



## Heart Attack: What is it?

### **What Is a Heart Attack?**

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to a section of heart muscle becomes blocked. If the flow of blood isn't restored quickly, the section of heart muscle becomes damaged from lack of oxygen and begins to die.

Heart attack is a leading killer of both men and women in the United States. But fortunately, today there are excellent treatments for heart attack that can save lives and prevent disabilities. Treatment is most effective when started within 1 hour of the beginning of symptoms. If you think you or someone you're with is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 right away.

Acting fast at the first sign of heart attack symptoms can save your life and limit damage to your heart. Treatment is most effective when started within 1 hour of the beginning of symptoms.

The most common heart attack signs and symptoms are:

- Chest discomfort or pain—uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest that can be mild or strong. This discomfort or pain lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Upper body discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath may occur with or before chest discomfort.
- Other signs include nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), vomiting, lightheadedness or fainting, or breaking out in a cold sweat.

If you think you or someone you know may be having a heart attack:

- Call 9–1–1 within a few minutes—5 at the most—of the start of symptoms.
- If your symptoms stop completely in less than 5 minutes, still call your doctor.
- Only take an ambulance to the hospital. Going in a private car can delay treatment.
- Take a nitroglycerin pill if your doctor has prescribed this type of medicine.