

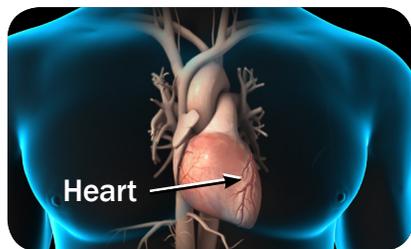
About Your Heart Attack

www.healthjourneysupport.com/cardiology/heart-attack

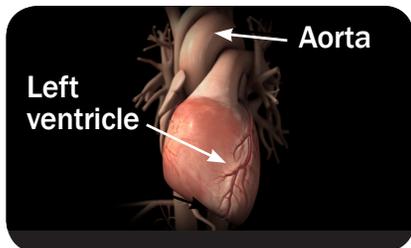
If you have recently been treated for a **heart attack**, a condition caused by a blockage of blood flow to your heart muscle, this handout will help you understand the condition and its treatment.

How Your Heart Works

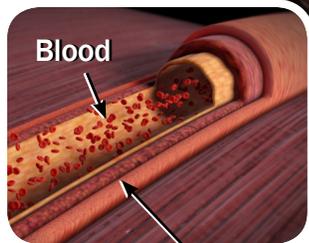
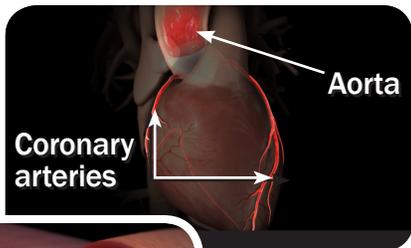
Your heart is a muscular organ that pumps blood containing the oxygen and nutrients your body needs.



The main pumping chamber of your heart is the left ventricle. When your left ventricle contracts, it sends oxygen-rich blood to your body through a large artery called the aorta.



Connected to your aorta are small arteries, called coronary arteries. Blood flows from your aorta through the coronary arteries to supply your heart muscle with oxygen and nutrients.



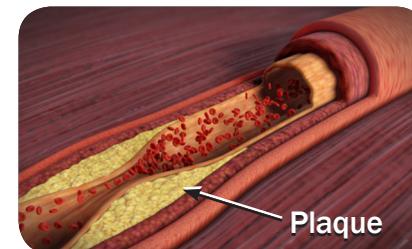
Normal blood flow through a coronary artery

Artery

When You Have a Heart Attack

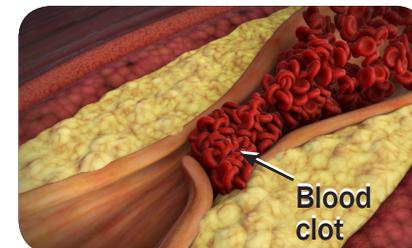
During your heart attack, blood flow through one of your coronary arteries may have been severely reduced or completely blocked.

Your reduced blood flow may have been caused by a buildup of a fatty substance, called plaque, in your coronary arteries.



Plaque

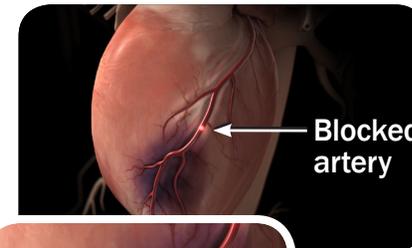
If this plaque became disrupted, a blood clot might form and severely worsen the narrowing, or lead to a sudden complete blockage, stopping blood flow down the artery.



Blood clot

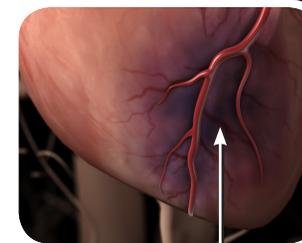
A Blocked Coronary Artery

A blockage in your coronary arteries prevented the oxygen and nutrients in your blood from reaching the part of your heart supplied by the artery.



Blocked artery

As a result, heart muscle in that area started to die. Damage to part of your heart muscle is called a heart attack. It's also known as a myocardial infarction, or MI.



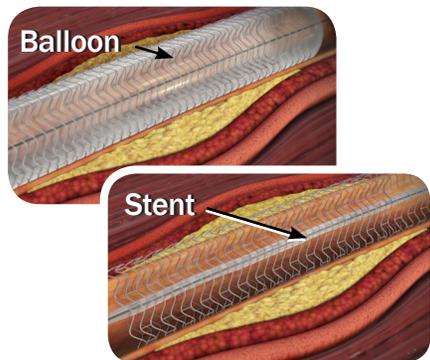
Dead heart muscle

About Your Heart Attack

Understanding Your Procedure

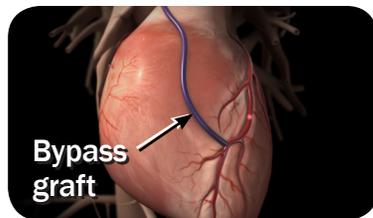
Your heart doctor may have recommended a procedure to help open the blockage and improve blood flow to the damaged area. The procedure you had may have been a:

- **Coronary angioplasty**, in which a balloon-tipped catheter inflates inside your blocked coronary artery to open it



The procedure may have involved placing a stent to help prop the artery open. This is usually a thin metal mesh that acts as a scaffold

- **Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)**, a surgical procedure in which the blocked areas of the coronary arteries are bypassed with veins or other arteries from the body



Medications

Before you left the hospital, your healthcare provider most likely prescribed several medications.

The information in this handout has been created and peer reviewed by graduate-level medical illustrators, followed by reviews from medical subject experts, either physicians or PhDs on the Nucleus Medical Review Board, to ensure medical accuracy and audience level appropriateness.

The handout is intended to supplement the information you receive from your health care provider and should never be considered personal medical advice. Always contact your health care provider with health questions and concerns.

According to guidelines, your medication may include the following:

- **Oral antiplatelets:** Help prevent platelets from sticking together and forming new blood clots
- **Beta-blockers:** Help lower your heart rate and blood pressure
- **Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs), and calcium channel blockers:** Work to lower your blood pressure if needed
- **Statins,** along with a low-fat diet: Help to lower your cholesterol. The drugs work by reducing the amount of cholesterol made in your liver

It is important to stay on your medications as your physician prescribed even if you are feeling better.



Do not go off your medication unless the healthcare professional that prescribed them tells you to.

If you experience any side effects from your medication, or have other concerns, contact your healthcare provider right away.