



British Heart
Foundation

My dad's heart attack

A book for children whose family
member has had a heart attack.



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**


bhf.org.uk



The British Heart Foundation have a wide range of books, posters, leaflets and lesson plans for children, their families and their schools.

Go to bhf.org.uk/schools to find out more.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, every minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives. Visit bhf.org.uk/donate



This book is for children who have a family member who had a heart attack.

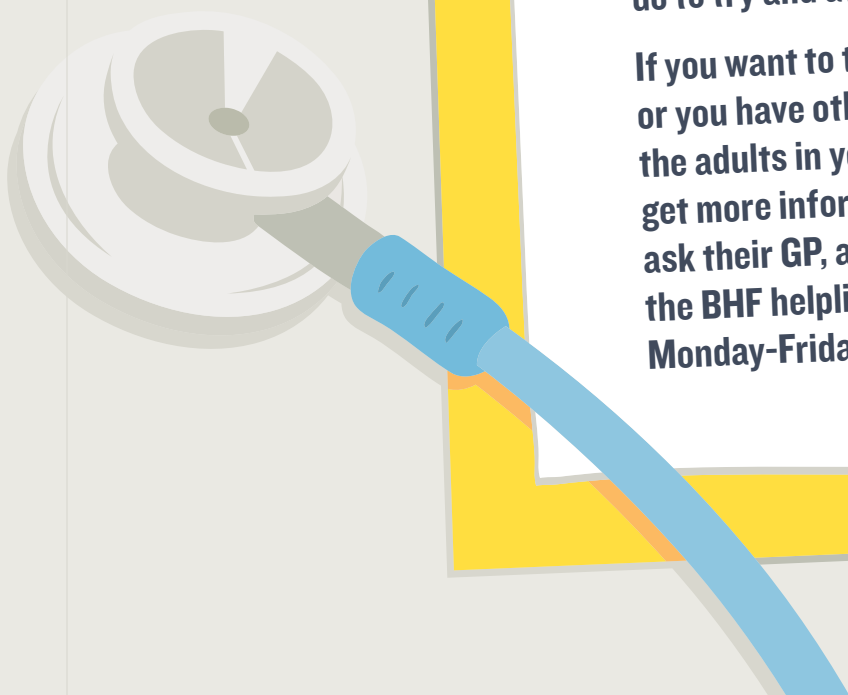
There are lots of different types of heart disease: This book talks about coronary (say cor-on-air-ree) heart disease.

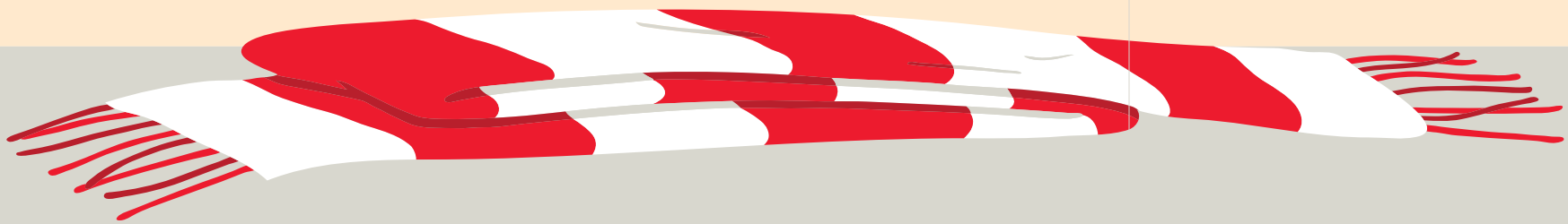
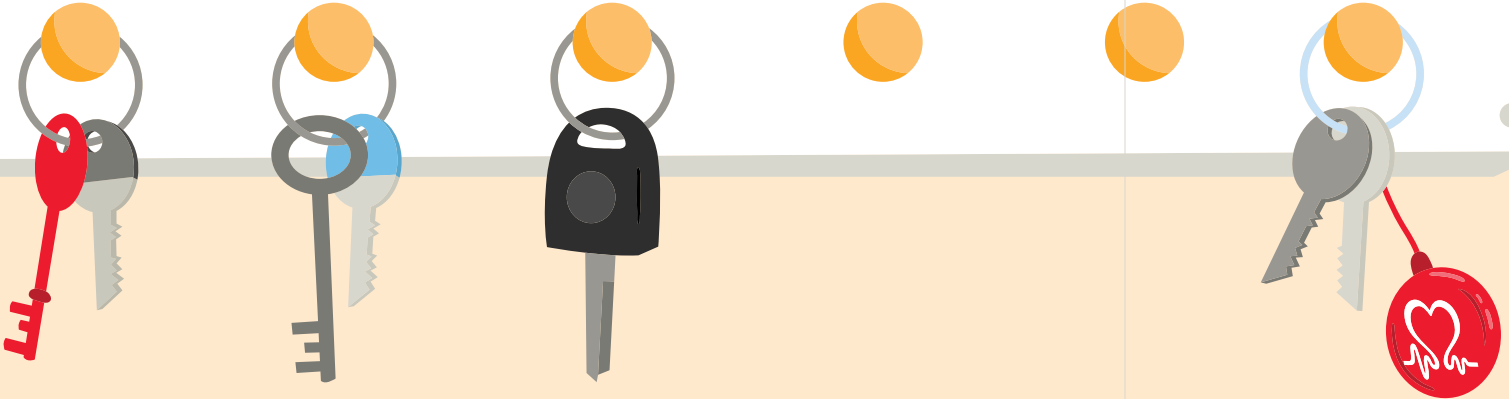
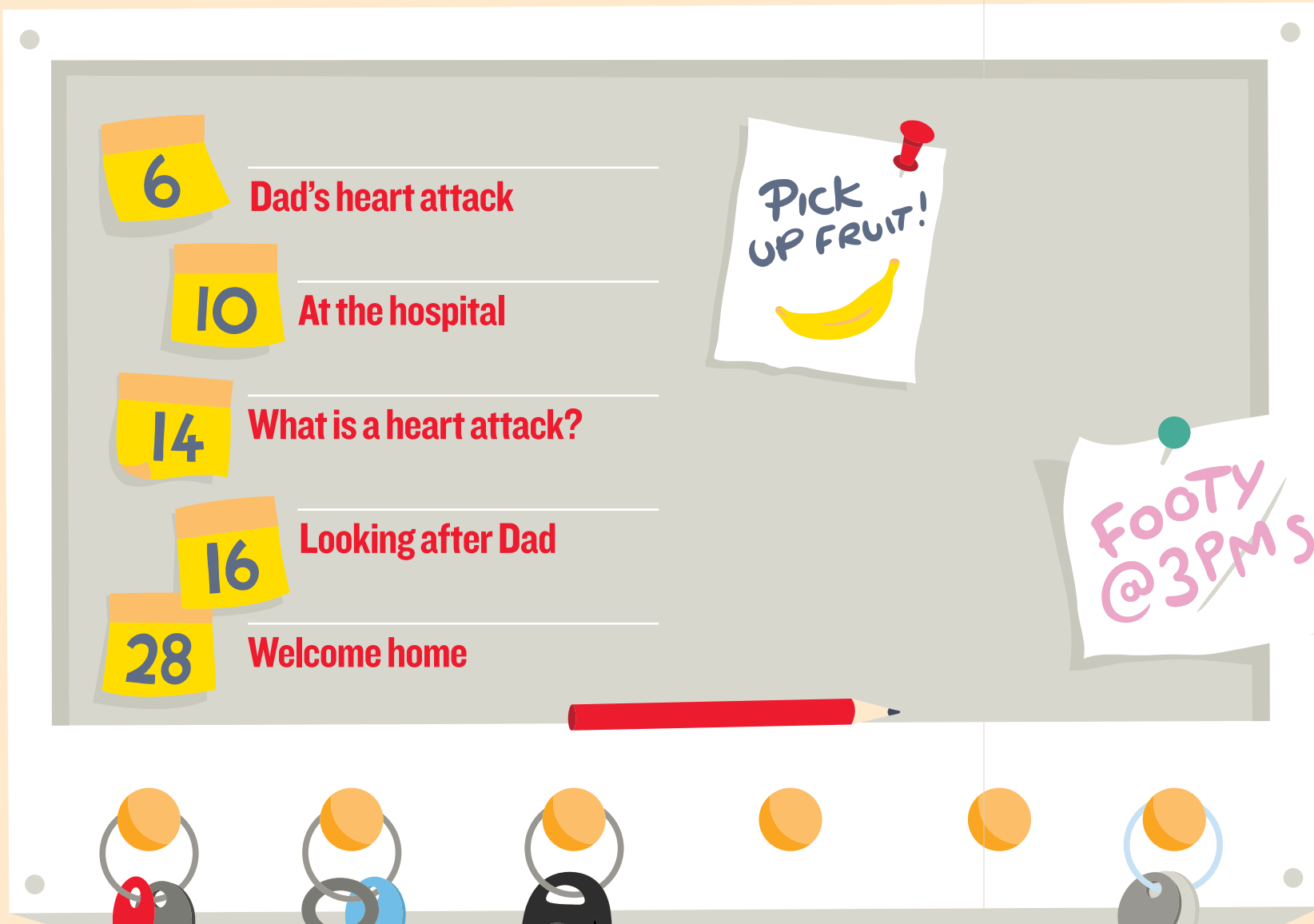
Coronary heart disease is the kind of heart disease that can cause heart attacks and cardiac arrest. The person is not born with this disease, it's something that develops over time.

