Heart Attack

What is it?

> A blockage of blood flow to the heart muscle due to a clot.

Symptoms:

A heart attack generally causes chest pain for more than 15 minutes. The pain may be mild or severe. Some heart attacks strike suddenly, but many people have warning signs hours or days in advance.

Someone having a heart attack may have any or all of the following:

- Chest pain, pressure or tightness, fullness, or a squeezing or aching sensation in the center of the chest
- Pain or discomfort that spreads to the shoulder, arm, back, neck, jaw, teeth, or stomach
- Nausea, indigestion, heartburn or abdominal pain
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, fainting
- Cold sweat

Symptoms in Women:

Women often experience less obvious warning signs

- An uncomfortable feeling in the upper back, jaw, neck, or shoulder
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pain or pressure in the lower chest or upper abdomen
- Fainting
- Indigestion
- Extreme fatigue

Plan of Action:

- **Call 911 or emergency medical assistance.** Don't ignore the symptoms of a heart attack. If you can't get an ambulance or emergency vehicle to come to you, have a neighbor or a friend drive you to the nearest hospital. Drive yourself only if you have no other option. Because your condition can worsen, driving yourself puts you and others at risk.
- **Chew aspirin.** Aspirin is a blood thinner. It prevents clotting and keeps blood flowing through a narrowed artery that's caused a heart attack. Don't take aspirin if you have chest pain due to an injury. Also, don't take aspirin if you are allergic to aspirin, have bleeding problems or take another blood-thinning medication, or if your health care provider previously told you not to do so.

- **Take nitroglycerin, if prescribed.** If you think you're having a heart attack and your health care provider has previously prescribed nitroglycerin for you, take it as directed. Don't take anyone else's nitroglycerin.

- **Begin CPR on the person having a heart attack.** The American Heart Association recommends starting hands-only CPR. Push hard and fast on the person's chest for 100 to 120 compressions a minute.

- **If an automated external defibrillator (AED)** is immediately available and the person is unconscious, follow the device instructions for using it

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