



What Are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack?

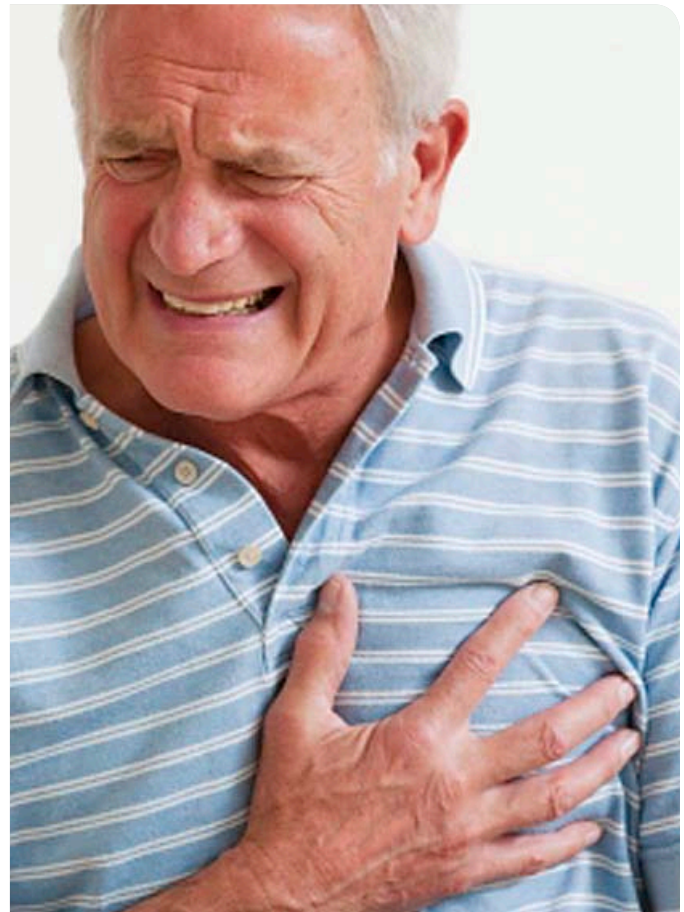
In the United States, coronary heart disease, which includes heart attack, causes 1 of every 7 deaths. But many of those deaths can be prevented — by acting fast!

Each year, about 635,000 people in the US have a new heart attack and about 300,000 have a repeat attack.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are more likely than men to have some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.



What should I do if I suspect a heart attack?

Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, **immediately call 9-1-1 or your local emergency medical services (EMS)** such as the fire department or ambulance. EMS staff can begin treatment when they arrive — up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too.

What else can I do?

Before there's an emergency, it's a good idea to find out which hospitals in your area have 24-hour emergency cardiac care. Also, keep a list of emergency phone numbers next to your phone and with you at all times, just in case. Take these steps NOW.

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Why don't people act fast enough?

Many people having a heart attack wait more than two hours before getting help. Some people feel it would be embarrassing to have a "false alarm." Others are so afraid of having a heart attack that they tell themselves they aren't having one. These feelings are easy to understand, but they're also very dangerous.

If you or someone close to you shows signs of a heart attack, **call 9-1-1 and get help right away!**

How can I help to avoid a heart attack?

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure if you have it.
- Eat foods that are low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium (salt) and added sugars..
- Be physically active.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Take medicine as prescribed.



If you think you may be having a heart attack, don't hesitate... call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number immediately. Making the call could save your life.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How can I tell heart attack from angina?

How is a heart attack different from stroke?

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We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.



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