dizzy
- a cold sweat.

## WARNINGS

- Having one or more signs or symptoms of a heart attack means this is a life-threatening emergency—**call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance immediately.
- It is not recommended that you drive the patient to the hospital yourself, as you may need to perform CPR.

## WHAT TO DO

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Encourage the patient to immediately stop what they are doing and rest.
- 3 Help the patient to sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 4 Reassure the patient. Loosen any tight clothing.
- 5 If the patient has been prescribed medication such as a tablet or mouth spray to treat episodes of chest pain or discomfort associated with angina, help them to take this as they have been directed.
- 6 Ask the patient to describe their symptoms. If any of the symptoms are severe, get worse quickly, or have lasted 10 minutes, **call triple zero (000)** for an ambulance and stay on the phone. Wait for advice from the operator.
- 7 Give 300 milligrams of aspirin (usually one tablet) unless the patient is allergic to aspirin or their doctor has warned them against taking aspirin.
- 8 Stay with the patient until medical aid arrives.
- 9 Be prepared to give CPR if symptoms worsen.

<sup>1</sup> The Heart Foundation, <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au>

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