



Treating a heart attack



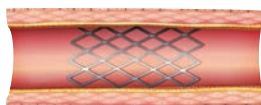
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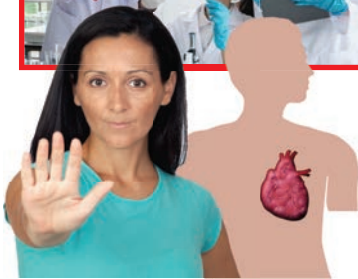
About us



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 about the different treatments you might have.

Treating a heart attack



A heart attack is a very serious emergency.

It is really important to treat a heart attack quickly. This can mean there is less damage to your heart.

Before doctors decide how to help you they will look at:



- What type of heart attack you have had.

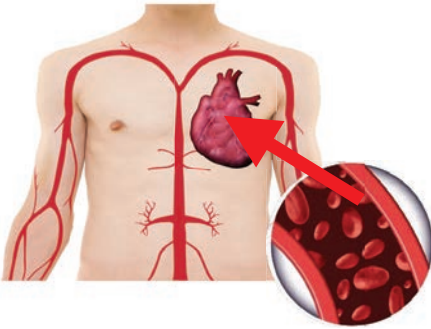


- When you started having symptoms. **Symptoms** are things you feel when you are poorly.

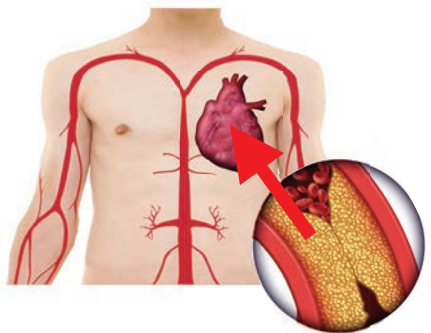


- How quickly the treatment can start.

Having a stent



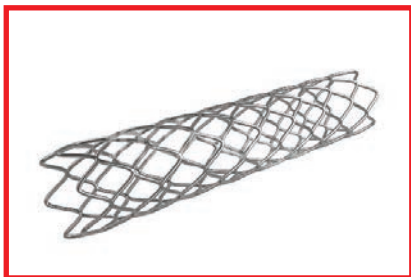
Blood moves through your heart in small tubes called **arteries**.



If the arteries in your heart get blocked, it can cause a heart attack.



A heart attack stops your heart from pumping blood around your body.



To get your heart pumping blood again quickly, you will usually have a treatment called a **stent**.

A **stent** is a small tube that looks a bit like a net. It is used to make your arteries wider.



The doctors will give you a local **anaesthetic**. We say this as:
an - es - thet - ic.

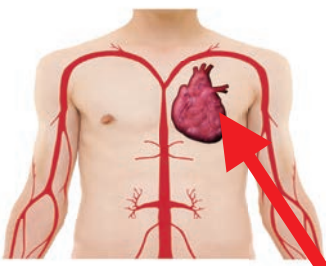
An **anaesthetic** is a medicine to stop you feeling pain when you have the stent.



You will still be awake when you have this treatment.



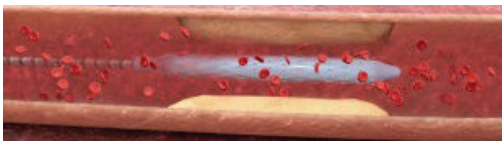
A tiny tube is then put into 1 of your arteries. This is usually in an opening in your wrist or at the top of your leg.



The tube is passed up through your artery to your heart.

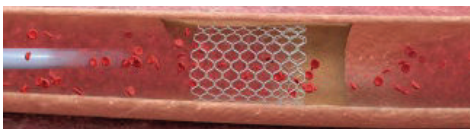


The tube has a tiny balloon at the end.

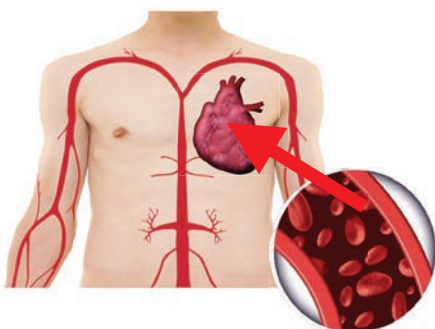


When the tube gets to the blocked part of your artery, the balloon is blown up.

