

# Heart Attack: Early Warning Signs

## 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:

- Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than 5 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, such as pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, which often comes with chest discomfort but can occur before the chest discomfort.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

Women who are having a heart attack may not have the usual symptoms, resulting in a delay in care. About a third of women have no chest pain at all when having a heart attack. Other symptoms may include abdominal pain, nausea, trouble breathing, and unexplained fatigue.

## 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 other symptoms, get medical care immediately. Do not wait longer than 5 minutes before calling 911. Calling 911 is usually the fastest way to get medical help in an emergency.

If you think a person 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 victim feel less excited.
- Have the victim sit or lie down.
- Ask the person if they take any medicines for chest pain, such as nitroglycerin. If so, get it and follow the written instructions on its use.
- Ask the person if they are allergic to aspirin. If they are not allergic, have them chew an aspirin as soon after calling 911 as possible.
- If the person stops breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Tell the 911 operator that this has happened.
- If the pulse and breathing stop, begin CPR. Continue until help arrives.

For more information about giving CPR and other life-saving skills, contact your local chapter of the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross or visit their Web

sites at <http://www.americanheart.org> and  
<http://www.redcross.org>.

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