

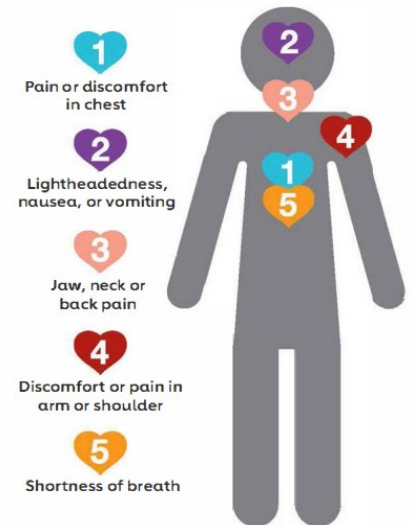
Key Patient Messages

The 2025 Acute Coronary Syndromes Guideline

1. When the blood flow to the heart is suddenly slowed or stopped this is called Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS). Several health conditions can lead to ACS. This includes [atherosclerosis](#), which is a buildup of fatty deposits (plaque) in the coronary arteries. When a piece of plaque breaks off, it can block blood flow and cause a heart attack also known as myocardial infarction (MI).

2. Recognizing the [signs of a heart attack](#) are useful to act quickly and get help. This picture shows some common symptoms. Other symptoms include sweating and a rapid heartbeat or palpitations.

Women may also experience symptoms like upper back pressure, anxiety, upset stomach, and unusual tiredness and weakness.



3. Below are some of the questions, decisions, and information the clinician is thinking about when treating a patient who is experiencing a heart attack.



Vital signs

What is the patient's blood pressure, breathing rate, body temperature, and pulse rate?



How is the heart working at that moment

This will help determine the best and safest treatment.



Timing of symptoms and treatment

Different treatments need to be started within a certain amount of time to work best.



Type of heart problem

Clinicians need to determine if the patient is having a heart attack, cardiac arrest or other health problem to give the right treatment.



Overall health

Other health conditions could change which medicines or procedures the patient needs.



Age

Different treatments may work differently based on a patient's age.



Tests and procedures needed

This could include:

- Electrocardiogram or “ECG” which records the electrical activity of the heart and can show signs of a heart attack
- Blood tests
- Echocardiogram or “echo” which is an ultrasound that takes pictures of the heart
- Cardiac Catheterization (cardiac cath) or angiography which is a procedure where dye is injected into the heart arteries to diagnose the heart problem)
- Cardiac CT or MRI which can provide detailed pictures of the heart and can assess heart damage

4. There are key differences between a [heart attack and cardiac arrest](#). A heart attack is when the blood flow to the heart is stopped or partially blocked. There are two types of heart attacks, called STEMI and non-STEMI.



ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI) Heart Attack

This is when the blood flow is completely blocked.



Non ST- Elevation Myocardial Infarction (Non-STEMI) Heart Attack

This is when the blood flow is partially blocked.

A cardiac arrest is when there are problems with the heart rhythm that change how the heart beats, called [arrhythmias](#). A heart attack can cause a cardiac arrest to happen. There are many different types of cardiac arrest.

5. The clinician may send the patient to the [Cardiac-Catheterization Lab, often called the “Cath Lab,”](#) for a common procedure called an angiogram when they are experiencing ACS . In the Cath lab a clinician can look inside the heart arteries for blockages and at how the patient’s heart is working at that moment to diagnose or treat the heart problem.

It’s helpful to understand the following about the Cath Lab:

- Both routine and emergency medical care can be given in the Cath Lab.
- Not all patients will need emergency care in the Cath Lab.
 - The patient may need other safe and effective treatments that cannot be given in the Cath Lab.

6. There are many ways to treat a heart attack. The treatment will depend on the type of heart problem the patient has and what caused that problem.

Listed below are some common treatments which include [medicines](#) and surgical [procedures](#). These treatments work to restore blood flow back to the heart, stop or prevent blood clots, or restore a normal heart rhythm.

COMMON MEDICATIONS

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THESE MEDICATIONS

Antithrombotic therapy	These are medicines that help prevent blood clots.
Anticoagulant	This is a type of antithrombotic medicine. These medicines are often called blood thinners and delay the body's ability to clot blood.
Antiplatelet	This is a type of antithrombotic therapy. These medicines keep blood platelets from sticking together that can cause a blood clot. Taking two types of these medicines is called dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT).
Statins	These medicines help lower cholesterol that can cause blockages in the arteries and reduce blood flow to the heart.
Beta-blockers	These medicines help treat heart rhythm problems and lower blood pressure.
ACE inhibitors	These medicines help lower blood pressure.

COMMON SURGICAL PROCEDURES

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THESE SURGICAL PROCEDURES

Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI)	This surgical procedure usually happens in the Cath Lab. The clinician opens a narrowed or blocked artery, often with a very small balloon which is called angioplasty, and may place a stent that will keep the artery from becoming blocked again.
Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery (CABG)	This procedure happens in the operating room instead of the Cath lab. During this procedure the clinician takes blood vessels from another part of the body to create new places for blood to flow. This lets the blood flow around the blocked or narrowed heart arteries and reach the heart.
Implantable Cardioverter-Defibrillator (ICD)	This surgical procedure usually happens in the Cath Lab but can also be done in the operating room.

During this surgical procedure, a device is implanted under the skin to track the patient's heart rate. It can detect an abnormal heart rhythm and send an electric shock to restore the rhythm.

7. Patients that receive [Cardiac Rehabilitation](#) after a heart attack or cardiac arrest have the best survival rates, strongest recovery, and less chance of returning to the hospital. This type of program has a team of clinicians that offer personal and monitored exercise training, health and nutrition education, psychological support, patient assessment and help taking medications in the most effective way.

Patients can be referred to cardiac rehabilitation while they are still recovering in the hospital or after they leave the hospital. There are some home-based options for patients that live too far away from a cardiac rehabilitation center. Patients should ask their clinician about how to receive these services.

In most cases, health insurance will pay for cardiac rehabilitation sessions, including Medicare. Patients can call their health insurance provider to ask for more information:

- Does their condition qualify them for these services?
- How many sessions will be covered?
- Where can they receive those services?

8. It's important to know that a [second heart attack](#) can be prevented with lifestyle changes. Learning about [Life's Essential 8](#) can help.

9. Focusing on overall wellbeing and mental health is important after experiencing a heart attack. Mental health support and [support networks](#) like those found here at the American Heart Association can help patients connect with others who have experienced this life changing event.



10. Learn how to help someone experiencing a heart attack. The first step is to act quickly and call 911. If someone is experiencing a cardiac arrest, CPR can help keep the blood flowing to the heart until medical care is available. [Watch this 60 second video](#) to learn how to do hands-only CPR.

There is also a machine that can help someone's heart beat after a cardiac arrest called an AED, [automated external defibrillator \(AED\)](#).



The AED gives voice prompts that say exactly what to do, so that whoever is using the machine does not have to worry about harming someone. Anyone can learn to use an AED.

Remember, the actions you take can lead to better heart health. This includes making healthy lifestyle choices like [eating healthy foods](#), staying [physically active](#), and avoiding [smoking](#). It's also important to understand when and how to take [prescribed medications](#), and to participate in cardiac rehabilitation for a stronger and healthier recovery if you have experienced a heart attack.

Finally, if you have chest pain or another symptom of ACS – act quickly and call 911.