# First Aid/ Heart Attack & Angina

# Introduction

## Heart attack (myocardial infarction) is when blood supply to the heart or part of the heart is cut off partially or completely, which leads to death of the heart muscle due to oxygen deprivation. Heart attacks usually occur after periods of rest or being recumbent, and only rarely occur after exercise (despite popular portrayal).

## Angina (angina pectoris) is a 'miniature heart attack' caused by a short term blockage. Angina almost always occurs after strenuous exercise or periods of high stress for the victim.

## The key differentiation between a heart attack and angina is that, in line with their typical onset modes, angina should start to relieve very shortly after resting (a few minutes), whereas a heart attack will not relieve with rest.

## Recognition

## • Chest pain: tightness in the chest or between the shoulder blades, often radiating into the left arm, and the jaw

## • Nausea or indigestion (especially in women)

## • Pale, clammy skin

## • Ashen grey skin

## • Impending sense of doom

## • Denial

# Treatment

## Assist the victim with medication, if they have any. People with angina will often have medication to control it; either as pills or a spray. The pills should never be touched with bare skin by the rescuer, as they may cause a migraine headache, and they are placed under the tongue for absorption. The spray should be taken on the bottom of the tongue. Only the victim should administer his medication. If he is unable to do so, then the rescuer should not do it for him. Helping to take the lid off or handing the bottle to the victim is fine, this should be documented if patient is transferred to other rescuers.

## • Call for an ambulance if they don't have medication, or if the medication doesn't help

## • Loosen tight clothing, especially around the neck

## • Assist the victim into a recumbent position, with the body leant back at about 45 degrees, with feet on the floor, but knees raised - this puts the patient in a 'W' position.

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## • If the patient is not on any anti-coagulant medicine such as heparin or warfarin, then assist them in taking one dose of aspirin if they decide to do so.

## • Continue monitoring vitals

## • Be prepared to do CPR should the victim go into cardiac arrest.