This book is about someone whose dad has a heart attack, but women can have heart attacks too.

The story will help you understand what a heart attack is, why it happens, how doctors treat heart attacks and things families can do to try and avoid heart attacks in the future.

If you want to talk about anything in this book, or you have other questions, ask to speak to the adults in your family. If they would like to get more information or support, tell them to ask their GP, a nurse at the hospital or phone the BHF helpline between 9am and 5pm, Monday-Friday on 0300 330 3311





Megan and her family

That's me, sitting on the sofa with my dad and mum. My brother is called Alfie. That's him on the beanbag with Monkey the cat. (We can't remember why the cat's called Monkey. It's a strange name for a cat, but that's what he's called.)





Heart attack – what to look out for

- pain in the chest
- pain or a numb feeling in either arm, neck, back or jaw
- a feeling of not being able to breathe properly
- feeling very sick and being very sweaty

If you think an adult is having a heart attack

- call 999 straight away
- help the person sit comfortably and stay with them
- don't give them anything to eat or drink

Dad's heart attack

It was a pretty normal afternoon. We were around the telly watching our team play football. Dad said he suddenly felt really unwell. His chest felt funny – all tight. He had pins and needles in his arm too.

Mum said that if anyone says they have pain or tightness in their chest, you should call an ambulance right away.

She dialled 999 and said 'Ambulance please. I think my husband is having a heart attack.'

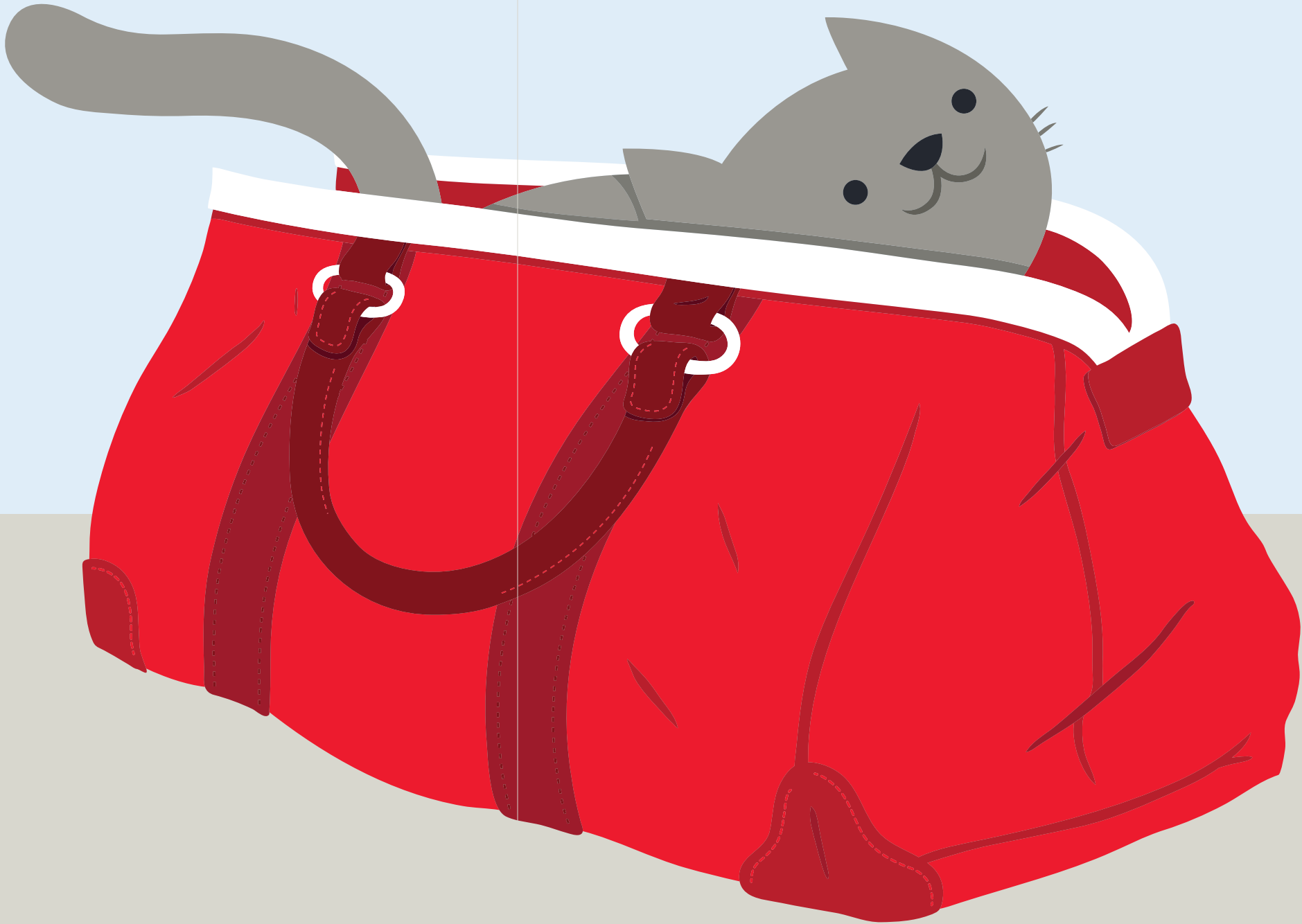


Mum off to hospital

After Dad had gone in the ambulance, Mum called Nana to come over and look after us so she could go to hospital and be with Dad.

