



Information about heart attacks





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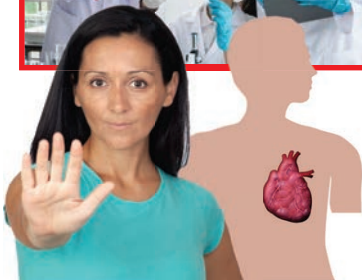
About us



We are British Heart Foundation.



We work with doctors and scientists to find treatments for heart problems.



We want to learn how to treat heart problems and stop them from happening.



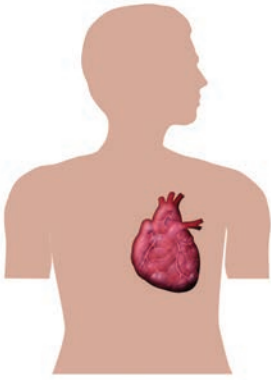
We have lots of information and support to help keep your heart healthy.



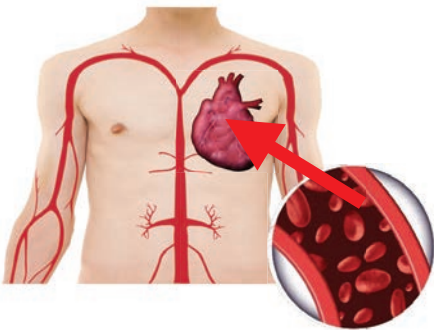
This booklet tells you:

- what a heart attack is
- what causes a heart attack
- what tests you might have to check if you have had a heart attack.

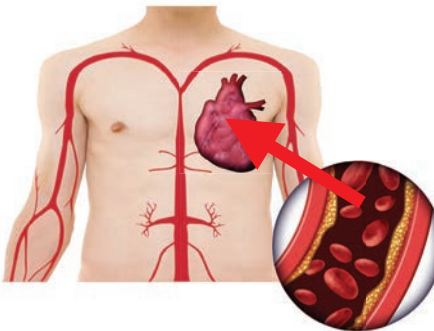
About your heart



Your heart is really important.
It pumps blood around your body
to keep you alive.



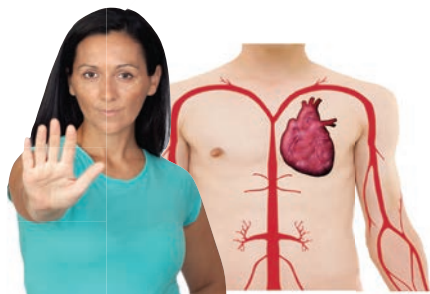
Blood moves through your heart
in small tubes called **arteries**.



If your **arteries** get blocked or
damaged, your heart cannot work
properly. It has to work harder to
pump blood around your body.



If this happens in the arteries in your
heart, it can cause a **heart attack**.



A **heart attack** stops your heart from pumping blood around your body. This is very serious.



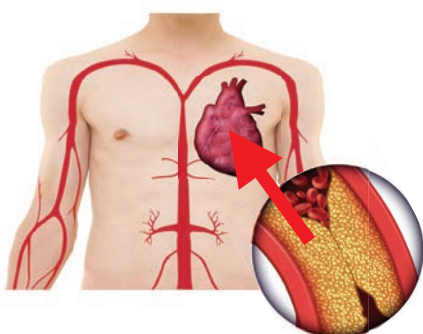
It can cause people to be very ill, or sadly die.

The 2 main types of heart attack



The most serious type of heart attack is called a **STEMI**.

We say **STEMI** like this: **stem ee**.

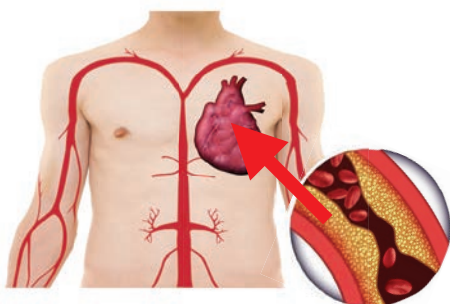


This is when your arteries get fully blocked. A STEMI can badly damage your heart.

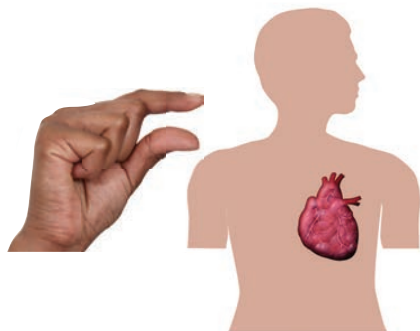


Another type of heart attack is called an **NSTEMI**.

We say **NSTEMI** like this: **en stem ee**.



This type of heart attack is less serious. It is when your arteries are only partly blocked.



A smaller part of your heart might be damaged. Or there might be no damage at all.



Ask your doctor if you have any questions about what type of heart attack you have had.

Symptoms of a heart attack



Symptoms are the things you feel when you are poorly. Heart attacks can cause different symptoms in different people.

If you are having a heart attack you might:



- get a pain in your chest. It might start quickly and not go away



- feel dizzy



- sweat a lot



- find it hard to breathe properly



- feel really anxious



- feel sick.



You might also get a pain that moves to different parts of your body like your arm, neck and back.



The pain might make parts of your body feel heavy. Or you might feel like you have eaten too much.

What to do if you or someone else is having a heart attack



A heart attack is a very serious emergency.



If you think you or someone else are having a heart attack, you should get medical help straight away.



You should phone 999 and ask for an ambulance.

