



Heart Attack: Know the Signs

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. It kills more than 700,000 people each year and affects millions more. And women are six times more likely to die from heart attacks than breast cancer.

You can have heart disease for years without pain or any other obvious symptoms. In fact, many people don't know they have heart disease until they have a heart attack.

If you think that you or someone else is having a heart attack, call 911 right away. The longer time without treatment, the greater the damage to the heart and risk of death.

Signs and Symptoms

Shortness of breath. It can be hard to catch your breath or to take a deep, full breath, usually experienced after exercise or other strenuous activity.

Repeated episodes of chest discomfort. It can feel like pain, uncomfortable pressure, or squeezing that lasts for several minutes at a time.

Discomfort in other parts of the upper body, such as one or both arms (usually the left), the back, left shoulder, neck, jaw, or stomach

Numbness or tingling in the arm, hand, or jaw

Dizziness or light-headedness

Sweating

Especially for Women

Women are less likely to feel chest pain during a heart attack than men. In fact, studies suggest that women often experience other heart attack symptoms, including:

Back, neck, or jaw pain

Persistent heartburn or indigestion

Nausea or vomiting

Dizziness or lightheadedness

Weakness

Fatigue



Pre-Heart Attack Symptoms

Some people experience heart attack symptoms 4–6 months to 1 week before the attack. If you have these symptoms, consult with your doctor.

Shortness of breath

Sleep disturbance

Unusual fatigue

Chest pain

Indigestion

Anxiety

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Log on to <http://www.pbs.org/takeonestep/heart> to find out more, as well as these organizations:

AARP

<http://www.aarp.org>

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice, and control. AARP produces several publications and has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A Campaign Affiliate of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

American Heart Association

<http://www.americanheart.org>

This comprehensive site offers information, advice, recipes, and resources on all aspects of heart disease and heart-healthy lifestyles, in English and Spanish.

America on the Move

<http://www.americaonthemove.org>

AOM works with partners and sponsors to educate and empower people to improve their health and quality of life, with free programs, tools, and resources. A Resource Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm>

This site provides a range of facts, tips, screening tools for patients and the public, with materials in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Filipino.

Reader's Digest Magazine

<http://www.rd.com>

Reader's Digest is the largest-circulation magazine in the world, published in 21 languages and 50 editions worldwide. The Health section of the Web site contains information and advice for a variety of health conditions, including the handout *10 Easy Steps to a Healthier Heart*. A Promotion Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

<http://womenheart.org>

This site includes fact sheets, recipes, exercises, and information about heart disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Materials are available in English and Spanish. An Outreach Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.

YMCA of the USA

<http://www.ymca.net>

YMCA Activate America™ is a national initiative that is rallying YMCAs across the country to help children and adults discover and sustain healthier ways to live. A Community Partner of *Take One Step: A PBS Health Campaign*.