We didn't know how to feel. Mum seemed upset and we were worried about Dad, but Nana kept saying that everything was going to be alright.



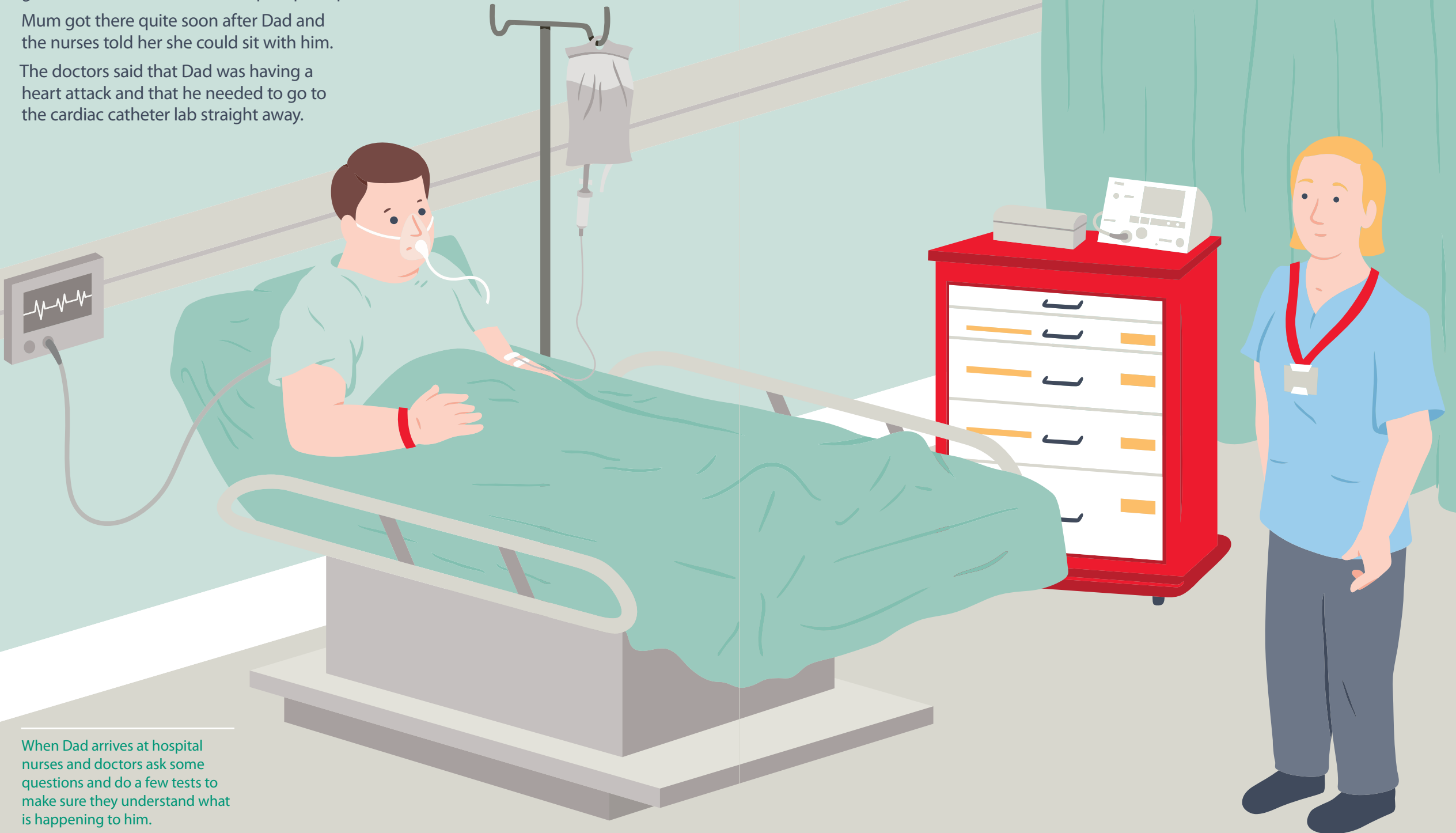


Dad arrives at hospital

While we were at home with Nana, Dad was arriving at the hospital. The ambulance team told them he was having a heart attack so they gave him some medicine to help stop the pain.

Mum got there quite soon after Dad and the nurses told her she could sit with him.

The doctors said that Dad was having a heart attack and that he needed to go to the cardiac catheter lab straight away.



When Dad arrives at hospital nurses and doctors ask some questions and do a few tests to make sure they understand what is happening to him.

What is a heart attack?

A heart attack is when your heart muscle isn't getting enough oxygen. Every part of your body needs oxygen to work properly.

Normally, when you breathe in, your lungs fill with air. That air has oxygen in it.

The oxygen goes into your blood and gets pumped through lots of tubes to help all the parts of your body work. It goes to the heart itself to help that work too.

But when a person has coronary (say cor-in-air-ree) heart disease, the little tubes that go to your heart get narrow so the blood can't pass through properly. They get narrow because they get clogged up with a kind of fatty stuff.

The fatty stuff can break off and clog up other bits of the tube. The blood can't get through to the heart muscle properly, so it doesn't get enough oxygen.

When this happens to a person it's called a heart attack.

