

Call 911

If you or someone you are with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than 5 minutes before calling for help.

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. Emergency medical services (EMS) staff can begin treatment when they arrive — up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. The staff are also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped.



If you can't access the EMS, have someone drive you to the hospital right away. If you're the one having symptoms, don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

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Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.

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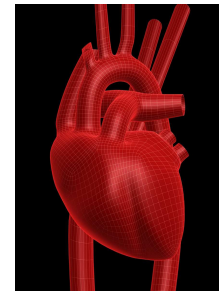
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For Your Health

Women and Heart Disease

What Causes a Heart Attack

Heart disease involves all parts of the cardiovascular system. It can affect the myocardium (the heart muscle), the coronary arteries, the heart valves, the conduction system and the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart).

A heart attack occurs when the blood flow to a part of the heart is blocked. This happens because coronary arteries that supply the heart with blood slowly become thicker and harder from a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances, called plaque.

If the plaque breaks open and a blood clot forms that blocks the blood flow, a heart attack occurs.

Every year heart disease claims the lives of close to half a million women in our country. In fact, it's the No. 1 killer of American women.

Personal and family history can affect your risk of heart disease. However, your lifestyle choices can also have a lot to do with raising or lowering your risks.

Don't ignore heart problems.

It can be a matter of life and death!

Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- 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 with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Pre-Heart Attack Symptoms

There are some symptoms that occur about 4-6 months up to one week before a heart attack actually happens. Some common pre-heart attack symptoms may include:

- Unusual fatigue
- Sleep disturbance
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Unusual indigestion
- Anxiety
- Pain in shoulder blade or upper back

Prevention

Everyone should make appointments to visit a health professional to monitor cholesterol, blood pressure, weight and other factors that can increase your risk for heart disease:

- Don't smoke, and avoid other people's tobacco smoke
- Monitor your blood pressure, as untreated high blood pressure can lead to heart failure
- If results of a blood test show that you have an elevated cholesterol level, you need to work to reduce it and get it checked regularly
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt
- Be physically active
- Seek ways to lower the impact of stress and anxiety
- Keep your weight under control
- Follow your doctor's orders for taking medicine
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes
- Get regular medical check-ups

Online Resources:

There are many organizations that provide information about heart disease:

- www.inova.org/my-health/index.jsp
- www.goredforwomen.org
- www.hearthealthyonline.com
- www.womenheart.org