

***Increasing incidence of heart disease- Learn Crisis
management of the heart
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Heart attacks are becoming very common and the next time it may be one of our own friends who may be having one. It is important to know how to recognize the symptoms and take proper steps.

If properly looked after, individuals have the best chance of survival, immediately and in the long run.

Symptoms that should ring a warning bell

1. Discomfort in the chest
2. Pain in the left side of the chest
3. Heaviness in the chest or upper abdomen
4. Breathlessness, either at rest or with a little walking
5. Unexplained sweating
6. Burning in the chest
7. Uneasiness in the chest
8. Pain in the jaw
9. Choking sensation
10. Pain or heaviness in both the arms

Commonest mistake is to attribute symptoms to Acidity or Gas or Spondylosis or Muscular pain

The background history of the person is also important; it is much more likely to be a cardiac symptom if there is a history of high blood pressure or a history of diabetes mellitus or if he is a smoker.

The best thing to do is not to take any chances and take him to a place where there is a facility to take an ECG and also see a Cardiologist. Remember that only taking an ECG is not enough. We have heard of enough number of stories of how the ECG was normal and the person went home only to develop an attack. It is the background plus the symptoms plus an ECG which should be evaluated to help diagnose and not ECG alone.

Do not waste time

The best chance of reducing the risk is when given clot dissolving drugs and if necessary angioplasty and stent treatment. It is well known that TIME IS HEART MUSCLE. The earlier the treatment, the lesser the heart muscle damage and the better chances of survival.

One should insure medically just like we insure our cars etc., as today treatment is expensive for the simple reason that sophisticated drugs and disposables are expensive as the development of new technology involves billions of dollars of research.

What to do:

1. Act early, do not waste time, take to the hospital with the best cardiac facility, with availability of a good ICCU and importantly, availability of a Cardiologist (The

nearest hospital may not have facility to treat heart attacks due to lack of immediate availability of the Cardiologist or equipment.)

2. Reassure the patient that everything will be alright and it is important to go to the hospital and take an ECG and get evaluated, better early than too late.

3. In case of doubt, it is better to stay in the hospital for a few hours under observation.

What to avoid;

1. Don't panic
2. Do not be careless and neglect warning signals and explain away the symptoms by thinking it is due to "gas" or acidity or muscular pain etc. It is very common to think that its not a heart attack-this is called as "denial" and is the commonest cause of delay. Hope for the best but also take measures to treat the worst, remember, safety first.
3. Do not think that it is night now and "we will go in the morning" etc. ICCU's are open 24 hrs and there is no point in delaying things, remember TIME IS MUSCLE.
4. Do not delay and go too late to the hospital and then expect miracles, Science and technology have limits.
5. Sometimes, when we are not sure, observation may be required, we may not get another chance to go to the hospital, Can you believe that even in the USA 40% of patients die before reaching the hospital.

Those taken early to hospital, get the maximum benefit of treatment and can get back to work early and live long.