

Myocardial Infarction (Heart Attack)

WHAT IS IT?

Myocardial infarction, commonly referred to as a heart attack, occurs when one or more coronary arteries become suddenly blocked, resulting in heart muscle death.

Also Known As: Acute Myocardial Infarction, Heart Attack

BASIC FACTS

- Myocardial infarction, commonly referred to as a heart attack, occurs when one or more coronary arteries become suddenly blocked, resulting in heart muscle death.
- Typical symptoms of a myocardial infarction include chest pressure or pain, shortness of breath, profound sweating, nausea, vomiting, and/or fainting.
- Myocardial infarction results from coronary artery disease (CAD), which is an accumulation of plaque inside the coronary blood vessels.
- When one of these plaques ruptures, a clot forms rapidly at the site and causes a sudden obstruction of blood flow in the coronary artery.
- Without immediate treatment, a myocardial infarction can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle and chaotic, abnormal heart beating. Both conditions can cause death.
- Because of the seriousness of a myocardial infarction, seeking immediate medical attention is very important.

A MORE DETAILED EXPLANATION

Myocardial infarction, also known as MI or heart attack, is a condition when one or more of the coronary arteries which supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle become suddenly blocked, resulting in heart muscle death.

In general, blockages result from plaques made of cholesterol and fats building up in the coronary arteries. The accumulation of this plaque is known as coronary artery disease (CAD). In many cases, the accumulation of plaque is a gradual process and can produce symptoms of chest pain or pressure known as angina pectoris, or angina.

In contrast to this gradual accumulation of plaque, a myocardial infarction occurs when a plaque suddenly ruptures, causing a rapid accumulation of clotting factors at the rupture site. This results in a sudden obstruction of blood flow in the coronary artery. This sudden obstruction prevents any blood from reaching the heart muscle. Without this vital supply of oxygen-rich blood, the heart muscle begins to die. The longer the obstruction persists, the greater the amount of heart muscle that dies.