

# Homework Help: Heart Disease

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## Warning Signals of Heart Attacks & Dealing with Emergencies

There may be no reason to expect a heart emergency, but that's the way of emergencies – no one expects them. So it's important to have a plan all thought out in advance. If you're the one in charge (and kids often are!) it will be important for you to keep your cool. The patient will be frightened enough. And a plan that works for a heart emergency will work for any emergency.

### What is the difference between a “heart attack” and a “cardiac arrest”?

A **heart attack** occurs when the blood supply to the heart is slowed or stopped because of a blockage. Most of the time, the blockage is due to a blood clot. Most of the time the blockage is a result of the artery getting clogged by plaque and the blood can't squeeze through. This condition is called atherosclerosis. The longer the blood supply is cut off, the more damage will be done to the heart. Sometimes a heart attack can lead to cardiac arrest.

A **cardiac arrest** is when the heart stops beating regularly and can no longer pump blood through the body. This is when a person stops breathing and has no heartbeat. **A cardiac arrest is a life-or-death emergency. You must act quickly!** The best chance a person has of surviving is for you to recognize what is happening and react quickly by starting CPR and calling 9-1-1.

### What are the warning signals of a heart attack?

Learn to recognize the signals of a heart attack, so you can react quickly – to save a life.

- **Pain!** People feel sudden pain that does not go away when they relax. They often feel it in the chest, neck, jaw, shoulder, arms or back. It can feel like burning, squeezing, heaviness, tightness or pressure.
- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Feeling like they might throw up, having an upset stomach**
- **Sweating**
- **Fear** – the sick person is often frightened. A feeling of 'doom' is a common symptom of an oncoming heart attack.

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## What should you do if someone you know has signals of a heart attack?

1. **CALL 9-1-1** or your local emergency number immediately, or have someone call for you.
2. Stop all activity. Get them to sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
3. If they take nitroglycerin, have them take their normal dose.
4. If they are experiencing chest pain, get them to chew and swallow Aspirin (one adult 325 mg tablet). It's important that they chew the Aspirin. Tylenol or Advil do not work the same way and won't help.
5. Help them to rest comfortably and wait for the ambulance to arrive.

## What should you do if someone stops breathing and has no heartbeat (cardiac arrest)?

1. **CALL 9-1-1** or your local emergency number immediately (see "Calling 9-1-1" sheet).
2. **Perform CPR** (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) until the ambulance arrives. (see "CPR" sheet)
3. **Locate an AED** (automated external defibrillator). If you are in a location that has an AED (airport, airplane, casino), find someone who is trained to use it. This machine delivers an electric shock to the heart. Most of the time, this shock will restart the heart. (see "AED" sheet)