

Two Emergencies

Heart Attack

Heart attack is one of the major causes of death in the country. Exercise, good diet, and staying away from smoking and drugs will help you avoid danger to your own heart. However, you may have to help someone else who is having a heart attack.

The following are warning signals of heart attack:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest behind the breastbone. The feeling may spread to the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, and back. It may last 2 minutes or longer, and may come and go. It need not be severe. *Sharp, stabbing twinges of pain usually are not signals of heart attack.*
- Unusual sweating – for instance, perspiring even though a room is cool.
- Shortness of breath.
- A feeling of weakness.
- Nausea – stomach distress with an urge to vomit.

FIRST AID: Have the victim sit or lie down, whichever is more comfortable for him. Get him under medical care as soon as possible. Keep watching the victim. CPR may be necessary before medical help arrives.

Choking

During a meal, a man lurches from his chair and clutches his throat. His face turns red and he cannot breathe. You realize a piece of food is stuck in his throat and rush to his aid by performing the *Heimlich manoeuvre*

FIRST AID: Food caught in the throat is like a cork stuck in a plastic bottle. Nothing can get in, but if you squeeze the bottle just right, the cork will fly out.

Step behind the victim and put your arms around his midsection. Clasp your hands together with the knuckle of one thumb just above his navel. With a sharp, inward thrust, drive your hands up under the victim's rib cage. The food should pop loose. If it doesn't, repeat this *Heimlich manoeuvre* several more times.

If the choking victim is very large or pregnant, chest thrusts may be more effective. If the victim has lost consciousness, straddle the victim on the floor. Place one hand atop the other between the navel and rib cage. Thrust the heel of your hand sharply inward and upward eight times on the abdomen just below the breastbone. Probe the victim's mouth with a hooked finger. Remove any obstructions, and be ready to start rescue breathing. (Advanced first aid courses will teach you the techniques to use with infants.)

If you ever choke on food and cannot breathe, clutch your throat with your hand. That's the universal sign for choking, and it may bring someone to your aid. You can perform the Heimlich manoeuvre on yourself by pulling your fist into your upper abdomen. Or you can bend over the back of a chair and force it against your belly.