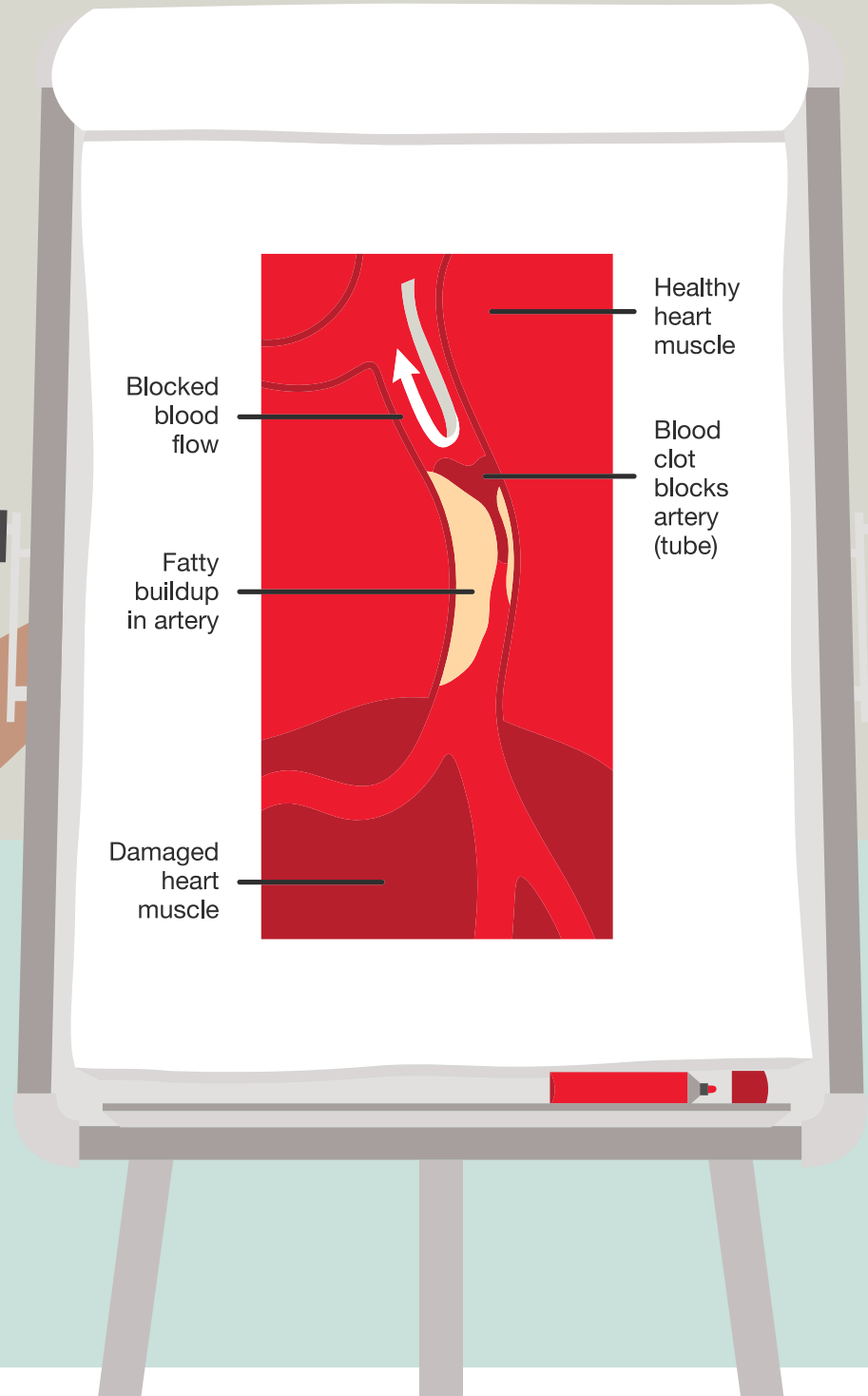
Heart attack and cardiac arrest

A heart attack and cardiac arrest are not the same thing.

A heart attack is when part of the heart muscle is not getting enough blood. This is what has happened to Megan's Dad.

A cardiac arrest is different. It's when the heart suddenly stops working. People whose heart has stopped working need someone to do CPR – a kind of pushing on their chest. This keeps their heart pumping until an ambulance arrives.

Sometimes a heart attack can cause a cardiac arrest so it's important to call an ambulance straight away.



The team

Cardiac Physiologist

This is someone who knows a lot about hearts.

Doctor

A doctor works out what is happening in a person's body and how to make them better.

Doctor

This doctor is wearing scrubs. Scrubs are special clothes that some people who work in some parts of the hospital wear.

Radiographer

A radiographer does x-rays and scans so they can see what is going on inside the body.

Nurse

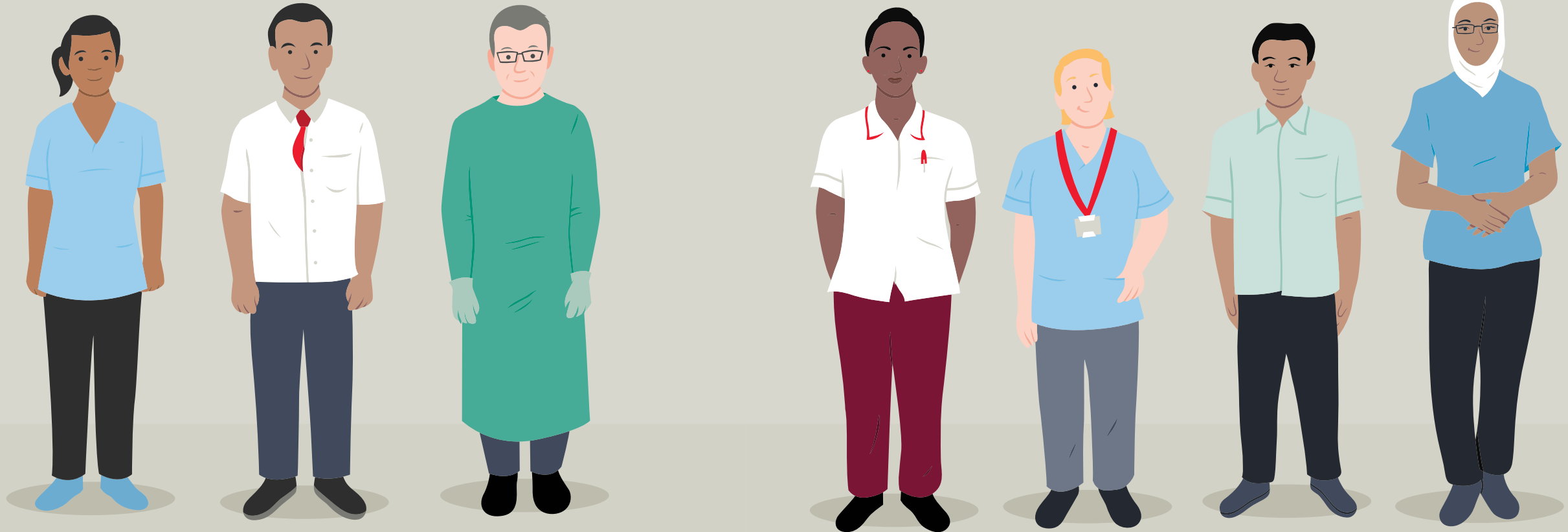
A nurse takes care of patients.

Nurse

This nurse is wearing scrubs. Scrubs are special clothes that some people who work in some parts of the hospital wear.

Doctor

When someone goes into hospital they can have more than one doctor looking after them.



