

HEART ATTACK or

SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST?

These two terms are often confused by people, as many don't know, or understand, the difference between them. The two terms are often used interchangeably, and people do not realize they are distinctly different.

A heart attack occurs when the blood vessels carrying oxygenated blood to the heart become blocked. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating.

A heart attack is a 'plumbing' issue whereas sudden cardiac arrest is an 'electrical' issue.

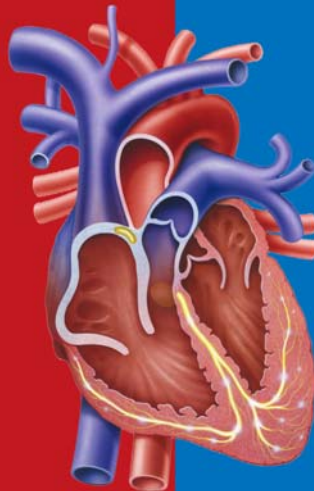
HEART ATTACK

Symptoms of a heart attack (or myocardial infarction, MI) can vary from person to person, and in discomfort from minor to severe.

Symptoms can include:

- pressure, tightness, pain or a squeezing sensation in the chest
- nausea, indigestion, heartburn or abdominal pain
- shortness of breath, coughing, wheezing
- light headedness/sudden dizziness
- fatigue
- cold sweat, feeling sick
- overwhelming sense of anxiety

It is possible to experience a heart attack without the associated chest pain. Most heart attacks are caused by coronary heart disease (CHD). A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to part of the heart stops, this is usually due to a blockage either by a blood clot or something similar. Many people experience warning signs and symptoms prior to having a heart attack, these can be hours, days or weeks in advance. In some cases, a heart attack will precede a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). If you suspect that you, or someone near you, is experiencing a heart attack, the most important thing to remember is to stay calm, act fast and call for an ambulance.



SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST

In cases of sudden cardiac arrest there is rarely any warning signs or pre-emptive symptoms and the patient always loses consciousness.

Symptoms can include:

- unresponsiveness
- loss of consciousness
- lack of pulse
- cessation of breathing
- abnormal heart rhythm

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is caused by an abnormal heart rhythm; the heart stops beating, and the person stops breathing. When this happens, blood stops flowing to the brain and other vital organs. Time is crucial to somebody experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest event. If you suspect somebody is having a SCA you must immediately phone for an ambulance, administer CPR and (ideally) use an automated external defibrillator (AED). For every minute that defibrillation is delayed, the victim's chance of survival decreases by 10% and without immediate treatment 90 - 95% of SCA victims will die. Early defibrillation makes a huge difference and can achieve survival rates as high as 50-70%.

By knowing and fully understanding the difference between a heart attack and sudden cardiac arrest you can be prepared for either event, if it were to unfortunately arise. Heart attacks and sudden cardiac arrest events should be treated very differently and it is important to know the steps required to ensure survival.

CARDIAC ARREST VS. HEART ATTACK

People often use these terms interchangeably, but they are not the same.

WHAT IS CARDIAC ARREST?


CARDIAC ARREST occurs when the heart malfunctions and stops beating unexpectedly.

Cardiac arrest is triggered by an electrical malfunction in the heart that causes an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia). With its pumping action disrupted, the heart cannot pump blood to the brain, lungs and other organs.

WHAT HAPPENS

Seconds later, a person becomes unresponsive, is not breathing or is only gasping. **Death occurs within minutes if the victim does not receive treatment.**

WHAT TO DO

 Cardiac arrest can be reversible in some victims if it's treated within a few minutes. First, call your local emergency number and start CPR right away. Then, if an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is available, use it as soon as possible. If two people are available to help, one should begin CPR immediately while the other calls your local emergency number and finds an AED.

CARDIAC ARREST is a LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH.

Cardiac arrest affects thousands of people annually with about three quarters of them occurring in the home.

 **Fast action can save lives.**

For more information on American Heart Association CPR training classes in your area go to heart.org/cpr.

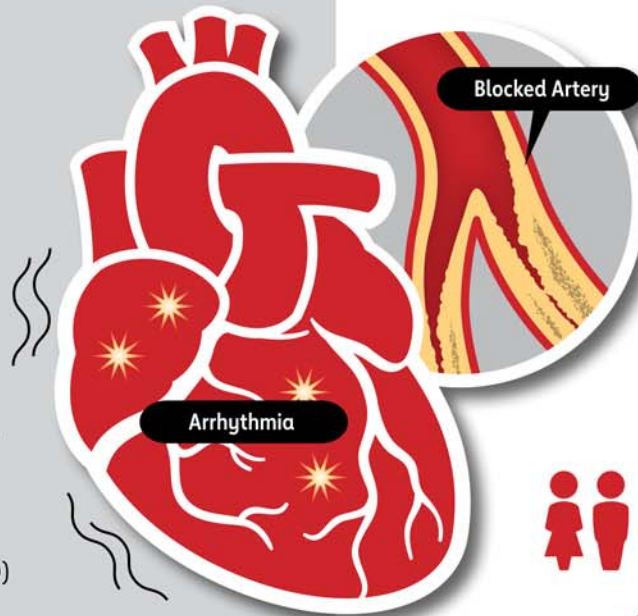
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Cardiac arrest is an "ELECTRICAL" problem.



A heart attack is a "CIRCULATION" problem.



A HEART ATTACK occurs when blood flow to the heart is blocked.

A blocked artery prevents oxygen-rich blood from reaching a section of the heart. If the blocked artery is not reopened quickly, the part of the heart normally nourished by that artery begins to die.


WHAT HAPPENS

Symptoms of a heart attack may be immediate and may include intense discomfort in the chest or other areas of the upper body, shortness of breath, cold sweats, and/or nausea/vomiting. More often, though, symptoms start slowly and persist for hours, days or weeks before a heart attack. Unlike with cardiac arrest, the heart usually does not stop beating during a heart attack. **The longer the person goes without treatment, the greater the damage.**



The heart attack symptoms in women can be different than men (shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain).

WHAT TO DO

 Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, call your local emergency number. Every minute matters! It's best to call your local emergency number to get to the emergency room right away. Emergency medical services (EMS) staff can begin treatment when they arrive—up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. EMS staff are also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too.

WHAT IS THE LINK?

Most heart attacks do not lead to cardiac arrest. But when cardiac arrest occurs, heart attack is a common cause. Other conditions may also disrupt the heart's rhythm and lead to cardiac arrest.



American Heart Association.