This makes your artery wider.



The stent is put into the artery and it keeps it open. Then the balloon is taken out.

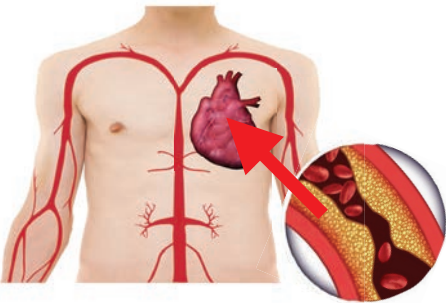


This helps blood flow to your heart.

Emergency medicines



If you are having a heart attack, healthcare staff will give you a tablet called an **aspirin**.



Aspirin helps to make your blood a bit thinner. This helps blood to move to your heart more easily.



You should let the healthcare staff know if you have already taken an aspirin tablet.



Medicines to help with blood clots

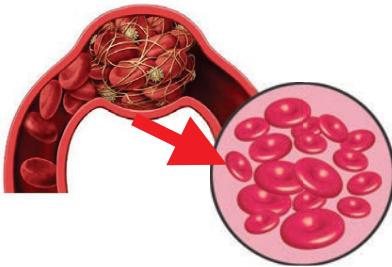
A **blood clot** is when parts of your blood stick together in lumps. This can block your arteries.



If you cannot have a stent, the doctor might give you medicines to help with blood clots.



Some tablets stop any more blood clots from happening.

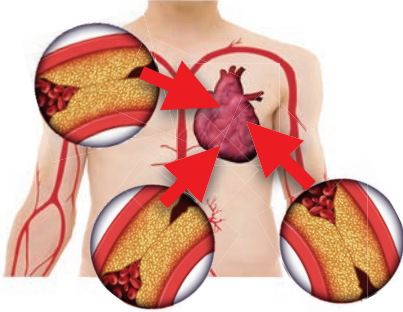


Other medicines break up the blood clots into smaller pieces.



The doctor will use a needle and a small tube to give you these medicines. They will put the needle in your hand or arm.

Having an operation on your heart



Some people cannot have a stent. This might be because they have too many blocked arteries.



They might need to have an operation called a **coronary artery bypass graft**.

People often call this operation a **bypass** for short.

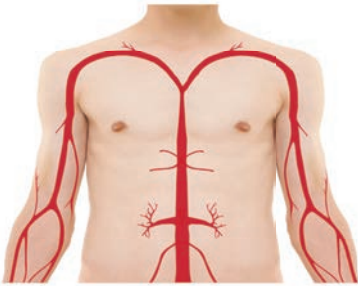


Before you have this operation the doctor will give you medicine that makes you go to sleep.

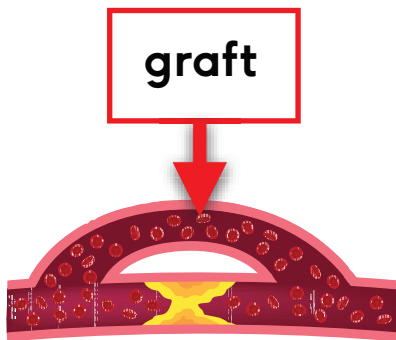
You will not feel any pain during the operation.



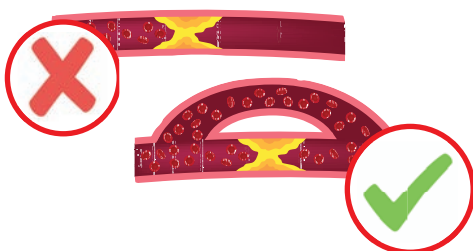
In the operation, the doctor takes a **vein** from your leg, arm or chest.



