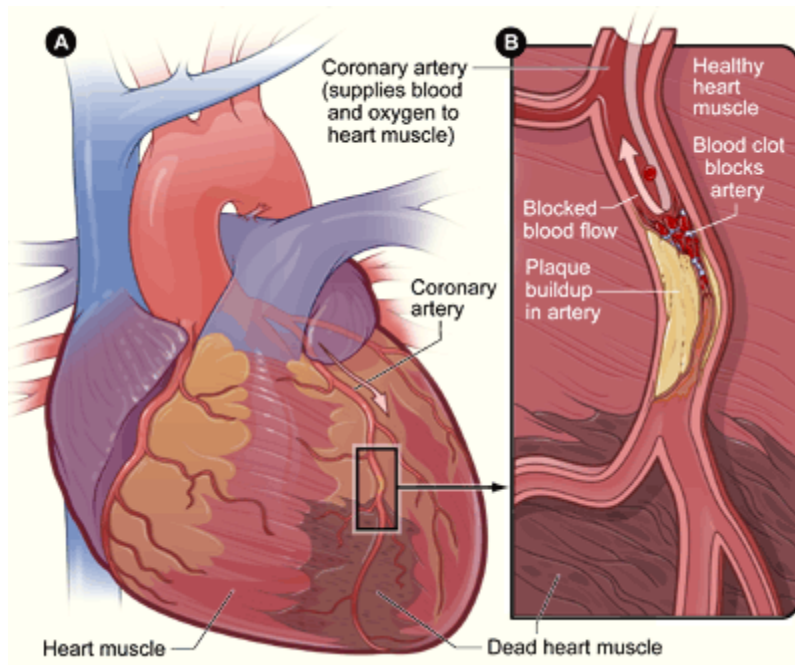


280,000 Australians of all age groups suffer from heart disease.

HEART ATTACK

The greatest cause of death in Australia is from heart attack due to Coronary Heart Disease. Heart disease claims the life of one Australian every 10 minutes.

The heart is a **muscle** that does not rest and has a high demand for oxygen. This oxygen is supplied via the Coronary Arteries. If a Coronary Artery becomes blocked, the patient suffers a heart attack.



The blockage is usually caused by a gradual build up of fatty substances (particularly cholesterol) which deposits as a plaque and calcification along the inner lining of blood vessels which narrow their diameter.

When a person suffers a heart attack, they can suddenly collapse due to rhythm disturbances or cardiac arrest i.e. slow, rapid, irregular or Ventricular Fibrillation.

Therefore **ALWAYS** seek urgent medical assistance for this condition (even when in doubt) - **RING YOUR AMBULANCE SERVICE**, or if not immediately available, transport patient by car to the nearest major hospital with an emergency department.

WARNING: If an Ambulance is not readily available and you need to transport the patient via car, ensure that you DRIVE CAREFULLY. **DO NOT** endanger yourself, the patient, or other road users and pedestrians with reckless driving.

Additionally, this type of driving will increase the anxiety and discomfort of the patient, and therefore have a negative effect on their condition.

Recognition of heart attack:

- the patient usually complains of a 'sudden' onset of tight/heavy pain across the chest which is usually poorly localised and unrelieved by posture or prescribed medication.
- the pain can radiate to the neck, jaw, shoulders or arms (usually the left arm).
- they may develop nausea, vomiting and/or shortness of breath and usually look pale, distressed and have cold sweaty skin.
- they may develop dizziness & fatigue.

WARNING: Not all patients of heart attack experience all of the above signs and symptoms, the MOST important indications are PAIN and SWEATING.

Management

If Conscious:

- rest the patient and give reassurance (DO NOT allow the patient to move around unnecessarily as this places extra strain on the heart)
- send for urgent medical assistance - preferably the Ambulance Service.
- **DO NOT** leave the patient unattended.
- loosen any constricting clothing around the neck, chest and waist.
- BE PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE SUDDEN UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

If Unconscious:

- clear the Airway and follow 'Basic Life Support', as outlined in *Emergency First Aid* by John Haines. i.e. DRSABCD.

Special Note: If the rescuer is alone and the patient has suffered a cardiac arrest, turn the patient onto their side into the recovery position and immediately seek urgent medical assistance (Ring 000 ask for Ambulance Service) and then commence resuscitation.)

The heart contracts relentlessly approximately 70 times a minute, 100,000 times a day, two and a half billion times a lifetime. It could do with a bit of care and consideration.