

# Listen To Your Heart ...

*Heart attack information just for women*

## Heart Disease

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women in the U.S., killing 500,000 women each year, according to the American Heart Association.

## Women Delay Treatment

The most common heart attack symptom for women, as with men, is chest pain or discomfort.

There are differences in how women and men respond to a heart attack. Research shows that women who have heart attacks often wait longer than men to seek emergency medical help.

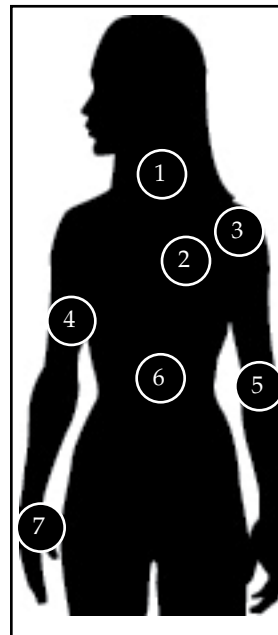
One possible reason is that women sometimes have symptoms that are different from the ones most often associated with a heart attack. As a result, women may not even realize they are in trouble.

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

Women's heart attack warning signs include:

- shortness of breath, lightheadedness, unusual fatigue (tiredness), breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, loss of appetite and indigestion
- pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body. such as the arms, back, neck, jaw, stomach, midchest, shoulders, elbows or fingers
- chest pain or discomfort.

## Possible Locations of Pain Caused by Heart Problems



1. neck and jaw
2. midchest or back
3. shoulders
4. one or both arms
5. elbows
6. upper abdomen
7. fingers

## Take Action for Warning Signs

The key to surviving a heart attack is to recognize warning signs and get medical help right away.

If you feel heart attack symptoms, or if the symptoms get worse when you walk around or get better when you rest, do not delay! Every minute matters.

- Stop whatever you are doing right away.
- If you take nitroglycerin, sit down and take it as directed.
- **Call 911.** Do not wait more than 5 minutes after you feel the symptoms to call for help.

If you are not sure about what you are feeling, call your clinic and ask to talk with a doctor or nurse.

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## Risks You Cannot Control

- **Family history** (genetics). You are at an increased risk for heart attack if your father or mother has had heart problems or a heart attack. **Important:** talk with your doctor about your family history.
- **Age.** One in 12 women ages 45 to 64 has heart disease; this risk increases to 1 in 3 for women older than age 65.

## Risks You Can Control

- **Tobacco use.** Cigarette smokers are two to four times more likely to have heart disease than non-smokers. Smoking causes heart disease and stroke; increases your heart rate, blood pressure and workload of your heart; and has been linked to about one-third of all cancers.
  - In one year of quitting smoking, your risk of heart disease is reduced by more than half.
- **High blood pressure.** Blood pressure is the amount of pressure within the walls of your arteries. The top number measures the pressure during heartbeats. The bottom number measures the pressure between heartbeats. You have high blood pressure if you usually have a top number of 130 or higher or a bottom number of 80 or higher.
  - You can lower your blood pressure if you eat less salt, get regular exercise, stop smoking, lose weight (if overweight) or take medicine(s) to lower blood pressure.
- **High cholesterol.** Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance found in all the cells of your body. It is needed to make hormones, vitamin D and help with the digestion of food.

Your liver makes all the cholesterol your body needs. You can also get cholesterol from the food you eat. Cholesterol moves through your blood in packages known as lipoproteins.

- Low density lipoprotein (LDL) is called the “bad” cholesterol. High levels of LDL can increase your risk of getting heart disease.
  - To help lower your LDL, exercise, lose weight (if overweight), and eat a diet that is low in saturated fat and trans fat, high in fiber, and has plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- High density lipoprotein (HDL) is called the “good” cholesterol. It carries cholesterol from other parts of your body to the liver where it is removed from your body.
  - To help raise your HDL, exercise, lose weight (if overweight) and quit smoking.
- If lifestyle changes do not lower your LDL enough, you may need to take a cholesterol-lowering medicine. Talk with your health care provider about which type of treatment is right for you.
- **Exercise.** Exercise has many benefits, such as lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, managing weight and strengthening your heart muscle.
  - You should try to exercise most, if not all, days of the week. Just 10 to 30 minutes of moderate activity (such as walking) can provide benefits. Being physically fit may also help increase your survival rate if you have a heart attack.

## For More Information

- American Heart Association: 1-800-242-8721
- [allinahealth.org](http://allinahealth.org)

Talk with your health care provider if you have questions about your health.