



# First aid fact sheet

## Heart attack



- 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 advised NOT to drive the patient to the hospital yourself, as you can need to perform CPR.

### Signs & symptoms

The warning signs of heart attack vary. Symptoms can start suddenly or develop over time and get progressively worse. People may have just one symptom or a combination of symptoms.

The patient may feel discomfort or pain in the centre of the chest. This pain may:

- start suddenly, or start slowly over minutes
- be described as tightness, heaviness, fullness or squeezing
- be severe, moderate or mild
- spread to the neck and throat, jaw, shoulders, the back, and one or both arms.

### Atypical signs and symptoms

However, not all patients define their pain as a heaviness or squeezing. The patient may also:

- feel short of breath
- have a choking feeling in the throat
- feel that their arms are 'heavy' and 'useless'
- feel nauseous
- have a cold sweat
- feel faint or dizzy.

Only minimal symptoms may be described by women, the elderly, people with diabetes or chronic inflammatory conditions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Māori and Pacific Islanders. Symptoms may be only:

- breathlessness
- nausea
- arm or jaw pain.

### What to do

#### Unconscious patient

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance. Stay on the phone and wait for advice.
- 3 Be prepared to give CPR.

#### Conscious patient

- 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. Reassure the patient. Loosen any tight clothing.
- 4 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.
- 5 Ask the patient to describe their symptoms.
- 6 If any of the symptoms are severe, get worse quickly or have lasted more than 10 minutes call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance. Stay on the phone and wait for advice.
- 7 Give 300 milligrams of aspirin (one tablet) unless they are 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.

### In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

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

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