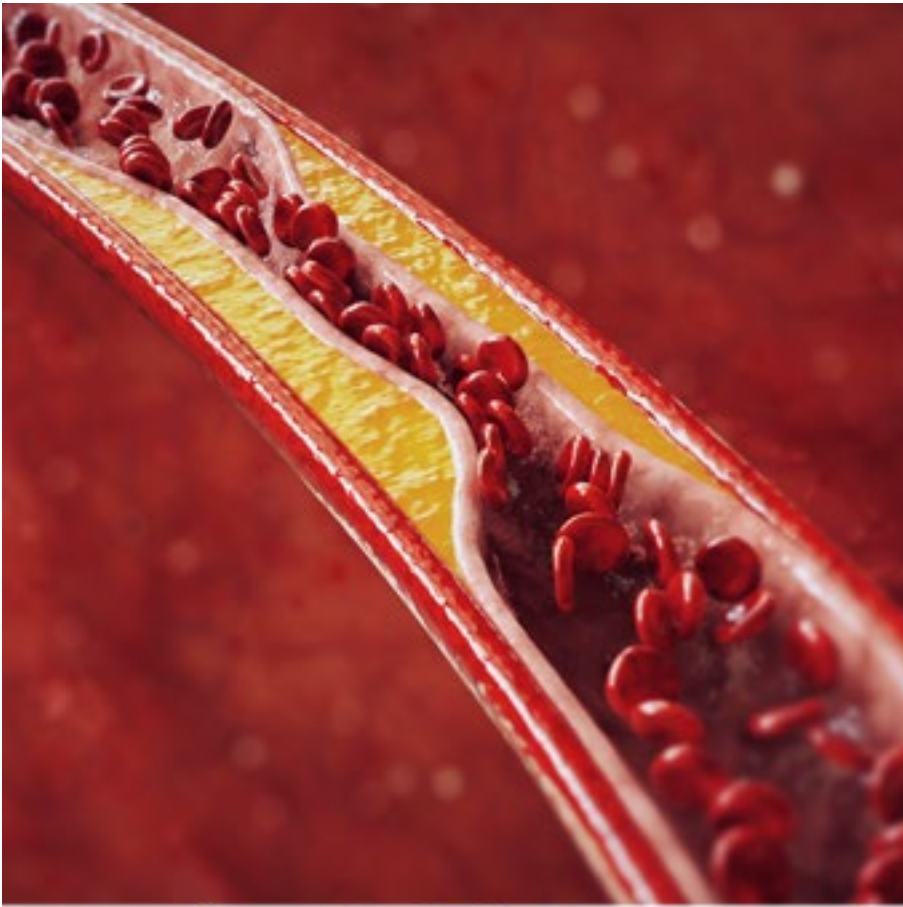




Heart Attack (Myocardial Infarction; MI)



Overview

This is a blockage in one of your coronary arteries. They're the vessels carrying blood to your heart's tissue. A heart attack can strike suddenly, often without any warning.

Causes

What causes a heart attack? It happens when a coronary artery becomes blocked. It's often linked to atherosclerosis, a buildup of plaque in your arteries. This can narrow and harden your coronary arteries, allowing a blood clot to get stuck. A heart attack can also be caused by a spasm of a coronary artery, which blocks blood flow. When blood flow is blocked, heart tissue loses its supply of oxygen and nutrients. Cells begin to die.

Symptoms

What does a heart attack feel like? Well, we tend to think of it as a painful pressing or squeezing feeling in your chest. You can also have pain in your shoulder, arm or back. Your neck or jaw may hurt. You may have nausea and fatigue, along with sweating and light-headedness.

Symptoms in women

But symptoms can be different for women. Many women don't feel chest pain. Instead, they may have shortness of breath, weakness and fatigue. Women who expect to feel chest pain during a heart attack but don't may not realize what's happening.

Treatment

A heart attack is a medical emergency. Anyone having a heart attack needs immediate medical attention. To limit damage to the heart, blood flow needs to be restored quickly. Your doctor will create a care plan that's right for you.