

# Heart Attack Signs and Symptoms

DIAL EMERGENCY  
**911**

## Planning ahead for a heart attack could save your life!

### Know the signs and symptoms

Heart attack signs and symptoms vary from person to person. Because of this, people often report that a heart attack didn't happen the way they expected, which can lead to a delay in seeking medical treatment —especially for women. Symptoms can be mild or severe, or come and go. Also, if you are a heart attack survivor, your symptoms may not be the same as they were for your first heart attack.

Common warning signs include:

- Chest discomfort or pressure — this includes any type of discomfort in the center of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes — pain, pressure, fullness or squeezing.
- Shortness of breath\*
- Neck, jaw or stomach discomfort\*
- Sweating at rest\*
- Radiating pain to shoulder(s), neck, back, arm(s) or jaw, with or without chest pain\*
- Nausea, vomiting or severe indigestion \*
- Lightheadedness\*
- Panic or anxiety with feeling of impending doom for no apparent reason\*

\*Women are more likely than men to have other symptoms unrelated to chest pain — approximately 40 percent of women do not experience chest pain at all when having a heart attack.

Women account for nearly half of all heart attack deaths. Over a lifetime, heart disease kills five times as many women as breast cancer.

Getting treatment quickly — at the first sign of distress — is critical for lifesaving medicines and treatments to work.

### Take action:

- **Call 9-1-1.** Say “I am having a heart attack.”
- Chew and swallow an aspirin (if you are not allergic).
- Rest. Stop everything and wait for emergency personnel to arrive.
- Do not drive yourself. If you do not have access to emergency transportation, ask someone else to drive you. Don't drive yourself unless you have absolutely no other option.
- Follow any instructions your health care provider has given you.
- Be clear, objective and persistent when describing your symptoms and insist on the best care for your heart.

*(continued on next page)*

**Heart attack survival plan checklist**

- I have discussed the signs and symptoms of a heart attack with family and friends.
- I have discussed the use of aspirin with my health care provider and (if applicable) have 325 mg aspirin on hand in case of an emergency.
- The nearest facility with cardiac care, preferably with a catheterization lab, is: \_\_\_\_\_.
- I have arranged care for children, pets or other dependents in the event of an emergency.
- I pledge to take warning signs very seriously and to take action quickly.

**Heart attack risk factor management**

To keep your risk of a heart attack as low as possible, it's important to manage your health. Review the risk factor checklist below to help you identify what risk factors you are controlling and any that you want to work on.

- I am managing my cholesterol.
- I am managing my blood pressure.
- I take a daily aspirin.
- I am a non-smoker and avoid secondhand smoke exposure.
- I am managing my weight, with the help of healthy eating and regular physical activity.

**My Heart Attack Survival Plan**

Fill out the information below and make copies. Keep a copy at home where you, your family or emergency personnel can easily see it. Keep another copy at work and in your purse.

**Medical diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Medications I am taking:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Medications I am allergic to:** \_\_\_\_\_

**My preferred, local, emergency health care facility:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**My health care provider(s):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Call in the event of an emergency:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**In a medical emergency, call 911**