The angiogram

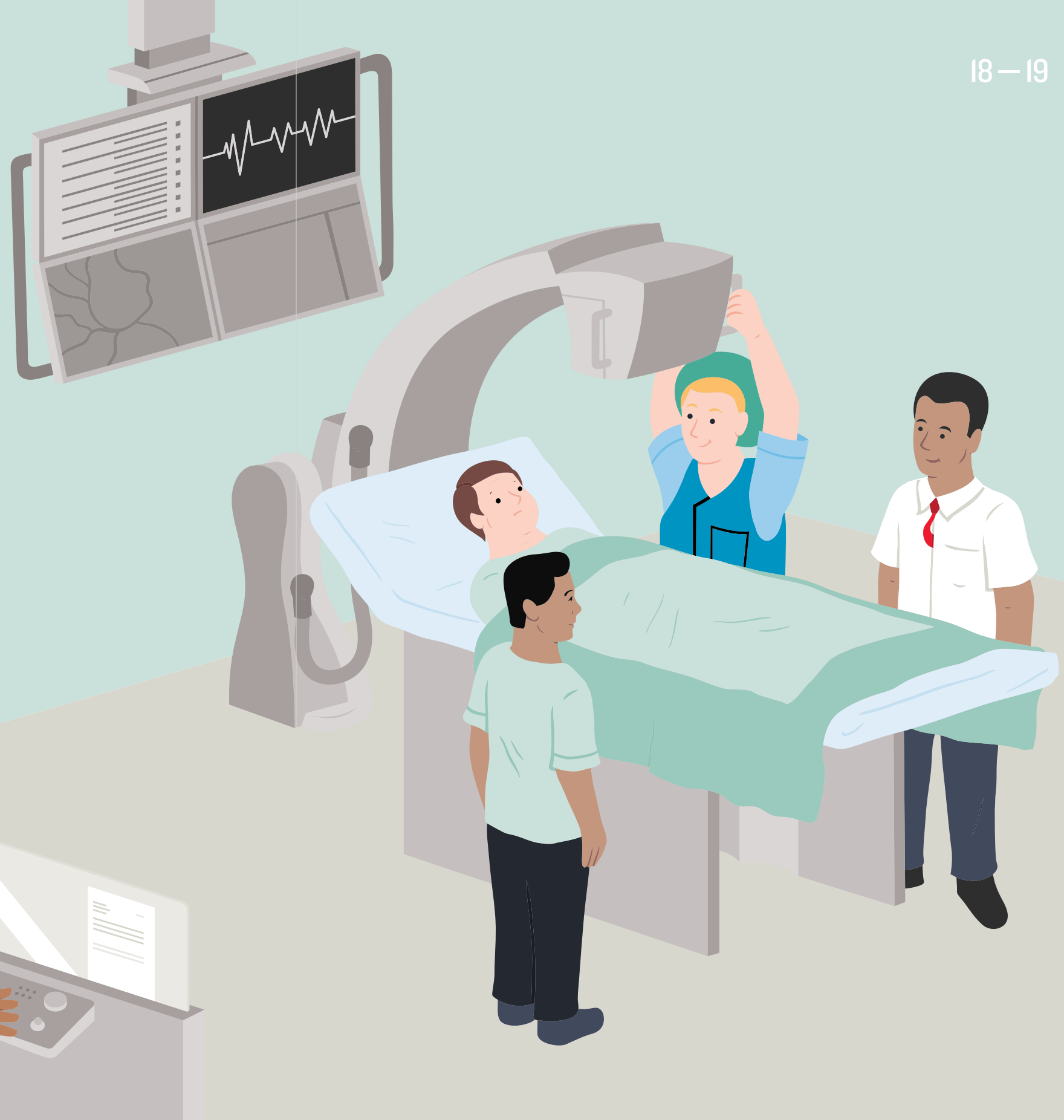
Mum waited outside while Dad went in the cardiac catheter lab. The doctor said that Dad needed an angiogram (say an-jee-o-gram).

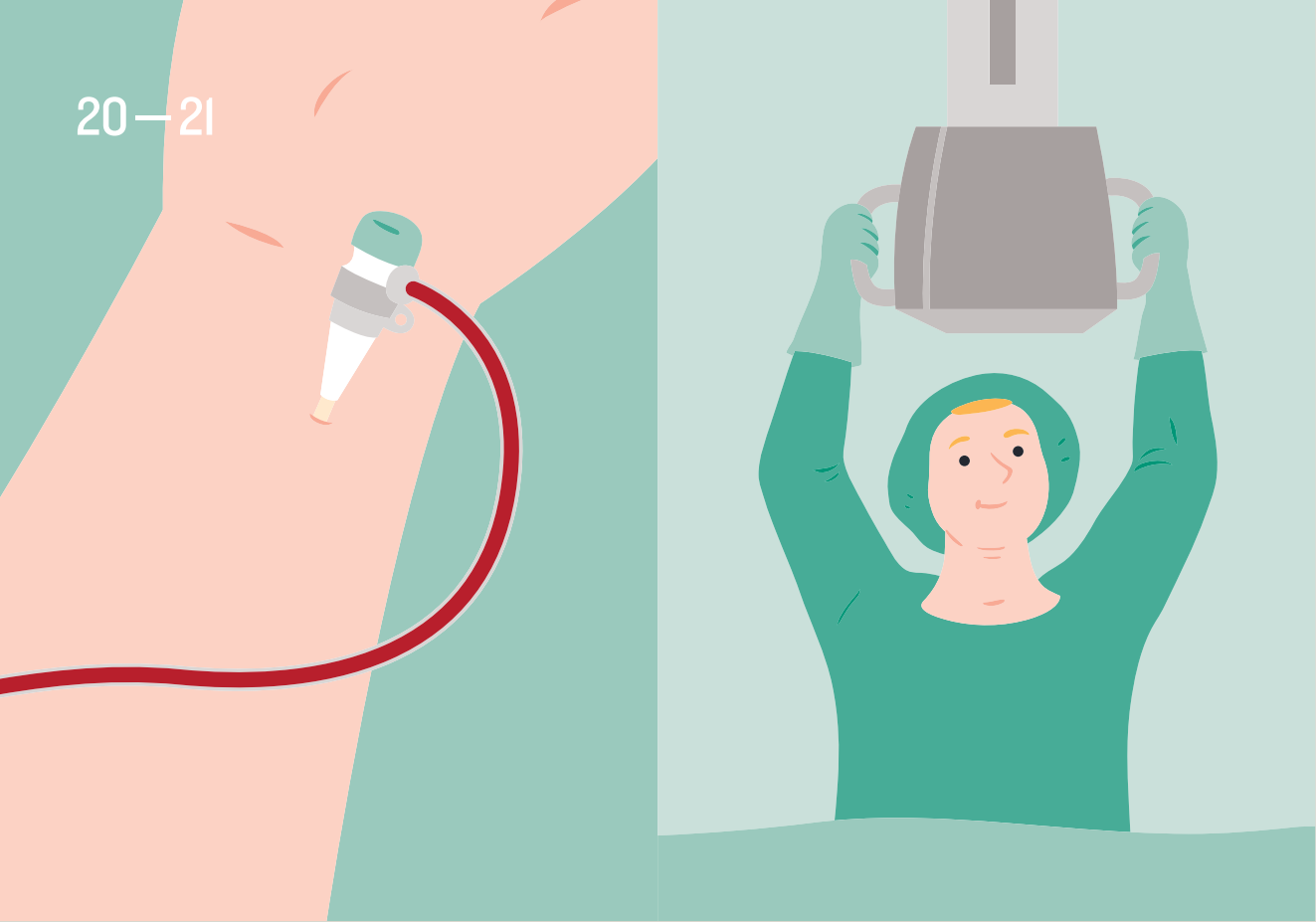
An angiogram is a way to find out which bits of tube around the heart are blocked. They put a little straw into one of Dad's arteries (the tubes that go around the body) and put dye through it into him. This lets the doctors see how blood is moving through his heart and where it is getting blocked when they look at their screen.

It takes about half an hour. It didn't hurt, because the doctors gave Dad special medicine. It just felt a bit strange.

What is a cath lab?

