What To Do (And What Not To Do) If You Think You're Having A Heart Attack

Dr. Terrence Baruch   *February 3, 2014 3:04 AM*

You feel a crushing sensation in your chest, with pain going down your left arm. Or you feel suddenly very tired, nauseous, dizzy, and short of breath. Or maybe you feel like you've come down with a stomach flu, but without any warning. You're probably having a heart attack.

It's time to save your own life. Here's what to do — and what not to do.

What to do:

- Do call 911 at once.
- Do sit or lie down and wait for the EMTs to arrive.
- Do take an aspirin if one is at hand. Chew it so it acts faster to thin your blood. If no aspirin is nearby, however, don't move around to find one.

What not to do:

- Don't panic. Heart attacks are very survivable — if you get help at once.
- Don't call a relative or friend for help. You need immediate treatment from trained emergency responders.
- Don't deny your symptoms. They're probably not from something you ate or from having a stomach bug. They won't just go away.
- Don't drive yourself or have someone drive you to the nearest hospital.
- Don't move around. You can't walk off a heart attack.
- Don't make an appointment to see your primary care doctor or cardiologist. Call 911 immediately.

Time is muscle when you're having a heart attack. The sooner you call 911, the more likely it is you will survive your heart attack without serious damage to your heart. In many communities, emergency responders are trained to take suspected heart attack patients

straight to a hospital that is a designated center for heart care. That might not be the closest hospital, but it is the one that is best equipped to treat a heart attack in the fastest, safest, and most effective way.

If you get to the right hospital within an hour of having symptoms, your chances of surviving a heart attack are very high. Every minute of delay after that, however, makes death or serious heart damage much more likely. If you want to live, call 911.

*Photo Credit: **Shutterstock.com***

SHARE: