

Know the warning signs of heart attacks and strokes

You could save your life



Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women. Heart attacks and strokes are life-or-death emergencies — every second counts. If you or someone you know is experiencing heart attack or stroke symptoms, call 911 immediately.

For a stroke, also note the time when the first symptom(s) appeared. A clot-busting drug received within 3 to 4.5 hours of the start of symptoms may improve your chances of getting better faster.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. The warning signs are:

-  Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few 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. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
-  Shortness of breath. This may occur with or without chest discomfort.
-  Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, the most common heart attack symptoms for women are chest pain or discomfort. However, women are more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting and back or jaw pain.

Stroke Warning Signs

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

The acronym F.A.S.T. is an easy way to recognize and respond to the sudden warning signs of stroke. The letters stand for:

-  **Facedrooping** — Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop or is it numb?
-  **Arm weakness** — Ask the person to raise both arms. Is one arm weak or numb? Does one arm drift downward?
-  **Speech difficulty** — Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence such as, "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly? Are they unable to speak or are they hard to understand?
-  **Time to call 911** — If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get them to the hospital immediately.

The American Heart Association and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute are working together for women for healthy hearts.

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