Cath lab is short for cardiac catheter laboratory. Cardiac means it's to do with your heart. A catheter is a little tube they put into your arteries. A laboratory is a place where they do tests to understand why someone is feeling unwell and how to make them feel better.





Dad's procedure

The angiogram showed that a tube around Dad's heart had become too narrow. The doctors said that a stent – a small bit of metal netting – needed to be put into the tube that takes blood to his heart to allow the blood to flow smoothly again.

They put the stent in by doing something called an angioplasty (say an-gee-o-plas-tee).

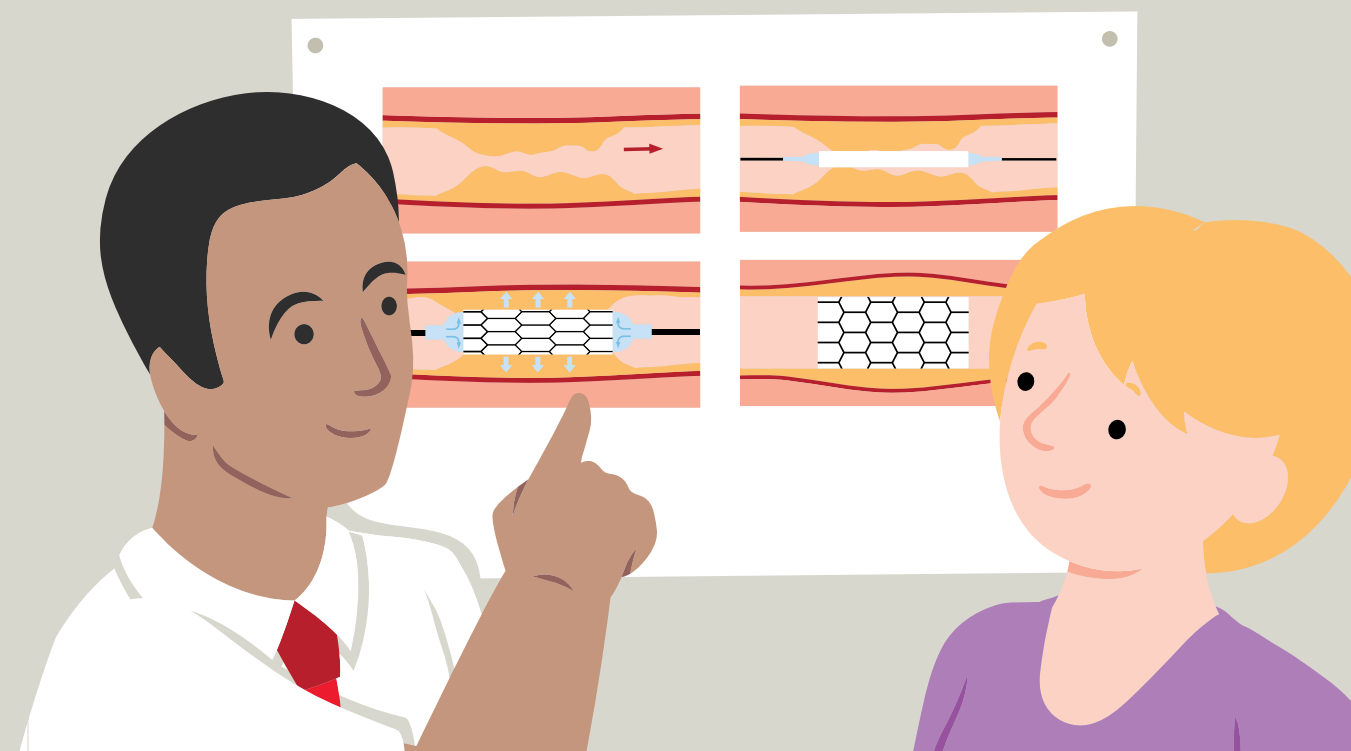
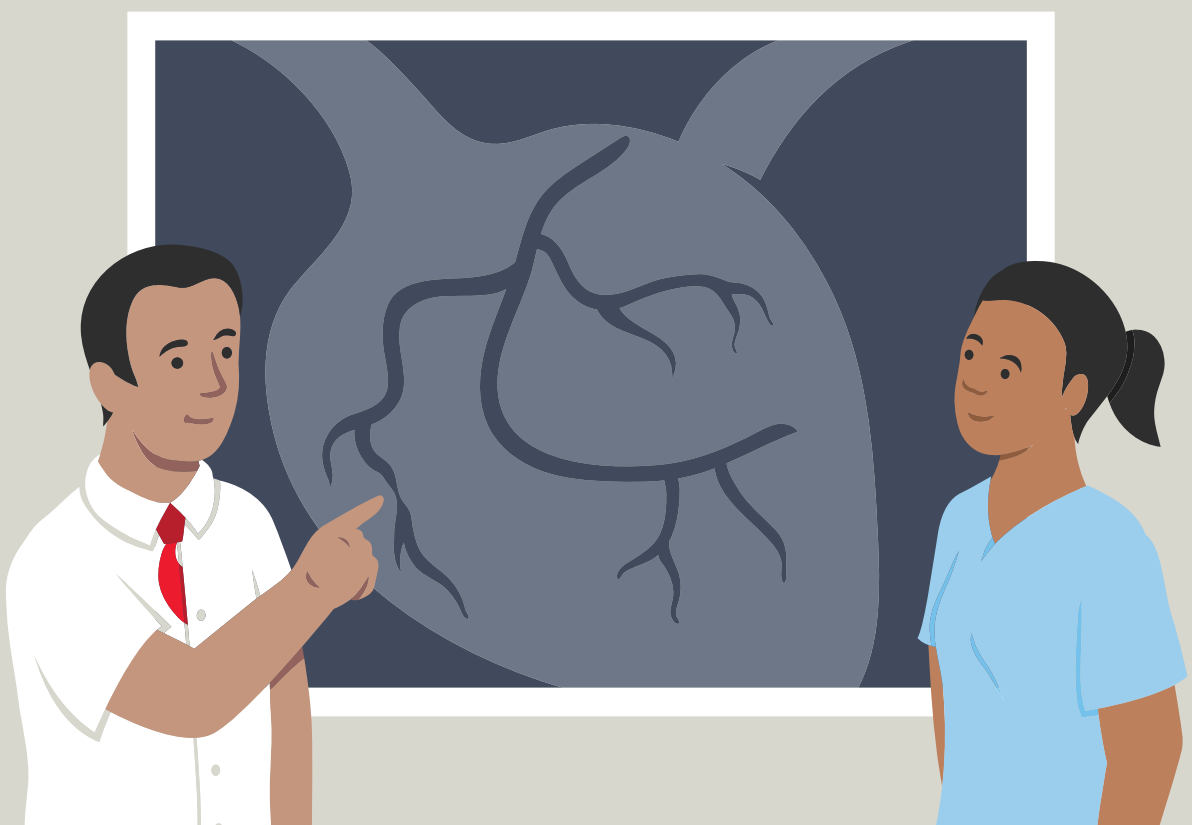
Angioplasty is when doctors put a tiny flat balloon into the tubes going to the heart, then blow it up to squash all the fatty stuff to the sides. Then sometimes they need to put a stent in to make sure that part of the tube doesn't get blocked again.

