

## PATIENT INFORMATION

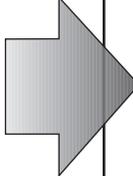


## FROM YOUR DOCTOR

# If you have chest pain

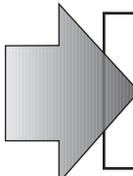
**Don't call your doctor. Don't call your kids. Dial 911. Call at the first sign of serious trouble.**

Medical science has made tremendous progress in treating heart attacks over the last few years. More people than ever return to active, healthy lives after even very severe heart attacks and open-heart surgery.



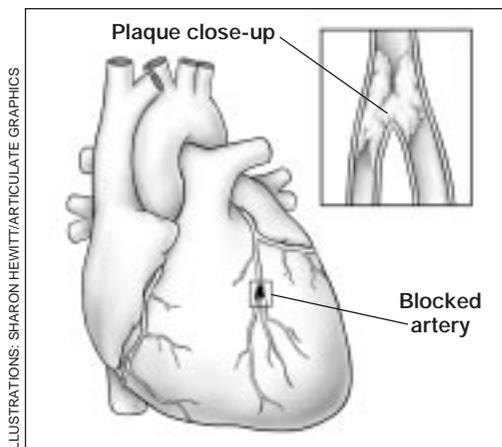
But none of this progress makes any difference unless you get to an emergency department as quickly as possible after heart attack symptoms start. To get the most out of the best available heart attack treatment, you must get to an emergency department so that your treatment can begin within *one hour* of the time symptoms began. After one hour, the success of heart attack treatments drop off sharply.

Even short delays can be very serious. Almost one million Americans will have heart attacks this year, and 225,000 of them will die. Half of these 225,000 will die *within one hour*.



So . . . don't waste time calling friends, relatives, or neighbors for opinions. Don't call your doctor friend in another state. Don't even call your own doctor, who can't do much for you in this situation except tell you to dial 911.

When you call 911, medical professionals arrive ready to begin diagnosis and treatment even before you get to the hospital. By the time you arrive, the medical staff is expecting you and may already have seen your ECG. Treatment to stop your heart attack may begin within a half hour.



### Why it matters

During a heart attack, one of the arteries supplying blood and oxygen to heart muscle gets blocked by a blood clot or plaque (see the illustration). As a result, the part of the heart muscle that was serviced by this artery starves for oxygen. This part of the heart muscle begins to die within minutes. ➤

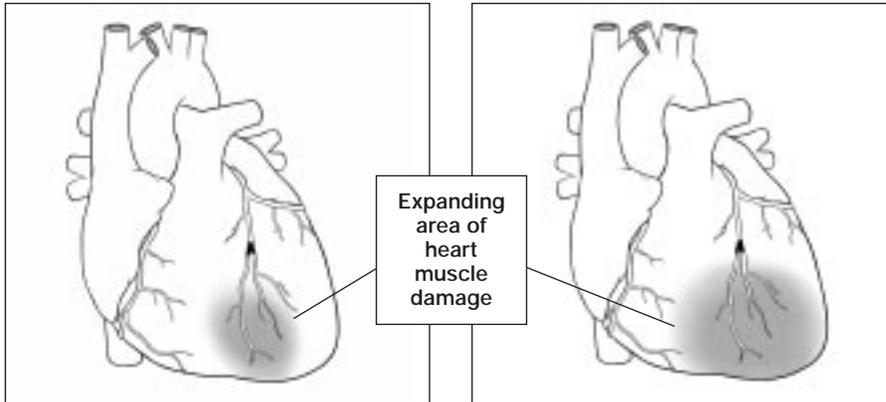
**patient  
care**

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# If you have chest pain

*continued*

- The longer the delay before treatment begins, the more heart muscle dies, as you can see in the illustrations here.
- The more heart muscle that dies, the weaker the heart becomes. In the worst case, the heart attack is fatal.



## What if it's a false alarm?

Don't ever let embarrassment or doubt stop you from getting emergency help for severe chest pain or chest pressure, especially if it doesn't go away when you take nitroglycerin. No one in the emergency department will hold it against you. No one expects you to diagnose your own heart attack! When it comes to possible heart attacks, it's always better to be safe than sorry.

## If you are at risk for a heart attack

Your doctor gave you this information sheet because you are at some risk for a heart attack. Maybe you've already had one. These are some steps to take:

- 1.** Ask your doctor to describe what symptoms might signal a heart attack, including those that you might feel in your jaw or arm and sensations other than pain.
- 2.** Ask your doctor about medications to take if symptoms start. Some people take aspirin with or without nitroglycerin even as they also call an ambulance.
- 3.** In the United States, 80% of the population is hooked up to the 911 system. If your community does not have a 911 system, find out *now* how to get your emergency transportation to the hospital in your community.