

No. 043/2024

January 2024

Our Ref: C1/24

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

Heart Month - February 2024

In the UK, someone dies from a heart or circulatory condition every three minutes.

Whether it's losing a loved one, family member, friend or colleague, to sudden cardiac arrest or coping with the devastating impact of heart failure, far too many people have felt the pain of heart and circulatory conditions. But during February's 'Heart Month' with help and support from as many people as possible, organisers of Heart Month, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) hope that together we can collectively give more hearts a chance.

Heart Month 2024 is an annual observance dedicated to raising awareness about heart health and cardiovascular diseases and more recently campaigning on CPR and Defibrillators with their 'RevirR' tool and on-line training for all.

Effective use of a CPR and a defibrillator can more than double the chances of survival after a cardiac arrest. People can learn how to give 'life-saving' CPR and how to use a defibrillator in just 15 minutes with 'RevirR -a free easy to use digital tracking tool.' People can complete it at home and all that's needed is a mobile phone and a cushion to practice on.

CPR and Defibrillators: how to save a life ('RevirR')

A cardiac arrest is when a person's heart suddenly stops pumping blood around the body. CPR keeps the blood pumping while help arrives and a defibrillator gives an electric shock to restore the heart's normal rhythm. Cardiac arrests can happen to anyone at any time.

The BHF resources here can be used to learn how to do lifesaving CPR and how to use a defibrillator in an emergency.

Link to this excellent Webpage is: - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life>

Subject matter covered is:

CPR:

On the special British Heart Foundation (BHF) Webpage that's been specially designed and set, anyone can now learn how to do CPR.

People can:

- [Read a step-by-step guide to CPR](#) and learn how to do CPR quickly using these simple instructions.
- **Complete the [Free interactive CPR training](#)** on-line and Learn CPR at home in 15 minutes using just a cushion and a mobile phone or tablet.

Defibrillators:

Here People can:

- [Learn about defibrillators](#) and read about what defibrillators are, how to use them and why they're so important.
- [Find a defibrillator near you](#) by searching the BHF's national directory to see where your nearest defibrillator is located.
- **Learn about the BHF's [defibrillator funding programme](#)** for community groups to apply for a fully-funded defibrillator.

Teach others how to do CPR:

Here People can:

- **Access [Free training resources](#)** - for teaching CPR. These can be used in workplaces, communities, schools and organisations. This covers how CPR and defibrillators work together. When somebody is in cardiac arrest, using CPR and a defibrillator together gives them the best chance of survival.

Learn all about Cardiac arrests and how to help a victim of cardiac arrest at:

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life>

Attachments:

- BHF Heart Attack Quick Guide.
- BHF Health and Work Factsheet and Information Sheet.

Royal Mail Group will be supporting Heart Month and communications will carry this 'footer' message:



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Joyce".

Dave Joyce
National Health, Safety & Environment Officer

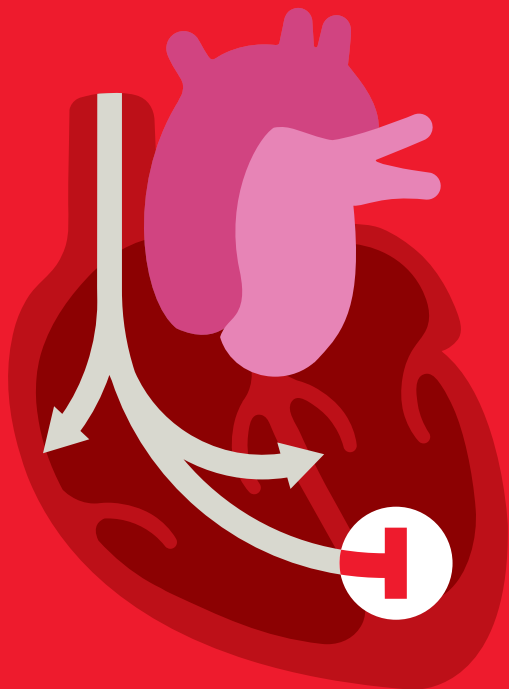
CWU 150 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London, SW19 1RX
email: info@cwu.org Tel: 020 8971 7200 Fax: 020 8971 7300
General Secretary: Dave Ward

@DaveWardGS Dave Ward CWU



Heart Attack

Your quick guide



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**
bhf.org.uk



British Heart
Foundation

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help. From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of living with heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**
bhf.org.uk



What is a heart attack?

A heart attack happens when there is a sudden loss of blood flow to a part of your heart muscle.

Most heart attacks are caused by coronary heart disease.

A heart attack is life threatening and you need to have treatment as soon as possible.

