

Heart Attack Warning Signs & Symptoms

Society of Chest Pain Centers

What is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack occurs, in most cases, when a vessel supplying the heart muscle with blood and oxygen becomes completely blocked. The vessel has become narrowed by a slow buildup of fatty deposits, made up mostly of cholesterol. When a clot occurs in this narrowed vessel, it completely blocks the supply of blood to the heart muscle. That part of the muscle will begin to die if the individual does not immediately seek medical attention.

- Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. Occurring with or before chest discomfort.
- Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, unusual fatigue, and/or light-headedness. Treatments are most effective when they occur in the early stages of chest pain.

Warning Signs of a Heart Attack in Women

- Pressure, fullness, squeezing pain in the center of the chest, spreading to the neck, shoulder or jaw pain.
- Chest discomfort with light-headedness, fainting, sweating, nausea, or shortness of breath
- Upper abdominal pressure or discomfort
- Lower chest discomfort
- Back pain
- Unusual fatigue
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Nausea

So don't delay! Don't take chances with chest pain. If you have chest pain or other heart attack symptoms, call 9-1-1 and seek medical attention immediately.