

# Heart Attack

If you or someone you know has heart attack warning signs (which may include severe pain in the centre of the chest or chest discomfort that makes the person feel generally unwell) get help fast.

**IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY  
DON'T DRIVE TO HOSPITAL**



Recognise the symptoms

Ring Triple Zero (000) and ask for an ambulance

Respond to the advice of the NSW Ambulance call taker

## WHEN A HEART ATTACK HAPPENS

When a heart attack happens, the heart muscle does not receive enough blood and oxygen and some of the heart muscle begins to die. In many cases, a blood clot is completely blocking an artery in the heart. If the artery can be opened quickly there will be less damage to the heart, which is why it is important to confirm this type of heart attack as soon as possible.

## SYMPTOMS

- Tightness, heaviness, pressure or pain in the chest, neck, jaw, back or arms.
- Shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, especially if these symptoms come on suddenly.
- You may also feel a cold sweat, nausea or dizziness.



## Quicker access to medical advice and life saving cardiac therapy

In the past, a doctor had to be with a person to diagnose a heart attack, but a new service that is being introduced in NSW allows an ECG to be sent quickly to a specialist doctor who may be many kilometres away. This means that people are treated much faster and, in many cases, even before they see a doctor.

An ECG is a simple test that records electrical activity in the heart. It shows special changes if a person is having a heart attack. Using the latest technology, this new service allows the ECG to be read by a specialist doctor almost immediately, so that the best treatment can be started sooner.

The doctor works with the ambulance paramedic or the small hospital team (depending on who is with the patient) to decide the best treatment.

There are two ways to open a blocked artery in the heart: angioplasty and thrombolysis.

In hospitals with specialist services, a doctor can put a small tube into the blocked artery to open it. This procedure is called **angioplasty**.

If the person is close to one of these hospitals, the paramedics will usually take the patient straight there. The other way to open the artery involves giving medication to dissolve the clot. This is called **thrombolysis**. This medication can be given in the ambulance by the paramedic or in the smaller hospital. As both these treatments need to be given as soon as possible, the best choice for patients living outside the major cities is usually thrombolysis.

**For more information speak to your doctor or visit**  
[www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au)



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