

ABCs of Health



Heart Attack

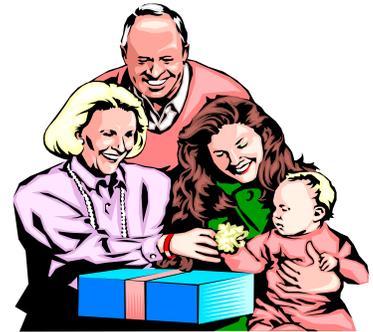
AWARENESS...

A heart attack occurs when, the supply of blood and oxygen to an area of heart muscle is blocked, usually by a clot in a coronary artery. Often, this blockage leads to arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat or rhythm) that cause a severe decrease in the pumping function of the heart and may bring about sudden death. If the blockage is not treated within a few hours, the affected heart muscle will die and be replaced by scar tissue.

Certain factors make it more likely that you will develop coronary artery disease and have a heart attack. These are called **risk factors**.

Risk factors you **cannot change** include:

- **Your Age**
 - Men: over age 45
 - Women: over age 55
- Having a **Family History of early heart disease**
 - Heart disease diagnosed in father or brother before age 55
 - Heart disease diagnosed in mother or sister before age 65
- Having a **Personal History of CAD**
 - Angina
 - A previous heart attack
 - A surgical procedure (angioplasty, heart bypass) to increase blood flow to your heart.

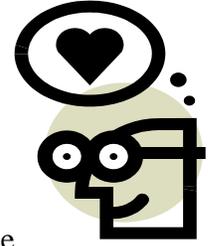


Risk factors that you **can change** include:

- Smoking
- High Blood Pressure
- High Blood Cholesterol
- Obesity
- Being physically inactive
- Diabetes (high blood sugar)



BEHAVIOR...



*The **Warning Signs and Symptoms** of a heart attack can include:

- **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. Heart attack pain can sometimes feel like indigestion or heartburn.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Can include pain, discomfort, or numbness 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, having nausea and vomiting, or feeling light-headed or dizzy.

Signs and symptoms vary from person to person. In fact, if you have a second heart attack, your symptoms may not be the same as for the first heart attack. Some people have no symptoms. This is called a "silent" heart attack.



CHANGE...

Make Lifestyle Changes

To prevent a heart attack, you will most likely need to make lifestyle changes. You may also need to get treatment for conditions that raise your risk.

*You can lower your risk for CAD and a heart attack by making healthy lifestyle choices:

- Eat a **healthy diet** to prevent or reduce high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol and maintain a healthy weight.
- If you **smoke, Quit!**
- **Exercise** as directed by your doctor.
- If you are overweight or obese, **lose weight.**

*National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

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