

## Myocardial Infarction

### Definition:

A myocardial infarction is commonly known as a heart attack. Your heart arteries bring blood flow and oxygen to your heart. Fatty substances called plaque can build up in your heart arteries over time causing the blood flow to become blocked. Sometimes the plaque cracks and triggers formation of a clot. When this blockage occurs your heart muscle can die or become permanently damaged. It is estimated that one in five deaths in the United States each year are attributed to a heart attack. A heart attack is a medical emergency. If you think you are having a heart attack you should seek help immediately.

### Risk factors:

- Heredity factors or having heart disease in your family
- Diabetes
- Getting older
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Having too much fat in your diet
- High cholesterol
- Unusually high levels of stress in you life

### Symptoms:

Chest pain is a major symptom of a heart attack and it usually lasts longer than 20 minutes. It may be felt in only one part of your body or spread from your chest to your arms, shoulder, neck, teeth, jaw, or back.

The pain may be mild or severe. It can feel like:

- Squeezing or heavy pressure
- A tight band around the chest
- Something heavy sitting on your chest
- Bad indigestion

Other symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Anxiety
- Cough
- Fainting
- Dizziness
- Extreme sweating
- Feeling as if your heart is beating too fast

### Treatment:

Your doctor will do a thorough examination. He may order several tests and blood work to see if you have had tissue damage to your heart or if you are high risk for a heart attack. There are many different medications available to treat and prevent a heart attack. In severe cases you may need a cardiac catheterization, angioplasty, stent or open heart surgery. It is important not to ignore any symptoms you may be having because heart disease can be life threatening.

### Contact Information

Memphis Heart Clinic  
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