

Emergency Treatment for a Heart Attack

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and getting help as quickly as possible is the best way to reduce the damage to your heart, and possibly save your life. Do not delay.

It's better to be safe and call 911 right away if you suspect you're having a heart attack.

Symptoms can include chest pain or discomfort, an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing or fullness sensation; pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach; shortness of breath; lightheadedness; nausea or vomiting; or breaking out in a cold sweat.

Don't worry about being embarrassed if you're wrong, and don't call a family member or friend first. Instead, call 911 immediately.

"Whenever you have any type of medical problem take it serious. Don't overlook it, don't think it's something that's here today gone tomorrow cause it's not."

Emergency personnel might instruct you to chew an aspirin. This common medicine can help dissolve blood clots and limit the damage caused by a heart attack.

If you experience any heart attack symptoms and have been prescribed nitroglycerin for angina, stop what you are doing. Sit or lie down and follow your nitroglycerin directions.

The symptoms of a heart attack are like those of angina.

If angina pain continues after the first dose, two more doses may be taken, five minutes apart. Most people respond within five minutes of taking nitroglycerin. Sometimes more doses are necessary at five-minute intervals over a 15-minute time period.

If your pain isn't relieved after taking three doses, you or a family member should call 911 or your emergency response number so you can get to the hospital right away.

If you have received some other directions from your healthcare provider about the use of nitroglycerin, it is important that you follow those instructions.

Emergency personnel may tell you to chew an aspirin if there is no medical reason for you to avoid aspirin. After calling 9-1-1 continue to take your nitroglycerin as prescribed or as directed by emergency personnel.

Time is important. Get help quickly.

"We always say 'Time is muscle.' What that means is the longer we take to open up the artery, the more muscle that dies. And the more muscle that dies leads to a worse outcome for that patient."

By recognizing the symptoms of a heart attack and taking quick action to receive prompt treatment, you can reduce the damage to your heart and continue to live life to the fullest.

"The pain was getting a little more elevated, and that's when he said, well, maybe we'll go to like a Patient First or something like that, and I said, no, let's go back and call 911, and that's what we did."