

Heart Attack Warning Signs

A heart attack is a frightening event, and you probably don't want to think about it. But, if you learn the signs of a heart attack and what steps to take, you can save a life—maybe your own.

What are the signs of a heart attack? Many people think a heart attack is sudden and intense, like a "movie" heart attack, where a person clutches his or her chest and falls over.

The truth is that many heart attacks start slowly, as a mild pain or discomfort. If you feel such a symptom, you may not be sure what's wrong. Your symptoms may even come and go. Even those who have had a heart attack may not recognize their symptoms, because the next attack can have entirely different ones.

Women may not think they're at risk of having a heart attack—but they are. Learn more about [women and heart attack](#).

It's vital that everyone learn the **warning signs of a heart attack**. These are:



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 uncomfortable 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. Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.



Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

Learn the signs—but also remember: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, you should still have it checked out. Fast action can save lives—maybe your own.

After you learn more about heart attack, try a brief [quiz](#) to see if you know what to do if you or someone else has warning signs.

Then go to <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/haws/haws.htm> to finish learning about heart attacks and heart disease.