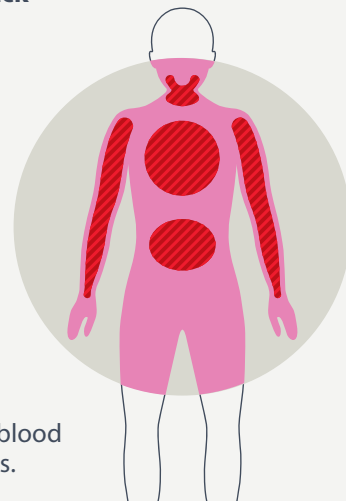


What are the signs and symptoms of a heart attack?

Symptoms of a heart attack

- Pain or discomfort in your chest that doesn't go away.
- The pain may spread to your left or right arm or may spread to your neck and jaw.
- You may feel sick or short of breath.

During a heart attack there is also the risk of having a cardiac arrest. This is when your heart stops pumping blood and normal breathing stops.



If you ever think you are having a heart attack, call 999 immediately.

Too many people risk their lives by waiting too long to call for an ambulance. If in doubt, call 999. It could save your life.



How is a heart attack diagnosed?

If you are having a suspected heart attack the ambulance staff will want to:

- take an ECG
- reduce your pain or discomfort
- start treatment to reduce or prevent damage to your heart
- resuscitate you if you go into cardiac arrest.

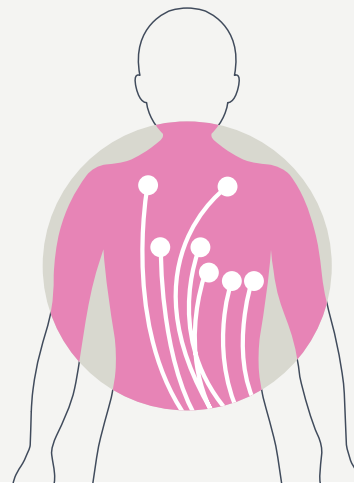
Once you arrive at hospital you will be seen immediately by a doctor or nurse.

This will include:

- more ECGs
- an assessment of your symptoms and medical history
- physical examinations, including measuring your blood pressure and monitoring your heart rhythm and heart rate
- a blood test called a troponin test (to detect if there has been any damage to your heart muscle).

What is an ECG?

An ECG (also known as an electrocardiogram) is a test to look at the electrical activity of your heart. It is used to find out if your symptoms are due to a heart attack.



What causes a heart attack?

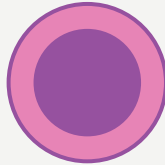
Most heart attacks happen when the inside of one or more of your coronary arteries become narrowed due to a gradual build-up of fatty deposits called atheroma.

How fatty material builds up

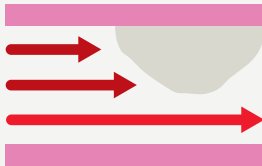
Normal blood flow through the coronary artery.



Cross section



Fatty deposits cause a narrowing and restrict the flow of blood through the artery.



The fatty area of atheroma in the artery wall is called a plaque.

If a plaque breaks, a blood clot forms to try to repair the damaged artery wall. This blood clot can totally block your coronary artery, causing part of your heart muscle to be starved of blood.



What treatment will I need?

If you have a heart attack, you need to have treatment as soon as possible. Early treatment to get the blood flowing to the damaged part of your heart muscle again can save your life and limit the amount of permanent damage to your heart muscle. Many people who have a heart attack need to have emergency treatment to unblock the coronary artery.

- You might have a treatment called **primary angioplasty**, which is a procedure to re-open the blocked coronary artery and usually involves inserting one or more stents to help keep the narrowed artery open.
- Or you might have **thrombolysis**, which means giving you a 'clot-busting' medicine to dissolve the blood clot that is blocking the coronary artery.



Yvonne's story

Yvonne, 54, had a heart attack after arriving at work one day.

"All of a sudden it felt as if someone had picked up a sledgehammer and whacked me in my chest.

I stood for a few minutes.

I could hardly speak, I could hardly breathe and within minutes I got all of these pains down my arms. I was sweating. People said: 'You look awful'.

I said: 'If I wanted to be a drama queen I would say I'm having a heart attack'.

I went to the doctor. I said to her I think I've got the strangest chest infection. She said there was nothing wrong with my chest and sent me to the hospital.

I had a lot of tests for an hour and then I saw this doctor walking towards me with a wheelchair. My reaction was to start laughing. She said: 'I don't make jokes about things like that' and asked me to get into the wheelchair.

I was taken to the cardiac unit and had an angiogram. They felt that with lifestyle changes and medication I would be ok. I went to cardiac rehab, looked at my lifestyle and started eating more healthily."



