

Women and Heart Attacks

If you're a woman, you may not believe you're as vulnerable to a heart attack as men—but you are. Women account for nearly half of all heart attack deaths. Heart disease is the number one killer of both women and men.

There are differences in how women and men respond to a heart attack. Women are less likely than men to believe they're having a heart attack and more likely to delay in seeking emergency treatment.

Further, women tend to be about 10 years older than men when they have a heart attack. They are more likely to have other conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and congestive heart failure—making it all the more vital that they get proper treatment fast.

Women should learn the heart attack warning signs. These are:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest.
- Pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Other symptoms, such as a shortness of breath, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

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

If you feel heart attack symptoms, do not delay. Remember, minutes matter! Do not wait for more than a few minutes—5 minutes at most—to call 9-1-1. Your family will benefit most if you seek fast treatment.

Source: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/haws/women.htm>