

Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack

By Arizona Heart Foundation

While some heart attacks seemingly come out of nowhere, **the majority of them start more slowly.** Regardless of whether your heart attack is sudden or one that develops over time, your chances of recovering and minimizing damage to your heart improve considerably when you treat the issue promptly. To do so, **you must learn to recognize the signs and symptoms that may indicate a heart attack is forthcoming.** The American Heart Association reports that while the symptoms of a heart attack may vary somewhat between men and women, most people who have them experience some, or all, of the same **five symptoms.** These five symptoms are listed below. You can also download heart attack warning signs to share with family and friends.

CHEST PAIN



Chest pain is **the most common heart attack sign** experienced by both men and women. Typically, you will start to experience discomfort on either the middle or the left side of your chest. The pain may remain constant for several minutes, or it may come and go sporadically. Many people who have had heart attacks describe feeling **intense pressure or squeezing in their chests.**

Your chances of recovering and minimizing damage to your heart improve considerably when you can identify and treat a heart attack quickly.

LIGHTHEADEDNESS

While lightheadedness may have any number of causes, it is often an indication **of a heart attack (or, sometimes, a stroke).** You may also feel dizzy, weak or faint before a heart attack in addition to feeling lightheaded.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Shortness of breath may be another indication of a heart attack. In some cases, you may feel chest discomfort alongside your shortness of breath. In others, the breathing issues may precede the chest pain or chest-tightening.

ARM OR SHOULDER PAIN



Arm or shoulder pain may also indicate a heart attack. **Arm pain that begins in your left arm, in particular, may be a warning sign** of a heart attack, although you may experience it in both of your arms or shoulders.

JAW, NECK OR BACK PAIN

Jaw, neck or back pain may also serve as heart attack warning signs. While both men and women may experience pain in these areas **ahead of a heart attack**, **research suggests women experience jaw and back pain, specifically, more frequently than men.**

WHILE THE ABOVE SYMPTOMS ARE NOT ALWAYS INDICATIONS OF HEART ATTACKS AND MAY HAVE OTHER UNDERLYING CAUSES, **IT IS CRITICAL THAT YOU SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY IN THE EVENT THAT YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE STARTS EXHIBITING ANY OF THEM.** CALLING 911 MAY BE THE FASTEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF RECEIVING PROMPT CARE.

If you are having a heart attack, every minute matters. Having emergency responders come to you, rather than you transporting yourself to the hospital, means medical professionals can begin treating you that much faster, which may ultimately mean the difference between life and death.