



What Are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack?

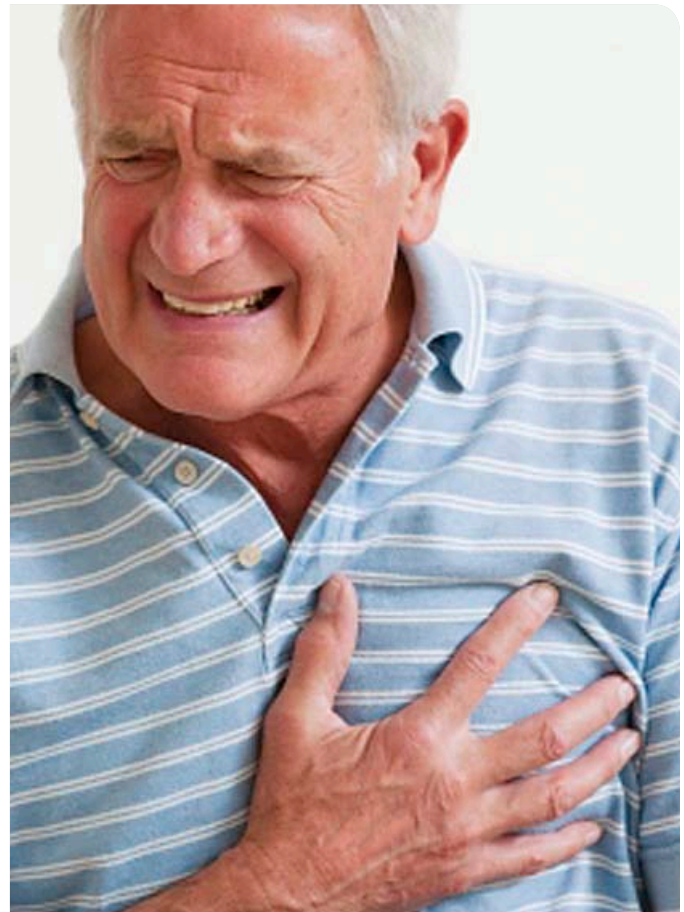
In the United States, coronary heart disease, which includes heart attack, causes 1 of every 7 deaths. But many of those deaths can be prevented — by acting fast!

Each year, about 635,000 people in the US have a new heart attack and about 300,000 have a repeat attack.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **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.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are more likely than men to have some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.



What should I do if I suspect a heart attack?

Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, **immediately call 9-1-1 or your local emergency medical services (EMS)** such as the fire department or ambulance. EMS staff can begin treatment when they arrive — up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too.

What else can I do?

Before there's an emergency, it's a good idea to find out which hospitals in your area have 24-hour emergency cardiac care. Also, keep a list of emergency phone numbers next to your phone and with you at all times, just in case. Take these steps NOW.

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Why don't people act fast enough?

Many people having a heart attack wait more than two hours before getting help. Some people feel it would be embarrassing to have a “false alarm.” Others are so afraid of having a heart attack that they tell themselves they aren't having one. These feelings are easy to understand, but they're also very dangerous.

If you or someone close to you shows signs of a heart attack, **call 9-1-1 and get help right away!**

How can I help to avoid a heart attack?

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure if you have it.
- Eat foods that are low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium (salt) and added sugars..
- Be physically active.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Get regular medical check-ups.
- Take medicine as prescribed.



If you think you may be having a heart attack, don't hesitate... call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number immediately. Making the call could save your life.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How can I tell heart attack from angina?

How is a heart attack different from stroke?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.



What Are the Warning Signs of Stroke?

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in America today. It's also a major cause of severe, long-term disability. People over 55 years old have more chance of stroke, and the risk gets greater as you get older. Men, African Americans and people with diabetes or heart disease are the most at risk for stroke. About 6.6 million people who have had strokes are alive today.

To protect yourself and your loved ones from the serious effects of stroke, you should:

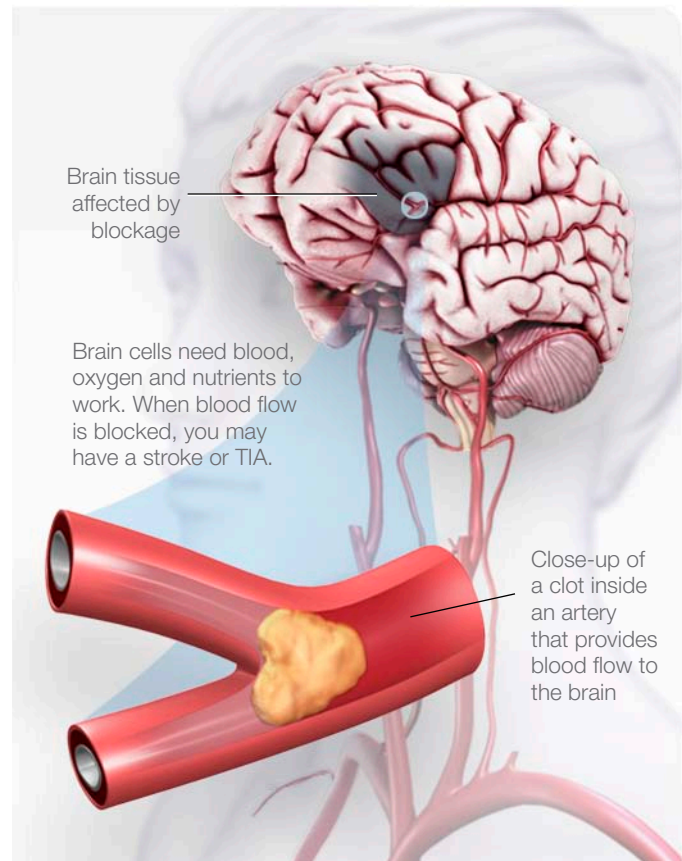
- Learn your risk factors.
- Reduce your risk factors.
- Learn the warning signs of stroke.
- Know what to do if you notice warning signs.

Knowing the signs of stroke is important. If you act fast and go to a hospital right away, you could reduce the effects of a stroke or save your life!

You and your family should learn the warning signs of stroke that are listed below. You may have some or all of them:

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

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember how to recognize a stroke and what to do. Spot a stroke **FAST**. **F**ace drooping. **A**rm weakness. **S**peech Difficulty. **T**ime to call **9-1-1**.



How does stroke happen?

A stroke happens when a blood vessel that feeds the brain gets blocked (ischemic stroke) or bursts (hemorrhagic stroke). Then that part of the brain can't work, and neither can the part of the body it controls.

TIAs, or transient ischemic attacks, are "warning strokes" that can happen before a major stroke. They happen when a blood clot clogs an artery for a short time. The signs of a TIA are like a stroke, but they usually last only a few minutes. If you have any of these signs, get to a hospital right away!

Uncontrolled high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, smoking and heart disease put you at a higher risk for stroke.

What should I do if I suspect a stroke?

Call 9-1-1 or the emergency response number in your area (fire department or ambulance) immediately. It's important to get to a hospital right away.

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Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. If given within 3 to 4.5 hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug may improve the chances of getting better faster.

How can I help prevent stroke?

You can help prevent a stroke if you do these things:

- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Treat high blood pressure, if you have it.
- Eat a healthy diet that's low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, added sugars and salt.
- Be physically active.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Follow your doctor's orders for taking medicine.
- Get regular medical check-ups.



Making lifestyle changes such as exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet are ways to help prevent stroke.

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- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How would I recover from stroke?

How is stroke different from heart attack?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.