Assessment of Acute Chest Pain

Chest Pain has a wide range of causes and diagnosis (some very serious, some not significant)

- Heart disease (heart attack)
- Lungs (e.g. pneumonia)
- Gastrointestinal (e.g. stomach ulcer)
- Chest wall (e.g. rib fracture)
- Psychogenic (e.g. panic attack)

Red Flag – Emergency IF CHEST PAIN AND one or more of these symptoms:

- Heart too fast or too slow
- High blood pressure
- Breathless at rest
- Pale, sweaty or clammy
- Distressed
- Bluish colour on lips or fingernails (cyanosis)
- Fluid accumulation in the lungs causing difficulty breathing

Call Ambulance

Examination and Assessment

Cardiac Causes of Chest Pain

Acute Coronary Syndrome

Stable Angina

Pericarditis (inflammation of the heart)

Aortic Dissection (a tear in the major blood vessel from the heart) – this is a rare condition

Non-Cardiac Causes of Chest Pain

Lungs

- Pulmonary embolism (blockage of the blood vessels)
- Pleurisy (inflammation of the lining around the lungs)
- Pneuemothorax (too much air in the wall around the lungs)

Gastrointestinal

- Conditions affecting the gullet (oesophagus)
- Gastric reflux

Musculoskeletal

- Usually a localised sharp pain
- Inflammation around the ribs
- Rib fracture

Primary health providers, hospital doctor's, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals follow the clinical version of these pathways which are based on the best available clinical evidence.