

Heart Attack Discharge Information

What is a heart attack?

A heart attack, also called myocardial infarction or MI, happens when blood flow to a part of the heart is suddenly blocked or a blood vessel in the heart suddenly squeezes to cut off blood flow (called a spasm). The blood carries sugar (glucose) and oxygen to the heart muscle. As you get older, your heart arteries get narrowed by the buildup of plaque. Plaque is made up mostly of fat and cholesterol that sticks to the inside walls of the arteries. When the plaque breaks open, a blood clot forms, which blocks the flow of blood to the heart muscle. When blood doesn't reach the heart muscle, the muscle is damaged. Usually, part of the heart muscle dies. How much of your heart muscle dies depends on how long the blood flow was blocked and where.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

There are things you can do now to take care of yourself and to prevent problems in the future. You need to make changes to be healthier and to help keep from having another heart attack. You will be encouraged to begin an exercise program, as well as eat a healthy diet and make other lifestyle changes to improve your health.

Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include all nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Treat or prevent pain
 - Dissolve or break down blood clots
 - Prevent blood clots
 - Relax and widen blood vessels and allow blood to flow through them easier
 - Reduce blood pressure, slow the heart rate, and reduce the workload of the heart
 - Control cholesterol levels
 - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
 - Reduce straining with a bowel movement
- Ask your provider if you should take aspirin. Low-dose aspirin therapy reduces the risk of stroke for women. For men, aspirin has been found to lower the risk of a first-time heart attack.

- You may need to continue cardiac rehabilitation therapy at home or at a skilled nursing facility to help you adjust to the activity limits you may have after your heart attack and to improve your health and fitness level. Most rehabilitation programs include:
 - Physical therapy to help you regain muscle strength and teach you ways to move safely
 - Occupational therapy to help you relearn ways to do the tasks that you previously did
- If you have had surgery, to care for your incision:
 - Keep your incision clean.
 - If you are told to change your dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

Appointments

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments.
- Keep appointments for all routine testing you may need. For example, if you now take medicine to prevent blood clots, you will need to have regular blood tests.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines or muscle relaxants.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- You will probably need to make changes in some of the foods you eat. Ask your provider about the benefits of talking to a dietician to learn what you need in a healthy diet.
- If your heart attack was caused by plaque build-up in your heart arteries, you will need to eat a diet low in sodium, low in cholesterol and high in fiber.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can worsen poor blood circulation.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.

Call emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back

- Chest pain (that) does not get better with medicine

If you have any of these symptoms, do not drive yourself.

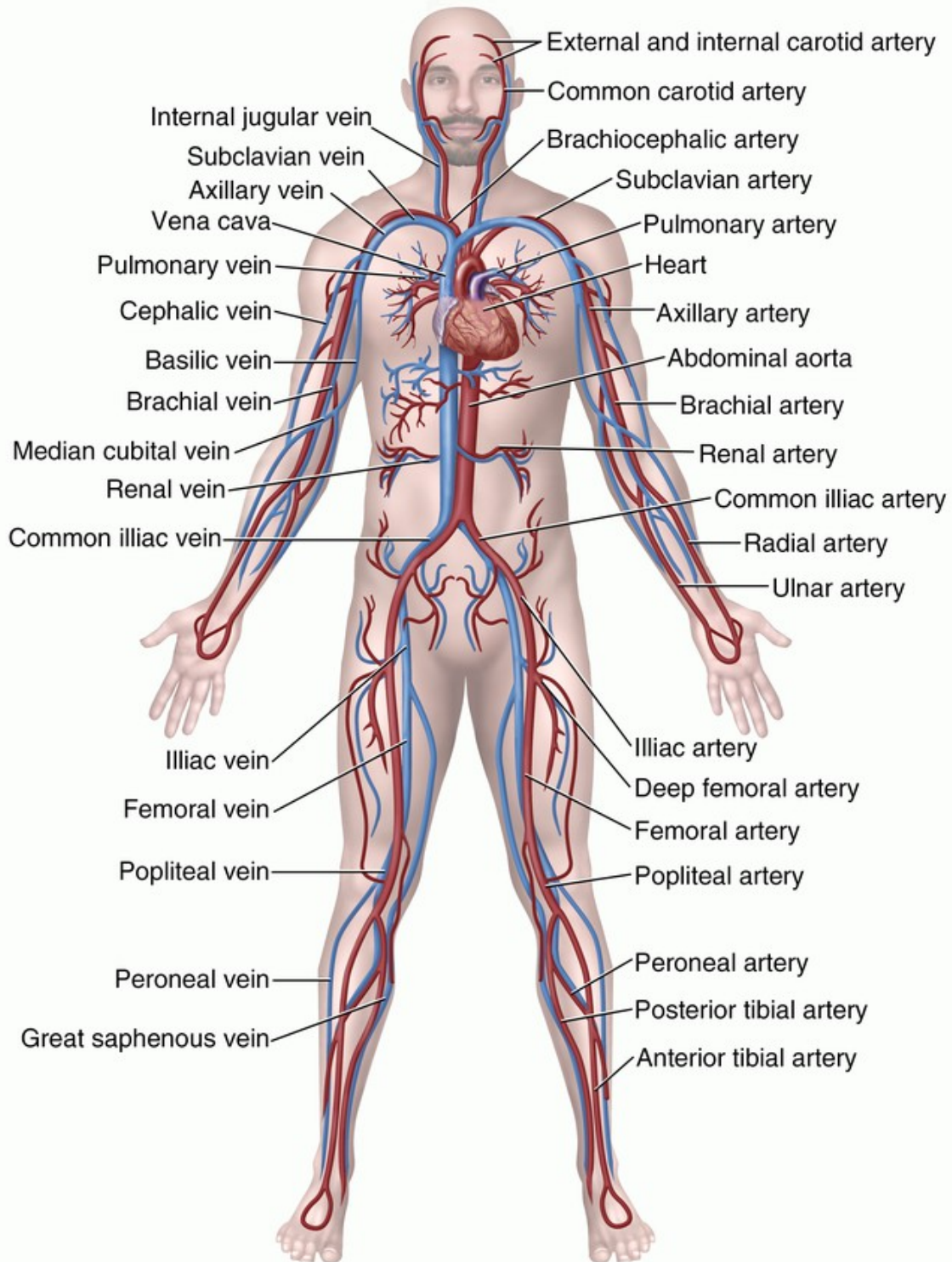
Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:

