



Cardiac Arrest

How does your heart work?

Your heart is a muscular pump circulating blood to every part of your body. The heart has a left and right side and requires both blood and oxygen to work.

The right side of the heart collects blood low in oxygen from the body and pumps it to the lungs, where it picks up oxygen and releases carbon dioxide.

The left side of the heart then collects blood rich in oxygen coming from the lungs and pumps it to the body via the aorta and a series of arteries.

Cardiac Arrest

Cardiac arrest is when your heart suddenly stops pumping blood around your body. This leads to your brain being starved of oxygen. This causes you to fall unconscious and stop breathing.

Signs and Symptoms

- They are not breathing, or they aren't breathing normally - not breathing normally may mean they're making gasping noises.
- Unconsciousness – they do not respond to any stimulation, such as being touched or spoken to.
- No pulse.

If you think someone has gone into cardiac arrest phone 999 and immediately start CPR. CPR will keep the blood, containing oxygen, flowing around the patient's body until an ambulance arrives. If one is available, **use a defibrillator** which will then deliver a controlled electric shock to try and get the heart beating normally again.



Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Causes of Cardiac Arrest

A common cause of a cardiac arrest is a life-threatening abnormal heart rhythm called ventricular fibrillation (VF). VF happens when the electrical activity of the heart becomes so chaotic that the heart stops pumping, instead, it quivers or 'fibrillates'. Other causes of cardiac arrest related to the heart are:

- **a heart attack (caused by coronary heart disease)**
- **abnormality of heart muscle (Cardiomyopathy)**
- **inherited heart conditions**
- **congenital heart disease**
- **heart valve disease**
- **myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle)**

How can I prevent cardiac arrest?

Not all cases of cardiac arrest can be prevented but to reduce your risk you can make changes to your lifestyle. If you have had a cardiac arrest, it is still important to follow a healthy lifestyle and consult your GP for advice.

1. Eat a balanced diet



2. Stop smoking



3. Moderate your alcohol intake



4. Keep physically active



Further Support

Living with a chest, heart or stroke condition can be challenging, not just for the person affected but for the wider family and carers as well. Our Care Services team at NICHS offers a range of information, support and activities to help people live with their condition. These services are free and can enable people to feel more in control, improve their confidence and know where else to go to for help. For more information, please visit our website www.nichs.org.uk

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