

# Care Gram

## Heart Attack

### What Is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack occurs when a coronary artery becomes blocked. This will slow down or stop the oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart muscle. If this supply is cut off for too long, the heart can suffer injury and the cells in the heart can die.

### Risk Factors

- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Obesity (overweight)
- Stress and tension
- Depression
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Inactive lifestyle
- Heredity

### Controlling Risk Factors

- High blood pressure (hypertension) goal:
  - Less than 140/90
  - Less than 130/85 if you have diabetes
  - Less than 120/80 if you have congestive heart failure
- LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) goal:
  - Less than 100 if you have heart disease or diabetes
- Smoking goal:
  - Stop completely – the risk for a heart attack is lowered by half within one year after you stop smoking
- Diabetes goal:
  - HgbA1C less than 7.0
- Obesity goal:
  - A BMI less than 25 – see a dietitian for a weight loss plan

### Cardiac Rehabilitation

When you go home after a heart attack, you will be referred to a Cardiac Rehabilitation Program. This program reviews your risk factors and helps you make lifestyle changes, including your diet, activity level, and exercise. You are monitored by nurses and other healthcare professionals while you are there.



**Licking Memorial  
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**After a Heart Attack**

1. Diet
  - Follow the diet that your doctor has prescribed for you – this also will be listed on your discharge instructions
  - A diet low in cholesterol and fat will lower your LDL cholesterol
2. Activity level
  - Your activity should start out small, then, slowly begin more
  - A goal for exercise is 30 to 45 minutes, 3 to 4 times a week
  - You will learn how to safely start an exercise program at Cardiac Rehabilitation
3. Discharge medications
  - The medications that you should take are listed on your discharge instructions
  - Please do not stop any of these without talking to your doctor
  - If you have any questions, call your doctor
  - If you cannot afford your medications, please contact our Prescription Assistance Program at (220) 564-4628
4. Action plan – what to do if you have chest pain
  - Nitroglycerin is a medication that helps with chest pain. Chest pain can feel tight, heavy, or like pressure on your chest. You also may feel discomfort. The discomfort also can be felt in the arm, throat and lower jaw. At the same time, you may have breathing problems, sweating or a feeling of doom. New research suggests women may have “atypical” symptoms that are described as abdominal or chest discomfort, extreme fatigue, or even shoulder pain.

**Follow these steps if you have chest pain:**

1. If you have chest pain, try resting first. If that does not help, use your nitroglycerin as prescribed by your doctor.
2. Place one tablet of nitroglycerin under your tongue while you rest. It also is available in spray form. One dose is one spray.
3. Wait 5 minutes. If the pain is not better, call 911 to be taken to the nearest hospital.
4. Do not delay – get help quickly. You have a better chance of living if you go to the hospital right away.