



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

Acute Coronary Syndrome

What is it?

The heart needs blood to work. When a problem keeps the heart from getting enough blood to work right doctors call it **Acute** (a-kute) **Coronary** (kor-o-na-re) **Syndrome** (sin drome). Acute means sudden. Coronary means heart. Syndrome means a group of signs that there is a problem.

Doctors use this general name because many things can keep the heart from getting enough blood. Sometimes blood vessels to the heart can get blocked by a blood clot. A clot is when a bit of blood turns thick like jelly. Sometimes blood vessels to the heart can squeeze tight suddenly. That is called a spasm (spaz- um). A heart attack is when a blood clot is so bad it cuts off a lot of blood to the heart.

Signs to Watch Out for

- a squeezing or tightness in the chest
- a heaviness, pressure, aching, or burning in the chest
- heartburn
- pain or ache in the jaw, neck, arms, shoulders, back and stomach
- feeling extra tired
- shortness of breath with activity
- cold sweats
- feeling sick to the stomach
- feeling faint or l

Don't Wait

Act fast if you or someone you are with has any of the above signs. Medicines given quickly can stop a heart attack from getting worse.

What to Do

- **Call 911 to get to the hospital fast. Do not drive yourself to the hospital. Ambulance workers can start treatment on the way to the hospital.** They may even be able to start a heart that has stopped.
- Take an aspirin right away. Take the regular kind, not the coated (enteric) kind.

Treatment

You may need medicines and maybe surgery, too. These are things you may be given in your treatment.

Medicines

- **Oxygen** – This gets more oxygen to your heart so it can beat stronger. They put a small tube in your nose or put a mask on your face.
- **Aspirin** – This thins the blood and fights clots.
- **Blood-thinning medicine** – This helps thin the blood and stops more clots from forming.
- **Medicines called Beta-blockers** – These boost blood flow to the heart. They also make a weak heart stronger.
- **Lipid-lowering medicines** – These lower bad cholesterol (blood fat) that causes blocks in blood vessels going to the heart. They also help calm swelling in the heart's blood vessels.
- **Nitroglycerin** – This widens the blood vessels going to the heart to boost its blood supply.
- **Morphine** – This relieves pain, and makes it easier for the heart to work.
- **Thrombolytics** – These break up clots in the heart's blood vessels and prevent a heart attack. Doctors need to give you these as soon as possible.

Surgery

- **Angioplasty** (anj-e-o-plas-ty) – Doctors put a small tube with a tiny balloon into the blood vessel. When the balloon is blown up, it pushes aside blockages. Sometimes they put a small piece of metal (a coil or stent) in the blood vessel. This supports it and keeps it open. This surgery can be life saving if done right away.
- **Coronary Bypass** – Doctors can put in new blood vessels to let blood go around the blocked vessels. This surgery is also called open-heart or bypass surgery.

Causes of Heart Trouble

- smoking
- overweight
- no exercise
- diabetes
- family history of heart problems
- stress
- high blood pressure (hypertension)
- high blood fat (cholesterol)
- cocaine use

What You Can Do Right Now

- Stop smoking.
- If you use cocaine, stop.
- Exercise 3 times a week for 20 minutes. Walking is good.
- If you are diabetic, keep your average blood sugar down to 150-170.
- Find ways to reduce stress in your life. Exercise is a good way to do this.
- Keep your blood pressure under 130/80.
- Keep your blood fat (cholesterol) low. Your bad cholesterol (called LDL) should be less than 100.
- Keep taking all your medicines even if you feel better. Tell your doctor if you think your medicines are making you feel bad.

Who to Call for More Help:

American Heart Association
1-800-AHA-USA1 (242-8721)
www.americanheart.org

American Dietetic Association
1-800-877-1600 www.eatright.org

How can I find a doctor?

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in heart problems. To contact one of our doctors call the:

Physician Referral Line at 1-800-223-8662
Visit our Web site at www.stvincentcharity.com

St. Vincent Charity Hospital	St. Luke's Health Care Center
2351 E. 22nd Street	11201 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44115	Cleveland, Ohio 44104
216-861-6200	216-721-6900
TTY: Ohio Relay 1-800-750-0750	

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