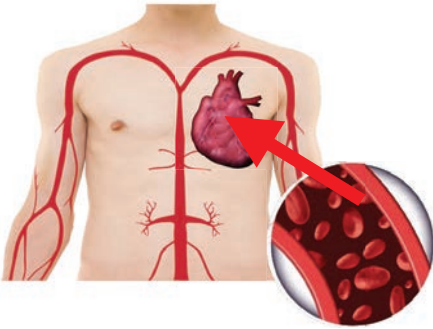


While you wait for the ambulance sit down and try to stay calm.



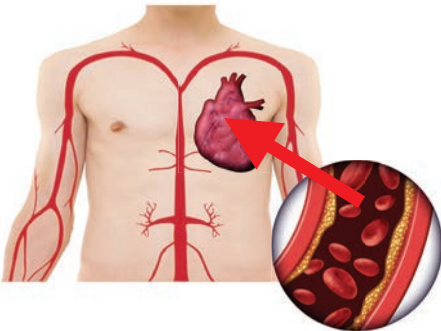
Take an aspirin tablet if you have one.

Heart disease



Most heart attacks are caused by **heart disease**.

Heart disease is a problem that can affect your heart and arteries.



It can happen when your arteries get blocked by too much fat sticking to the wall of your artery.



Anyone can have heart disease. You might have more chance of getting heart disease if you have 1 of these health conditions.



High blood pressure

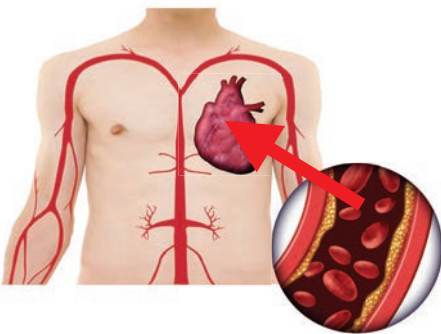
This is when the pressure in your arteries is higher than it should be.

Your heart has to work extra hard to pump blood around your body.



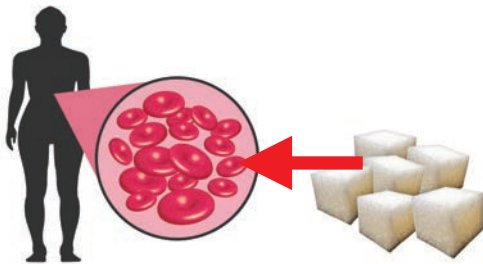
High cholesterol

We say cholesterol like this:
kol est er rol.



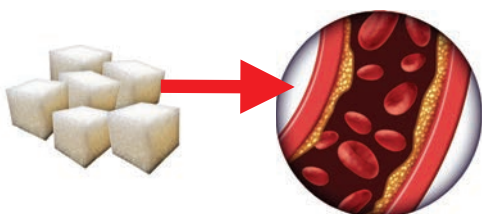
Cholesterol is a type of fat that moves around in your blood.

Too much cholesterol can narrow your arteries and make it harder for the blood to move through.



Diabetes

This is a condition where your body cannot control the right amount of sugar in your blood.



Too much sugar in your blood can damage your arteries.

Over time, this can cause heart disease.

You also have more chance of having heart disease if you:



- have an unhealthy **diet**. Your **diet** is things you eat and drink



- smoke



- weigh too much



- have someone in your family who has heart problems.

Testing for a heart attack



If healthcare staff think you have had a heart attack, they will do some tests to check.

Some of the tests you might have are:

ECG



Some sticky patches are put on your chest. The patches have wires that go to a computer.

It only takes a few minutes and does not hurt.

The ECG checks how well your heart is working.

Blood tests



The doctor will use a needle or small tube to collect some of your blood.

This might sting a little bit but only for a short time.

The test tells doctors if there has been any damage to your heart.

Blood pressure checks

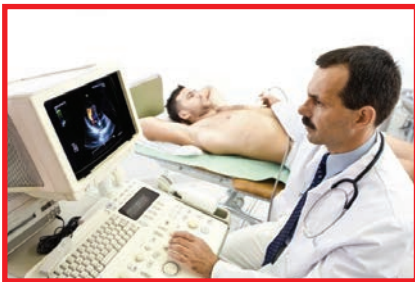


The nurse will wrap the sleeve of the blood pressure machine tightly around your arm.

The test will squeeze your arm but not for very long. It does not hurt.

This will show how well your heart is pumping blood around your body.

Echocardiogram



An echocardiogram is a type of scan. We call it echo for short.



The doctor holds a special machine on your chest.

The machine is a bit like a camera. It shows the doctor a picture of your heart on a computer screen.



It shows the doctor how well your heart is working. It does not hurt.



As well as tests, the doctor will ask you some questions.

The questions will be about your health and your family's health.



The tests and checks will help doctors to know:

- if you have had a heart attack



- what type of heart attack it was



- the best treatment to give you.

For more information



If you have any questions about heart attacks you can contact us.

You can speak to 1 of our nurses on our Heart Helpline.

You can contact our Heart Helpline by:



Phone:

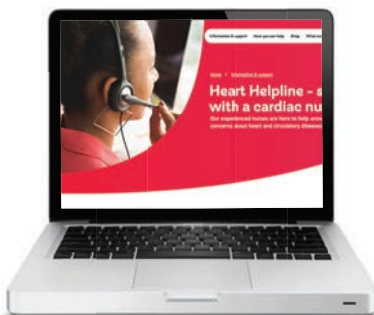
0808 802 1234

It is free to call this number.



Email:

hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk



Online:

bhf.org.uk/hearthelpline



The Heart Helpline is open
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



It is closed on bank holidays.



We also have an easy read booklet
about looking after your heart.



You can find the booklet on our
website:
bhf.org.uk/healthyheartER