You are in the ideal position to educate patients and their families

- The Heart Foundation has developed a ‘Will you recognise your heart attack?’ action plan and fact sheet that should be given to all people with CHD.
- These materials, along with education and counselling, should be given to patients before discharge from hospital following any coronary event, or during cardiac rehabilitation.
- Patient education requires a team approach. A variety of health professionals should be involved, including coronary care nurses, medical and cardiac rehabilitation nurses, pharmacists and physiotherapists.

Why some patients delay calling Triple Zero (000)

Some patients:

- tend to ignore their warning signs or wait for them to go away
- don’t recognise their symptoms as warning signs of heart attack
- think their symptoms need to be severe to call an ambulance
- don’t want to bother the ambulance service or don’t want other people to worry about them
- think it’s better to call their GP
- worry about the cost of an ambulance.

Important notes

- People with coronary heart disease (CHD) are at greater risk of heart attack than the general population.
- Mortality and morbidity associated with heart attacks in people with CHD could be substantially reduced if they recognise and act upon the warning signs quickly.
- More than 50% of heart attack deaths occur before the person reaches hospital.

Research conducted by the Heart Foundation confirms that many people, including people with CHD, wait too long before seeking treatment for a heart attack. Furthermore, just under 50% of people arrive at hospital emergency departments by ambulance.

You can help

Use the Will you recognise your heart attack? fact sheet and action plan to make sure that all people with CHD and their families know the warning signs of heart attack, and what to do and why it’s important to act quickly if they experience them.
Your role in reducing delays in patient response to warning signs of heart attack

- Give all of your patients with CHD a ‘Will you recognise your heart attack?’ action plan and fact sheet and encourage them to keep them at home and at work.
- Communicate the following key messages:
  - the different warning signs of heart attack
  - the potential to experience different warning signs in a future cardiac event
  - their risk of having a heart attack is now higher than the general population
  - how and when to use short-acting nitrate medicine (if appropriate)
  - why it’s important to act quickly and call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance
  - why it’s important to get early treatment to reduce heart muscle damage and save lives
  - it’s better to act quickly even if you’re not sure that you’re having a heart attack.
- Where possible, include your patient’s immediate family when communicating the key messages.
- Enlist the family’s support to reinforce the messages and acknowledge that the patient may need help to act quickly.

Other available Heart Foundation tools and resources

- There are a number of resources available on the Heart Foundation website to help you to educate your patients, including:
  - a checklist of important information to discuss with patients and their families about the warning signs of heart attack and what to do if they experience them
  - DVD about the warning signs of heart attack.