



HOW TO RECOGNIZE WHEN SOMEONE IS HAVING A HEART ATTACK



Many movies and television shows depict someone having a heart attack clutching his or her chest and collapsing. Indeed, chest pain is a telltale sign of a possible heart attack. It typically feels like squeezing pressure, a fullness in the chest, or pain that starts in the center of the chest. The pain may go away and come back. It can also spread to your arms, neck, head, and back.

However, not everyone experiencing a heart attack has chest pain.

You may have some or all of the following symptoms instead:

HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, OR JAW PAIN:

Some experience these types of pain instead of chest pain.

SHORTNESS OF BREATH:

You may gasp for air during an episode of shortness of breath. If you're having a heart attack with chest pain, the shortness of breath may occur before or during the attack. It could also appear as the primary symptom without any chest pain.

NAUSEA AND/OR VOMITING:

Although less common, you may feel sick to your stomach even though you may not vomit. Belching can accompany this feeling of nausea. Vomiting occurs when nausea becomes severe.

DISCOMFORT IN THE UPPER MIDDLE ABDOMEN:

Sharp, heavy pain in this area of the stomach could be an indication of an impending heart attack. It typically lasts for several minutes.

SWEATING:

This is a common heart attack symptom, but it often doesn't occur in the way you would expect. Rather than feeling too warm, people who have had this heart attack symptom describe it as more of a cold sweat. A person will likely feel cold, even though they're perspiring.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 >



INDIGESTION AND/OR HEARTBURN:

You may experience stomach pain, belching, and burping as if you had just eaten too much or consumed food that didn't agree with you. This is true whether you have recently eaten or not. If the pressure and pain of the heart attack occur in the upper middle abdomen, it will feel more like heartburn.

ARM PAIN:

It's common for heart attack pain to radiate down the arms, particularly the left arm. You may experience pain in your fingers and wrists as well.

PAIN IN THE UPPER BACK:

Back pain can occur for a variety of reasons. However, it's more likely a symptom of a heart attack when it's sudden and you can feel it most intensely between your shoulder blades.

FATIGUE, ANXIETY, OR LIGHTHEADEDNESS:

Sometimes it's hard to describe what you're feeling during a heart attack. You may have a general sense that something isn't right or feel an overwhelming sense of doom, anxiety, or fatigue. This is one reason that individuals experiencing a panic attack sometimes confuse it with a heart attack.



Alternatively, you may have no symptoms at all during a heart attack. This occurs in about one-quarter of all cases, and it's more common among individuals who have diabetes. Individuals having a silent heart attack often chalk up their symptoms to anxiety, stress, fatigue, or indigestion. Seek prompt medical attention if any of these symptoms appear suddenly.