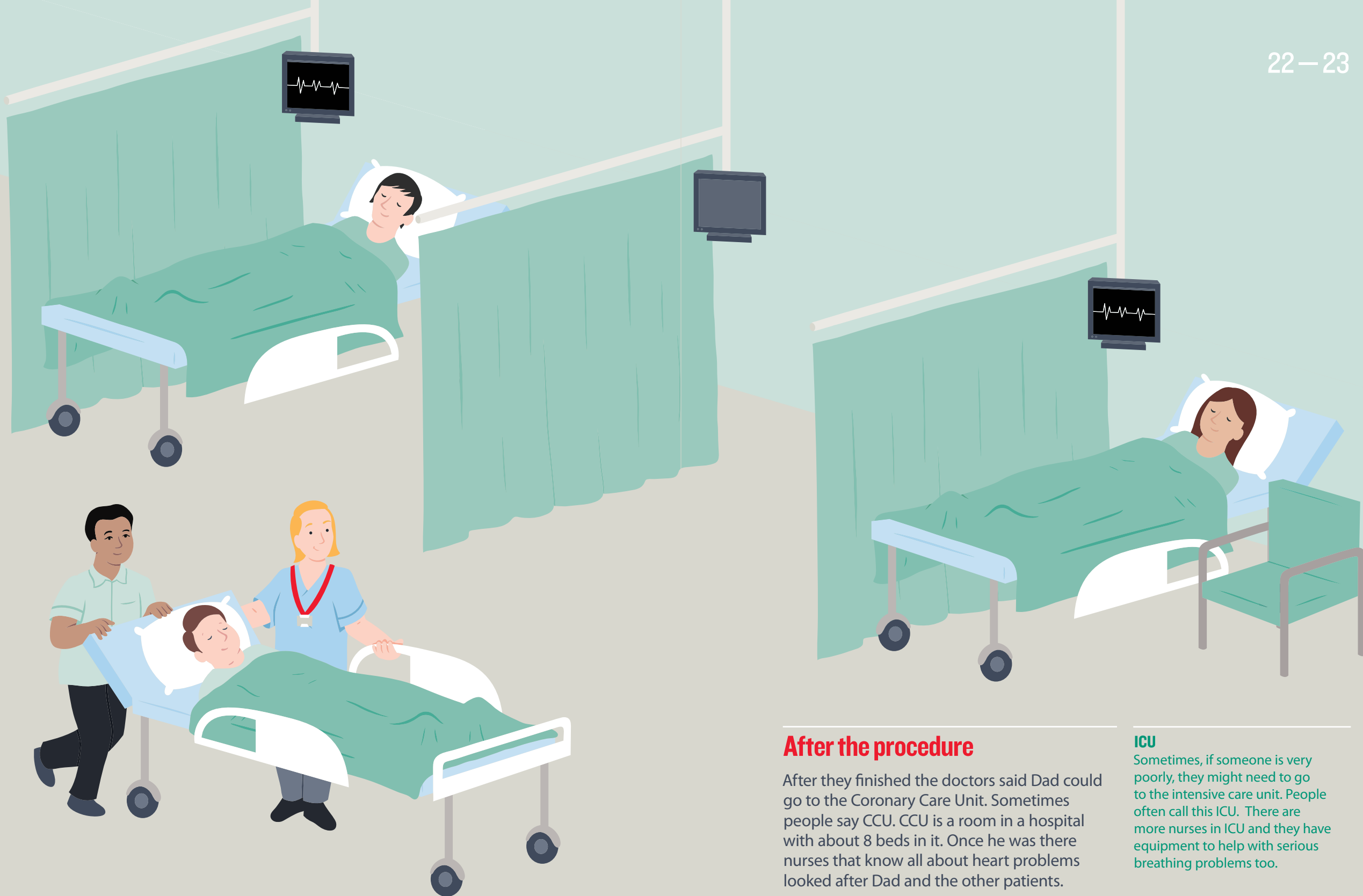
This all took about an hour and the doctors gave Dad a special medicine so it didn't hurt.

They said that the stent could stay in forever, and should help the blood flow around his heart more easily from now on.

Stents

Sometimes people worry that having lots of stents means their heart attack was worse than if they'd just had one. But this is not true. Sometimes doctors will use a few short stents instead of one long one. Having more doesn't mean the problem was bigger.





After the procedure

After they finished the doctors said Dad could go to the Coronary Care Unit. Sometimes people say CCU. CCU is a room in a hospital with about 8 beds in it. Once he was there nurses that know all about heart problems looked after Dad and the other patients.

When Dad got there he was really tired so he had a long sleep.

ICU

Sometimes, if someone is very poorly, they might need to go to the intensive care unit. People often call this ICU. There are more nurses in ICU and they have equipment to help with serious breathing problems too.

Mum comes home

When Mum came home from hospital she told us all about everything that had happened to Dad. She said that he was being looked after really well, and that he would be in hospital for a few days.

Mum said that I could go with her to visit Dad in the morning. Alfie wanted to come too but Mum said that you have to be 5 or older to visit the hospital Dad's in. This is to help keep the ward safe and stop bugs that can make you poorly from spreading.

Alfie was a bit upset about this to start with, but then Nana had an idea. She said she would make a get well soon card with Alfie, and then take him out to buy some balloons for when Dad gets home. Alfie loves balloons.





Visiting Dad

Going in to see Dad was a bit weird to start with. I didn't really know what to expect.

He had moved to a ward and the doctors said he was getting a bit better every day.

He saw me and said "Hello Meg! Come here and give your Dad a big kiss!" and then I knew everything was alright.

I asked him if he was okay, and he said "I am getting better. I'll be up and about in no time."

WELCOME HOME !





Dad's back!

A few days later, the doctors said Dad could come home. We were so excited to see him.

On the day we made a banner and welcome home cards. Alfie tied the balloons to just about every part of our house.

Dad looked really happy when he came in. But he looked really tired too.

"It might take a few weeks for Dad to get back to normal" said Mum. "But he should be able to do everything he did before very soon."

I asked if Dad would be able to play football.

"Yes" said mum. "We don't need to worry about Dad now. He'll be the same as he always was, and so long as he takes his tablets he'll be fine."

Medication

When someone has had a heart attack, they need to take medication (say med-ee-kay-shun). Medication means tablets that help to make sure the person won't have another heart attack.

Usually people have to take a few different tablets. Some work together to make blood a little bit thinner and stop it sticking to the stent because that would block up the blood supply again. Others help the heart pump better.

It is very important for anyone who has had a heart attack to keep taking the medication their doctor gives them.

But why?

I told Mum that I still didn't understand why Dad had a heart attack in the first place. "Could it have been because of something we did?" I asked mum.

"No! Of course not" she said and smiled. Then she looked at me and Alfie really seriously. She said "Nobody else can cause someone to have a heart attack. It just happens when fatty stuff builds up in the tubes around someone's heart."

Then she said "There's lots we can do to help make sure that doesn't happen again though."



The follow up appointment

A week or so after, Dad went back to the hospital for a follow-up appointment. I didn't like the idea of him going back, but Mum said it was no big deal.

"They're just going to do a few tests and make sure his heart is working as well as it should be" she said. "He's going to go to an exercise class at the hospital every week too, because that will help him recover."





