

ANGINA / HEART ATTACK

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Heart attack – happens when heart muscle tissue dies because of oxygenated blood has been cut off. Usually, a blood clot gets stuck in a coronary artery that has been narrowed through atherosclerosis. The blood supply is cut off and the heart tissue beyond the clot is starved of oxygen. A heart attack can feel just like angina, except the pain doesn't go away with rest and medication. If the heart attack damages the heart's electrical system, or if a lot of the heart muscle is affected, the heart may stop beating. This is cardiac arrest.

Signs and symptoms of angina and a heart attack

Pain may feel like - Heaviness, tightness, squeezing, pressure, crushing, indigestion, aching jaw, sore arms

Other signs – denying anything is wrong, fear, pale skin, nausea, vomiting, sweating, shortness of breath, fatigue, hock, unconsciousness, cardiac arrest

First aid for angina / heart attack

There is a difference between the two. You can't tell the difference as a first aider but the first aid for both is the same.

1. Begin ESM, scene survey, question the history. Ask, "Where does it hurt?" "Have you had this pain before?" or "Do you have medication for this pain?"
2. Do a primary survey
3. As soon as you recognize the signs and symptoms of angina/heart attack, call, or have a bystander call, for medical help. If you have to leave to call put casualty at rest before going.
4. Place casualty in the most comfortable resting position to reduce the work the heart has to do. This is usually the semi-setting position but may vary according to the casualty.
5. Loosen any tight clothing and reassure casualty to lessen fear and worry, again to rest the heart.

Signs and symptoms of heart failure

- Inappropriate shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing when lying flat
- Blueness around the lips, fingernail beds, ears and other parts of the body
- Swelling of the ankles
- Coughing up frothy, pink fluid

Stroke – If a blood clot blocks a narrowed artery in the brain or a blood vessel ruptures in the brain area and that part of the brain doesn't get the oxygen it needs, the brain tissue dies. This is called a stroke or cerebro-vascular accident (CVA). A severe stroke can cause death and a less severe stroke may cause irreparable brain damage that may impair certain body functions depending on what part of the brain was affected.

TIA – similar in signs and symptoms to a stroke, it is caused by a lack of oxygen to part of the brain. TIA lasts from a few minutes to 24 hours and leaves no permanent brain damage. It is a warning sign that a stroke may follow. The TIA, a transient ischemic attack is also known as a mini-stroke and it is imperative that medical attention be sought preferably during the attack and most definitely after the attack.

Signs and symptoms of a stroke/TIA - depend on what part of the brain is affected.

More common

- Paralysis of face muscles
- Difficulty speaking, swallowing i.e. slurred speech, drooling
- Dizziness or a sudden fall
- Loss of coordination
- Numbness or weakness of the arms or legs, especially on one side
- Decrease in feel of consciousness
- Mental confusion
- Double vision or loss of vision

Less common

- Loss of bladder and bowel control
- Unequal size of pupils
- Severe headache

First Aid for Stroke/TIA

1. Begin ESM, do a scene survey. Ask the casualty questions to determine the scene history. Do a primary survey.
2. Get medical help
3. Position casualty at rest in the most comfortable position – usually semi sitting.
4. Give nothing by mouth, just moisten lips with a wet cloth if necessary.
5. Protect casualty from injury if they are lifted, moved during convulsions.
6. Reassure casualty, keep them warm and calm to prevent further shock.
7. If they become unconscious or semiconscious place them in the recovery position.

Start AR if breathing stops, start CPR if there is not pulse.

Important NOTE on CVA & TIA: To the untrained observer a person experiencing one of these conditions may simply be considered intoxicated and dismissed without medical care only to find later that the individual expired or suffered irreparable brain damage. Many of the signs and symptoms associated with CVA & TIA are those common to intoxication. Please be aware of this.

Cardiac arrest – is when the heart stops pumping. This can happen suddenly or may follow a period of stopped or ineffective breathing.