

Heart Attack: Warning Signs

Heart attacks are one of the most common causes of death in the US. Heart attacks happen when blood flow to part of the heart is suddenly or completely blocked.

Every minute of every day someone dies from a heart attack. Getting help right away when you are having a heart attack improves your chances of staying alive. It may also help keep your heart from being damaged.

Since early treatment makes such a difference, it is important to know the warning signs of a heart attack.

What are the signs of a heart attack?

Not everyone has the same symptoms. Signs of a heart attack may be one or more of the following:

- Chest pain or pressure, squeezing, or fullness in the center of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back (may feel like indigestion or heartburn)
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms or shoulders, or in your back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling very tired
- Breaking out in a cold sweat for no known reason

Along with these symptoms, you may also feel very tired, faint, or be sick to your stomach.

Don't delay getting care if you have different symptoms, such as:

- Sudden weakness or unexplained tiredness
- Unexplained anxiety and nervousness
- Sudden, severe heartburn or indigestion

What should I do in case of a heart attack?

If you or someone you know feels chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the symptoms listed above, call 911 to get medical care right away.

If you think you may be having a heart attack:

- If you are not allergic to aspirin, chew an aspirin as soon as possible after calling 911.
- If you take any medicines for chest pain, such as nitroglycerin, follow your healthcare provider's instructions for taking it.
- Sit or lie down while you wait for help.

If you think someone else is having a heart attack:

- Call for emergency help by dialing 911. Stay on the line. Do not take the person to a hospital in your own car.

- Be calm and take actions that make the person feel less excited.
- Ask the person if they take any medicines for chest pain, such as nitroglycerin. If so, get it and follow the written instructions for its use.
- Ask if the person is allergic to aspirin. If they are not allergic, have them chew an aspirin as soon after calling 911 as possible.
- If the person does not respond when you shake them gently, and you have been trained in CPR, start CPR. Tell the 911 operator that the person is not responding. Keep giving CPR until help arrives.

You can get more information about giving CPR and other life-saving skills from:

- American Heart Association
800-242-8721
<http://www.americanheart.org>
- American Red Cross
800-733-2767
<http://www.redcross.org>

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