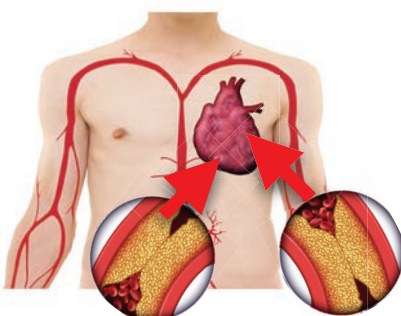
A **vein** is a small tube that moves blood through your body to your heart.



The doctor fixes the vein onto your heart around the blocked artery. This is called a **graft**.



Blood moves through the graft instead of through the blocked artery.



This operation can be done for 1 or more blocked arteries.

After a heart attack

Feeling better from a heart attack can take weeks or months.



Different people take different amounts of time to feel better. It is important to take the time you need.



Lots of people worry they might have another heart attack.

There are some things you can do to try to stop another heart attack from happening. Things like:



- doing a course about looking after your heart

and

- taking your medicines.



Doing a course about looking after your heart



After treatment for a heart attack, you might be offered a course called **cardiac rehab**.



The course is for people who have had a heart attack. You can do it as a group with other people or on your own at home.



The course helps you to look after your heart.



It gives you information about things like:

- healthy things to eat and drink



- stopping smoking



● different treatments and medicines



● sex and relationships



● driving



● going back to work



● going on holiday



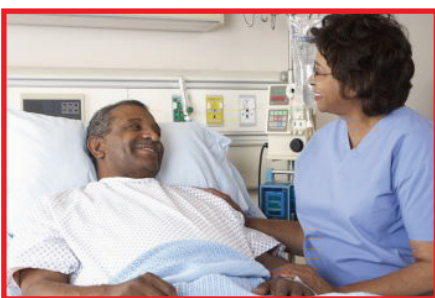
● looking at things you want to be able to do



● looking after your mental health.



The course also gives you some safe exercises to do. Exercise is really good for your heart.



Your nurse should tell you about the course when you are in hospital.



You usually do the course 4 to 6 weeks after you have gone back home.



The group meets 1 or 2 times a week for up to 12 weeks.



This might be in your local hospital, community centre or leisure centre.



If you do the course from home you will get things like:

- exercise classes online

and



- video or telephone calls with a support worker.

Taking your medicines



You will have to take medicines every day to try to stop another heart attack from happening.



This might feel strange at first. But it is really important that you keep taking your medicines, even if you feel well.

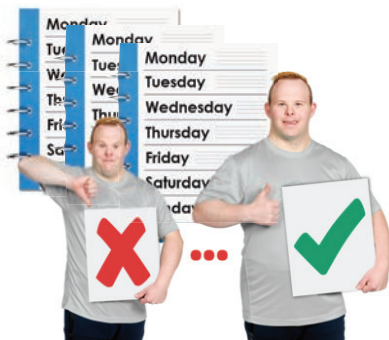


If you have any questions about your medicines, talk to your doctor or local pharmacist.

Side effects



Side effects are things you might feel when you start taking a new medicine. Things like a headache or feeling sleepy.



This is ok. Your body needs time to get used to the new medicine.



If you do not feel better after a few days, you should tell your doctor.



You should never stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to.



Paying for your medicines

Most people have to pay for their medicines.



If you have to pay for a lot of medicines, speak to your pharmacist. They can give you information about ways to save money.



If you need to, ask someone you trust to help you find out more about this.

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



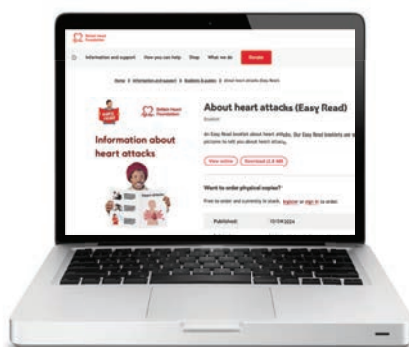
The Heart Helpline is open
Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



It is closed on bank holidays.



We have more easy read booklets
with information about heart attacks
and keeping your heart healthy.



You can find the booklets online
here:
bhf.org.uk/easy-read



Questions you might have

Use these pages to write down any questions you have for your nurse, doctor or our helpline.





This booklet has been supported by Royal Mail in partnership
with British Heart Foundation