

## Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attacks for Men and Women

At the beginning of a new year it is always wise to refresh our memories on knowing the warning signs of heart attacks. People engage in physical activities that are designed to help them lose weight and get in shape as they recognize they have added a few more pounds each passing year. The mistake many make is in not consulting their primary physician in deciding what exercise is appropriate for their specific physical situation. So, consult your doctor before beginning your exercise routine. Heart attacks are the most common cause of death for both men and women numbering over 500,000 per year.

Knowing the warning signs and symptoms of heart attacks can save a life - yours, a stranger, or someone you know. A heart attack is caused by blocked blood flow to the heart muscle which starves it of oxygen; thereby damaging or destroying the heart muscle.

The signs and symptoms of a heart attack are varied and differ somewhat between men and women. Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, pain in the chest that is spreading to the shoulders, neck, or arms, chest discomfort that increases in intensity, chest pain that occurs with other symptoms, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea/vomiting, or rapid irregular pulse are all potential indicators of a male heart attack. As with men, women's most common heart attack symptoms are chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain. Also, over 30% of women have milder symptoms when having heart attacks with no chest pain at all and flu-like symptoms are reported by over 70% of women prior to experiencing acute chest discomfort or severe difficulty in breathing with accompanying shortness of breath. Other symptoms for women may include dizziness with weakness, sudden extreme fatigue, and panic with a feeling of impending doom.

Pay attention to what your body is trying to tell you. A heart attack can be accompanied by all or only a few of these symptoms. It is important to recognize and report symptom changes to your doctor. Knowledge of the symptoms of a heart attack improves your ability to act quickly to get the care you or others need. The next step is to know who to call in an emergency. Emergency medical phone numbers are best known in advance. Check your local phone directory for the phone number to emergency medical services in your community. Keep this number near your phone.