How can we help?

“There are three main things that help people avoid heart attacks” said Mum. “The first one is to not smoke. Smoking is very bad for your heart. It makes the tubes get blocked up. But your Dad has stopped smoking now. He says he’s never going to smoke again and we need to help him.”

Alfie and I were pleased. We were glad Dad was doing something good for his heart, but also because we think smoking is a bit gross. It stinks and we’ve been asking him to give up for ages!

“The other two things we’re going to do are to eat more healthily and to be more active” Mum said.

Avoiding coronary heart disease

5 a day



Keep your heart healthy and strong by eating a balanced diet and staying active.

Being active

Being physically active makes your heart stronger. You need to do activity that makes you feel all hot and a bit out of breath.

Grown-ups need to be active for 30 minutes a day 5 days a week.

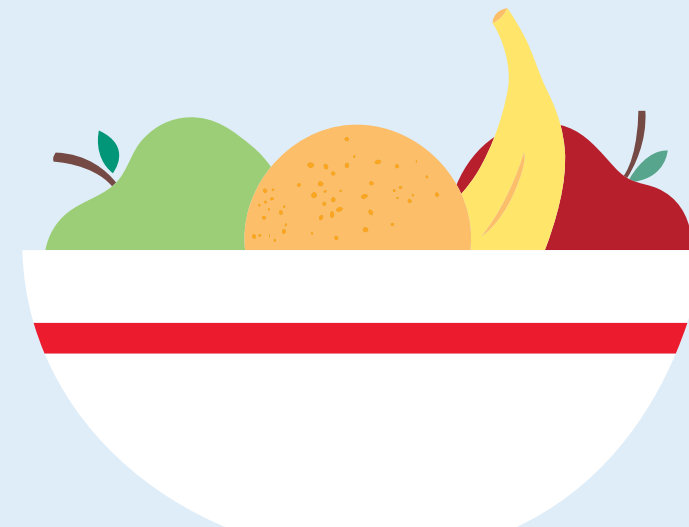
Children and young people need to be active for 60 minutes every day.

You don't need to do all your activity in one go. You can do it broken up throughout the day. As long as it adds up to the right amount in the end.

Sometimes people who have had a heart attack are worried about being active. Their doctor will tell them what activities they can do.



SHOPPING
CARROTS
APPLES
MILK



EVERYDAY
COOKBOOK

Eating a balanced diet

Everyone in your family needs to eat a balanced diet to help their hearts stay strong.

5 a day

Everyone needs to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and veg a day. Think about a portion as about the amount you can fit in the palm of your own hand.

Swap saturated fat for unsaturated fat

Foods like kebabs, fried chicken, sausages, pakoras, bahji and Jamaican dumplings are high in saturated (say sat-tur-ate-ed) fat. It's also in foods like cream, butter, cakes, biscuits and cheese. Try not to eat these things too often and keep them to small portions when you do.

Low salt

Try not to eat too much salt. Use the information on food packets to find the lowest-salt foods and don't add salt at the table.

Balanced meals

Try and have family meals that are made up of:

- Starchy foods like wholemeal bread and pasta, brown rice and also potatoes.
- Plenty of vegetables and fruit.
- Some lean protein like chicken, turkey, eggs, lentils, peas and beans or tofu.
- Some low-fat dairy food like low-fat yoghurt, low-fat cheese and semi-skimmed milk.

You can also include some fatty and sugary foods but keep these to small amounts and choose healthier, unsaturated oils and spreads.

Getting active

Alfie and I walked to the supermarket with Mum and Dad. Walking there was part of our new plan to be active.

We picked out loads of yummy fruit and vegetables for our family.

Now we have vegetables with every meal and fruit as a snack in between meals.

I like pineapples and bananas best. Alfie's favourite is apples.



Feeling healthier

Over time, Dad got a lot better. He kept taking his medication and visiting our GP for check-ups. He became a healthy weight because we were eating better and being more active.

“I feel like a young man again!” laughed Dad. “Who’d have thought you could feel more healthy after a heart attack than before it?”





Proud to be healthy

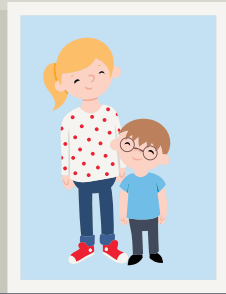
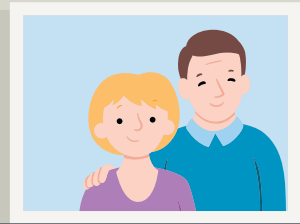
Everything's pretty much back to normal now. The only thing that's different is that we all eat yummy, healthy food together and we do a lot more stuff. We've been going out on our bikes, going swimming and we walk more than we used to.

One afternoon we were lying on the grass after a game of catch. I asked Dad how he felt. "I feel good Meg" he said. And then he squeezed my hand and said "And I feel proud."

"Proud of what?" I asked.

"Proud of my family" he said. "Proud of all the changes we've made and how much you've all helped me."

That made me feel proud too.



Artie's museum adventure

Join Artie Beat and friends on an adventure as they solve riddles about how their bodies work and find the ancient treasure at the heart of the museum. G385

Artie's carnival adventure

Have fun with Artie and friends on a carnival adventure as they teach children all about healthy snacks that give you energy and keep your heart healthy. G384

Artie's safari adventure

Go on a safari adventure with Artie and friends as they encourage all the animals to get fit and healthy in time for the floods. G383

The Artie Beat club

Artie Beat is a heart health superhero helping children take care of their hearts. With his friends, he teaches children all about eating healthily and staying active to keep their hearts strong. Children can join the Artie Beat club for free and receive a joining pack and four exciting magazines a year. Sign up for free at cbhf.net.

To order any of our heart health information, call the BHF orderline on 0870 600 6566, email orderline@bhf.org.uk or visit bhf.org.uk/publications.cbhf.net to find out more.

This book was produced by the British Heart Foundation, with help from the King's College Hospital Coronary Care Unit. Thank you to all the healthcare professionals who provided vital contributions to the development of this resource. With special thanks to Ann Wollaston.



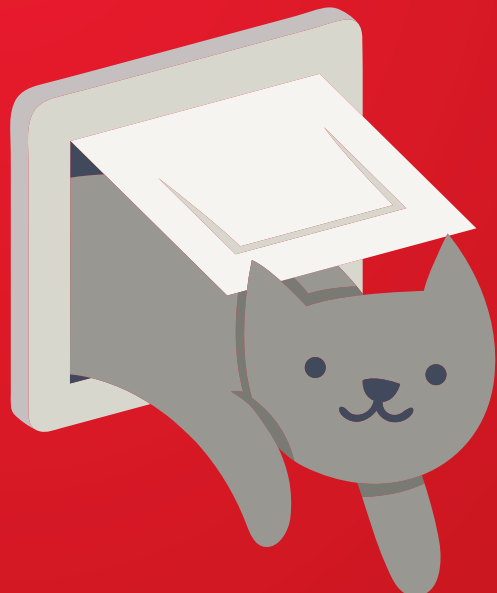
**British Heart
Foundation**

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many mums, dads and grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.



**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**

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