

WARNING SIGNS and SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK

Heart Disease is the most common cause of death in men and women and can often strike without warning. Despite advances in treatment for heart disease, only a fraction of patients make it to the hospital in time for them to benefit from these therapies.

When treating heart disease, time is critical. Recognition of the symptoms of a heart attack is essential in obtaining potentially life-saving treatment. A heart attack can begin to damage the heart within 30 minutes of the start of symptoms and sometimes this damage may be irreversible. With heart attacks, TIME = MUSCLE.

Call 911 as soon as symptoms appear!

Many individuals do not realize they are having a heart attack because the symptoms may be mild, they may attribute the symptoms to stress, muscle strain, indigestion, or the flu. It is important to recognize these atypical symptoms because not all heart attacks manifest with chest pain. This tends to be the case more so in women compared to men.

What are the symptoms of a heart attack?

- Chest pain or discomfort: May feel like a squeezing, pressure, heaviness, tightness or fullness.
- Heaviness or pain in other areas including back, neck, jaw or arms. This is more common in women.
- The pain or pressure can be gradual or sudden. It may come and go, gradually intensify or awaken one from sleep.
- Cold sweating: This can occur even without chest discomfort. If there is no obvious reason for sweating such as exercise or hot flashes, consider having your physician investigate this further.
- Fatigue: Some women may experience feeling extremely tired even during routine tasks, a gradual or sudden decrease in energy level or an inability to complete tasks that they were able to in the past.
- Nausea: This can be mistaken for other problems such as flu, heartburn or stomach ulcers; however, nausea can also be a presentation of heart disease or angina.
- Shortness of breath: Can occur with minimal activity or with activities that previously did not cause difficulty breathing. This is especially important because people with diabetes may not necessarily have chest pain, and this may be their only symptom of a heart attack.
- Lightheadedness: May occur with activity or in conjunction with any of the other symptoms.
- In the case of a heart attack, no symptom should be taken lightly. If symptoms exist, act on them as soon as possible. Remember, TIME = MUSCLE Call 911 even if you suspect you may be having a heart attack, but are not sure.