

Managing Your Health: Heart Attack

Recognize the Signs. Act Quickly. Save Lives.

What Is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack, or myocardial infarction (MI), occurs when blood flow to a part of the heart muscle is blocked, typically due to a buildup of fat, cholesterol, and other substances forming a plaque in the coronary arteries. This blockage can damage or destroy part of the heart muscle.

Common Signs and Symptoms

Recognizing the symptoms of a heart attack can save your life. Symptoms don't always look the same—they can vary from person to person, and men and women may experience them differently.

Typical symptoms include:

- Chest discomfort: Pressure, tightness, pain, or a squeezing sensation in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Discomfort in other areas: Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath: With or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs: Cold sweat, nausea, lightheadedness, or sudden dizziness.

What to Do in an Emergency

If you or someone else is experiencing heart attack symptoms:

1. Call 911 immediately. Do not attempt to drive yourself to the hospital.
2. Chew and swallow an aspirin (unless allergic or advised otherwise by a doctor).
3. Rest and stay calm while waiting for emergency responders.

Prompt medical attention can significantly improve survival rates and outcomes.



Decreasing Your Risk of Heart Attacks

While some risk factors like age and family history can't be changed, many lifestyle choices can reduce your risk:

- Maintain a healthy diet: Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
- Exercise regularly: Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days each week.
- Avoid tobacco: Smoking increases the risk of heart disease.
- Manage stress: Practice relaxation techniques and seek support when needed.
- Monitor health metrics: Keep blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels in check.

Regular check-ups with your health care provider can help manage risk factors effectively.

Learn More

For additional information and resources on heart health, visit heart.org.

This guide is for reference purposes only. Always consult with your medical provider for personalized advice and recommendations regarding your specific health condition.