

Heart Attack

A heart attack is also called a myocardial infarction or MI. It occurs when a blood vessel that feeds the heart muscle becomes blocked. Blood flow stops to a part of the heart. If treatment is not done right away, this part of the heart muscle dies. A scar forms in this part of your heart.

Blockage may occur from:

- Fatty deposits called plaque
- A spasm in the blood vessel
- A blood clot

Signs of a Heart Attack

- Pain or pressure in the middle of your chest, arm, jaw, shoulders, neck or stomach. It may spread from one place to another.
 - Feeling of tightness, crushing, aching, choking, squeezing, burning or heartburn
 - Occurs both during activity and at rest
 - Lasts for more than 15 minutes
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Feeling scared
- Dizziness

Call 911 **right away** if you have any of these signs. Sit or lie down until the emergency squad arrives. Do not drive to the hospital or delay by calling your doctor.

Discharge Instructions After a Heart Attack

The heart takes several months to heal.

- Go to your follow-up doctor's appointment.
- Ask about getting into a cardiac rehab program.
- Limit your activity for 4-6 weeks.
 - Rest each day.

- Increase your activity over time.
- Rest for 1 hour after eating meals and at least 30 minutes after activities such as bathing, showering, or shaving.
- Limit stair climbing. Take the stairs slowly.
- Avoid lifting more than 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms.
- Do not vacuum, mow grass, rake or shovel. You may do light housework.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive and when you can return to work. You may ride in a car short distances.
- Sexual activity can be resumed when you are able to walk up 20 stairs without problems.
- Follow the diet your doctor and dietitian suggest.
 - Eat foods that are low in fat.
 - Avoid salty foods.
- Weigh yourself each day to check for fluid build-up. Extra fluid makes your heart work harder.
 - Call your doctor if you gain 2-3 pounds or 1 kilogram overnight.
- Avoid temperatures that are very hot or very cold.
 - Do not take hot or cold showers.
 - Do not use a hot tub, spa or whirlpool.
 - Stay indoors during humid weather or very hot (higher than 80° F or 27° C) or cold (lower than 30°F or 1° C) temperatures.

Your doctor may give you other instructions.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.