- Dizziness
- Inability to do your normal daily activities
- Irregular, fast, or slow heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden weight gain of 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in a week
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, or legs, or abdominal bloating, or swollen hands or face
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound if you had surgery. These include:
 - The area around your wound is more red or painful
 - Your wound area is very warm to touch
 - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area
 - You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
 - You have chills or muscle aches
- Signs of a problem when you are taking blood thinners, such as:
 - Unusual bruising
 - Red or black bowel movements
 - Cuts that do not stop bleeding

Developed by RelayHealth.

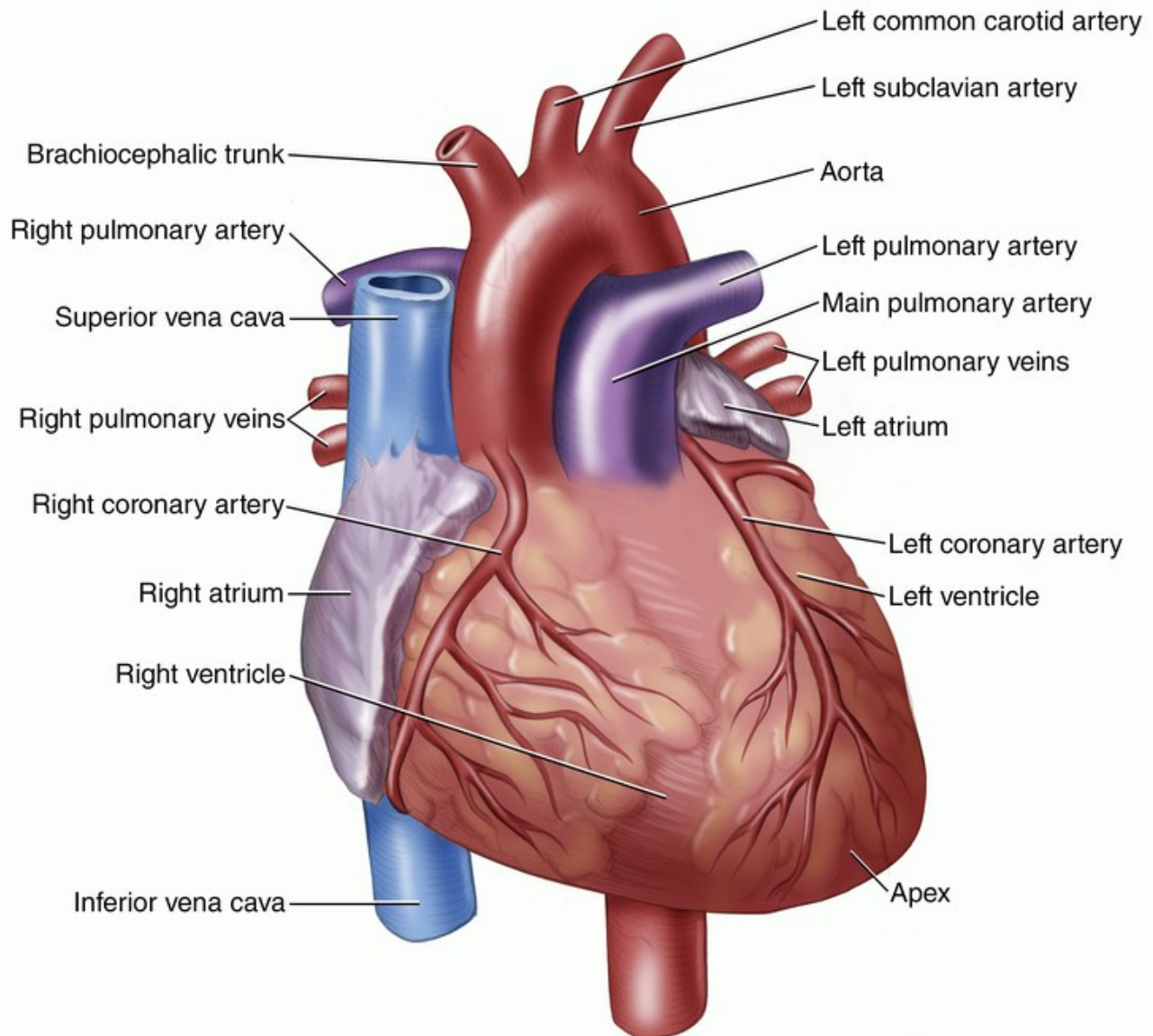
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Circulatory System



