

BITESIZED
TEACHING



Tachycardia

Tachycardia

Tachycardia means a fast heart rate (as opposed to bradycardia, which is a slow one). People's resting heart rates vary, but tachycardia in a healthy adult would be defined as over 100 beats per minute. There are many reasons why a patient's heart rate may be abnormal, and it is important to carefully record, report and review any evidence.



Signs and Symptoms

- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Breathlessness
- Fatigue



Causes

Tachycardia tends to be triggered by a disruption to electrical activity in the heart, causing extra beats. This usually derives from the following:

- Medications can cause tachycardia, especially antipsychotics such as Clozapine
- Drinking large amounts of caffeine and alcohol
- Tiredness, stress or emotional upset
- Damage to heart from heart disease
- Abnormal electrical pathways in the heart
- Anaemia
- Exercise
- Smoking
- Fever
- Drug use
- Overactive Thyroid
- Electrolyte imbalance



Emergency

- Heart rate above 150 bpm
- Chest pain
- Vomiting blood
- High or low temperature
- Collapse



Ward Based Management

- Call a doctor
- Take a manual reading of the pulse. Observe for any unusual patterns, such as the pulse initially speeding up then slowing down or irregularity.
- Be aware of patient's physical health history and whether they have been tachycardic before
- Record other physical observations
- Conduct an ECG
- If worried about the patient, organise an immediate medical review