

## What are the Warning Signs of a Heart Attack? Some signs are surprising – especially for women

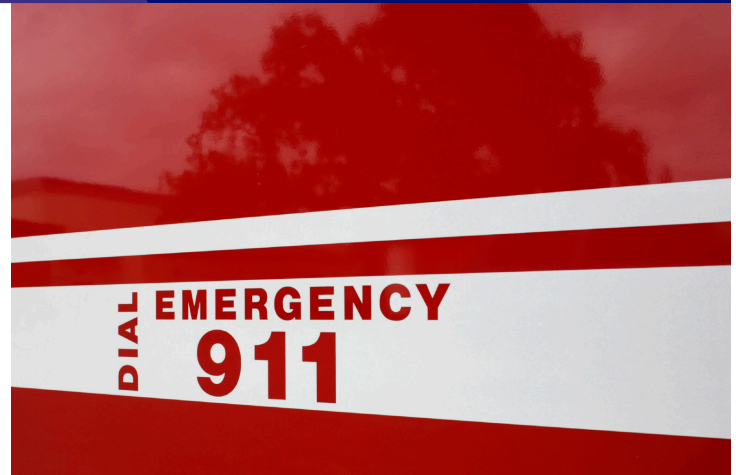
We've all seen the movie scenes where a man gasps, clutches his chest and falls to the ground with a heart attack. In reality, most heart attacks are not that dramatic – they start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. The symptoms can be subtle and people aren't sure what's wrong. For women, the signs and symptoms are often less typical and sometimes confusing.

Even when the signs are subtle, the consequences can be deadly, especially if the person doesn't get help right away. Here are the common (and not so common) signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes – it can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain and it can range from mild to severe
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Feeling of indigestion, heartburn or nausea
- Lightheadedness
- Anxiety – feeling like something is wrong

Even though heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women, women often chalk up the symptoms to less life-threatening conditions like acid reflux, the flu or normal aging. For women, as for men, the most common symptom of a heart attack is some kind of pain, pressure or discomfort in the chest. But women are more likely than men to also have the symptoms unrelated to chest pain, particularly:

- Jaw, neck, shoulder or upper back pressure
- Extreme fatigue, lightheadedness or fainting
- Feelings of indigestion, heartburn or nausea/vomiting



It's common to experience more than one symptom, but it's important to remember that you don't have to be experiencing all of the symptoms to be having a heart attack.

**Learn the signs, but remember this:**  
Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out. Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1 for emergency medical services (EMS).

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. EMS staff can begin treatment when they arrive – up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. EMS staff is also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too. It's best to call 911 for rapid transport to the emergency room.

A heart attack strikes someone about every 34 seconds. Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives – maybe your own.



[Watch a KARE 11 Interview with MHIF Researcher and Preventive Cardiologist, Dr. Michael Miedema: Why Do Women Wait Longer to Seek Health for a Heart Attack?](https://tinyurl.com/MHIFdontwait)

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