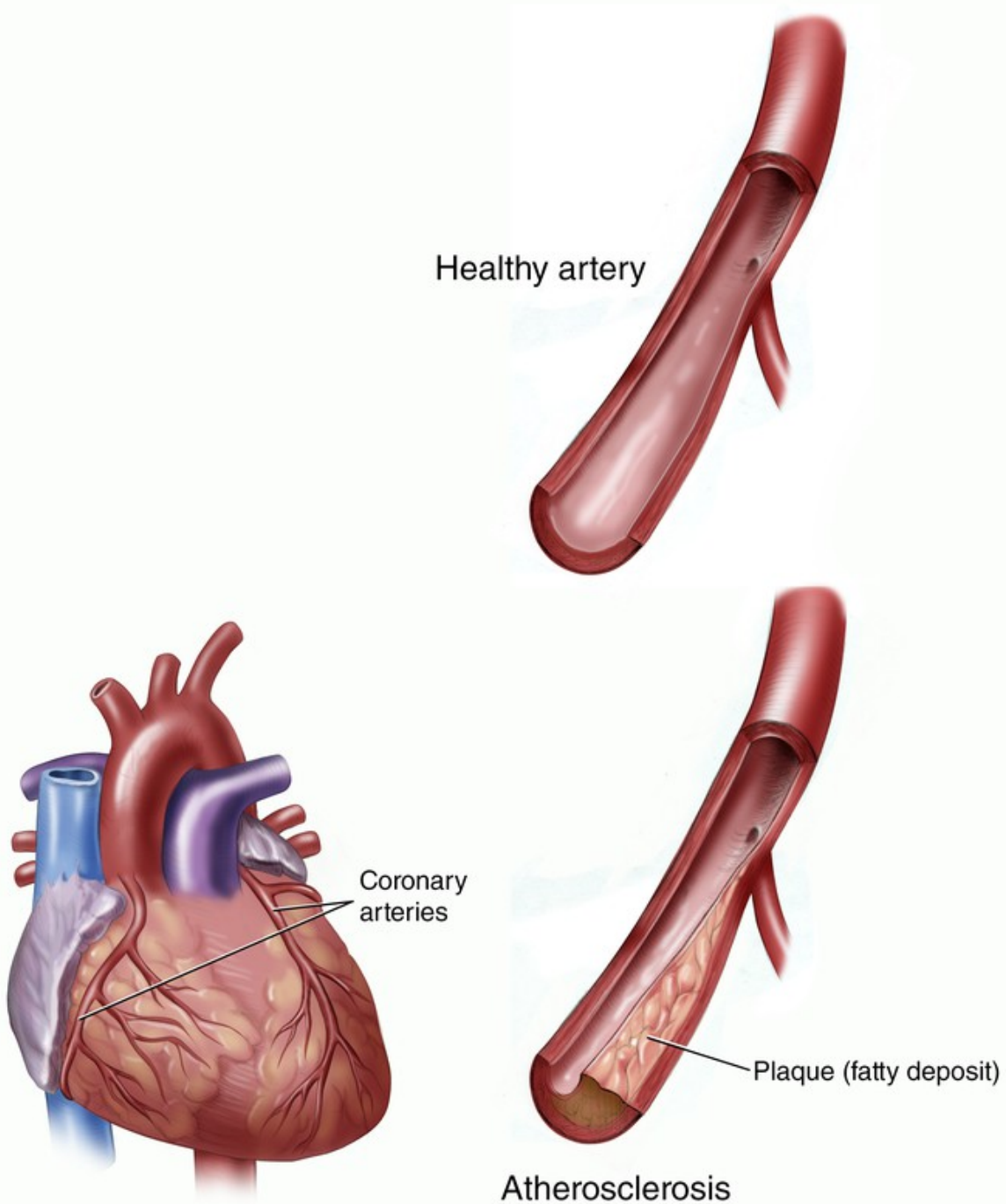
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Heart: External View



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Plaque Buildup in Arteries



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