

First Responders

by Doug Brown

We still need volunteer First Responders for Tappen, Sunnyside, White Lake, Eagle Bay, Blind Bay, Sorrento and Notch Hill as well as Volunteer Dispatchers. Full training is provided. Please contact either of the two responders below for more information.

Chest Pain Overview

If you are having severe pain, crushing, squeezing, or pressure in your chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or if the pain moves into your neck, left shoulder, arm, or jaw, go immediately to a hospital emergency department. Do not drive yourself. Call 911 for emergency transport.

Chest pain is one of the most frightening symptoms a person can have. It is sometimes difficult even for a doctor or other medical professional to tell what is causing chest pain and whether it is life-threatening.

Any part of the chest can be the cause of the pain including the heart, lungs, esophagus, muscle, bone, and skin.

Because of the complex nerve distribution in the body, chest pain may actually originate from another part of the body.

The stomach or other organs in the belly (abdomen), for example, can cause chest pain.

Potentially life-threatening causes of chest pain are as follows:

Heart attack (acute myocardial infarction): A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the arteries that supply the heart (coronary arteries) becomes blocked. With decreased blood flow, the muscle of the heart does not receive enough oxygen. This can cause damage, deterioration, and death of the heart muscle.

Angina: Angina is chest pain related to an imbalance between the oxygen demand of the heart and the amount of oxygen delivered via the blood. It is caused by blockage or narrowing of the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart. Angina is different from a heart attack in that the arteries are not completely blocked, and it causes little or no permanent damage to the heart. "Stable" angina occurs repetitively and predictably while exercising and goes away with rest. "Unstable" angina results in unusual and unpredictable pain not relieved totally by rest, or pain that actually occurs at rest.

Aortic dissection: The aorta is the main artery that supplies blood to the vital organs of the body, such as the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and intestines. Dissection means a tear in the inner lining of the aorta. This can cause massive internal bleeding and interrupt blood flow to the vital organs.

Pulmonary embolism: A pulmonary embolus is a blood clot in one of the major blood vessels that supplies the lungs. It is a potentially life-threatening cause of chest pain but is not associated with the heart.

Spontaneous pneumothorax: Often called a collapsed lung, this condition occurs when air enters the space between the chest wall and the lung tissue. Normally, negative pressure in the chest cavity allows the lungs to expand. When a spontaneous pneumothorax occurs, air enters the chest cavity. When the pressure balance is lost, the lung is unable to re-expand. This cuts off the normal oxygen supply in the body.

Perforated viscus: A perforated viscus is a hole or tear in the wall of any area of the gastrointestinal tract. This allows air to enter the abdominal cavity, which irritates the diaphragm, and can cause chest pain.

Cocaine-induced chest pain: Cocaine causes the blood vessels in the body to constrict. This can decrease blood flow to the heart, causing chest pain. Cocaine also accelerates the progression of atherosclerosis, a risk factor for a heart attack.

Please, if you can volunteer as a first responder or dispatcher call one of the numbers below for an explanation of what is required. New course starting at the end of February. For more information call Sherri at 250.675.2420 or Doug at 250.675.3920