“I view my heart now as the engine of a car. **If the engine packs up, everything is gone.**”

Yvonne, survivor



How long will I need to stay in hospital for?

You will need to have more tests while you are in hospital. You will have more ECGs and you are likely to be attached to a heart monitor some of the time, to check for any problems with your heart rhythm or heart rate. You may also have some other tests, to look more closely at your heart and how it is working, and to help decide on the best form of treatment for you.

You will usually stay in hospital for about three to five days, depending on what type of treatment you have had and how well you begin to recover.





What happens to my heart after a heart attack?

A heart attack can be a frightening experience and it can take time to come to terms with what has happened. It's natural to be worried about your recovery and future. Many people make a full recovery and within a few months are able to return to their normal activities. Some people may find that they are not able to do as much as they previously did, but attending cardiac rehabilitation will increase your chances of getting back to normal as quickly as possible.



Will it happen again?

Having one heart attack does increase the risk of having another, but this risk is greatly reduced with the correct treatment. And, if you take the medicines your doctors have prescribed for you and follow a healthy lifestyle, you can significantly reduce your risk.



Do I need to take medicines every day?

After a heart attack you will need to start taking medicines every day, and will need to take most of them for the rest of your life. If you already had a heart condition before you had your heart attack, you may already be taking some or all of these medicines.

Take medicine daily to:

- Help to prevent another heart attack
- Prevent or treat symptoms of angina





I'm afraid to do too much in case it brings on another heart attack.

It's natural to feel concerned about exercising after your heart attack. Your heart is a muscle and, like any other muscle in your body, it needs physical activity to keep it in good condition. At first this will be gentle activity. But you will then gradually do more activity for longer, as you become physically stronger and more confident.



What is cardiac rehabilitation?

After a heart attack you are usually referred to a cardiac rehabilitation service for specialist advice and physical activity, if there is one available in your area. Everyone's needs are different and the service you are offered will depend on what has happened to you. Going to cardiac rehabilitation – often called cardiac rehab – can reduce the risk of dying after a heart attack and helps improve some of the risk factors for coronary heart disease. It also aims to promote your health and keep you well.

Risk factors

A risk factor is something that increases your chances of getting a disease.

High blood pressure



Smoking



High cholesterol



Weight and body shape



Diabetes



Not doing enough physical activity



The good news is that for most risk factors for coronary heart disease, you can do something about them.

Dear colleagues

Why the BHF?

Heart and circulatory diseases are the world's biggest killer, and with millions of people in the UK living with risk factors like high blood pressure, smoking and being overweight, the BHF have produced this awareness raising information fact sheet around the importance of knowing your health numbers and making lifestyle choices that can improve your overall heart and general health.



**Every
3 minutes**
someone in the UK
goes to hospital due
to a heart attack



Heart and circulatory
diseases cause
460 deaths
each day in the UK

Know your heart age

Understanding your health numbers is the first step towards improving them. Heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors are explained here the steps that can be taken to keep your heart healthy.

- Have your blood pressure tested, as well as body mass index and waist circumference
- Learn how certain lifestyle factors can lead to the development of heart and circulatory diseases
- Input your numbers into our the BHF Heart Age Calculator to find out your heart age and the steps that can be taken to help improve it.

Think Well

Heart health and mental health are closely connected. People with severe mental health problems are more likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease. So thinking well is the first step to keeping your body healthy.

Beat heartbreak forever.

- Be aware of the key causes of stress
- Discuss which coping strategies are unhealthy
- Follow new, healthier coping mechanisms that can reduce stress.

Eat Well

Healthy eating, as part of a healthy lifestyle, helps control body weight and lowers blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol - all risk factors for heart and circulatory diseases. Eat Well and benefit from a healthier heart and body.

- Measure and understand your BMI and waist measurement
- Learn which foods can contribute to better heart health, lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- Understand food groups and learn recommended portion sizes, to aid weight management.

Be Active

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things we can do to stay healthy. But it can feel difficult to work exercise into your routine. So rather than recommending gym memberships or hours of pounding the roads, BHF recommends;

- Simple, effective ways to increase daily activity
- Learn the health benefits of regular physical activity

Changing Habits

Adopting healthy habits is the key to improving overall health and wellbeing, but letting go of your unhealthy habits can be challenging.

- BHF quick guides explain the health risks of smoking and alcohol
- BHF guides and literature is available to assist with stopping smoking and cutting down alcohol consumption

End

Beat heartbreak forever.

ROYAL MAIL GROUP FOOTER MESSAGE



Protecting heart health
and saving lives
in our communities.

RevivR
- learn CPR
in 15 minutes

