

Heart Health for Women

Cardiac Arrest: the heart malfunctions and stops beating unexpectedly. This is an Electrical problem.

Heart Attack: blood flow to the heart is blocked. This is a Circulation problem.

Heart Failure: the heart's pumping power is weaker than normal.

Roughly 670,000 Americans will be diagnosed with heart failure this year. People with a high risk of developing heart failure include people with:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Coronary artery disease
- Metabolic syndrome
- History of alcohol abuse
- History of rheumatic fever
- Family history of heart disease

What are you doing to improve your health in 2018? Do you have a doctor you trust and a lifestyle that promotes health and wellness?

What are the Symptoms of Heart Failure?

- Congested Lungs: shortness of breath with exercise or difficulty breathing at rest or when lying flat in bed. Lung congestion can also cause a dry, hacking cough or wheezing.
- Fluid and water retention: Less blood to your kidneys cause fluid and water retention, resulting in swollen ankles, legs, abdomen, and weight gain. Symptoms include increased need to urinate during the night. You may feel bloating in your stomach with a loss of appetite or nausea.
- Dizziness, fatigue, and weakness: Less blood in your major organs and muscles causes you to feel tired and weak. Less blood to the brain can cause dizziness or confusion.
- Rapid or irregular heartbeats: The heart beats faster to pump enough blood to the body.

Six Symptoms of Women's Heart Attacks

Women don't always get the classic heart attack symptoms that are widely described about men's experiences, such as crushing chest pain that radiates down one arm. Women may experience vague or silent symptoms that are easy to miss. If you have the signs below, or you just know that you do not feel right, do not wait for them to resolve themselves. **Call 9-1-1.** You will likely be receiving life-saving treatment up to an hour sooner by calling 9-1-1 than you will by being driven to the hospital by a loved one. Every minute counts!

Turn the page to understand these symptoms in yourself and in your loved ones:

Signs of heart attack in women:

1. Chest pain or discomfort. It may feel like a squeezing or fullness and can be anywhere in the chest. It is said to be truly uncomfortable.
2. Pain in your arm(s), upper back, neck or jaw. The pain can happen suddenly or gradually, and it may wane and then get more intense. If you are asleep, it may wake you up. Tell your doctor about unusual or unexplained symptoms in any part of your body above your waist, says cardiologist C. Noel Bairey Merz, MD.*
3. Stomach pain. Women can experience severe abdominal pressure as well as heartburn or unusual nausea.
4. Shortness of breath or lightheadedness. You can feel like you just ran a marathon but you cannot, in fact, make a move.
5. Sweating. Breaking out in a cold sweat, similar to feeling a stress-related experience. If you are neither in a hot room nor having a hot flash, consider this cold sweat experience to be a possible symptom of heart trouble.
6. Fatigue. Feeling extremely tired while sitting still or feeling like you are “tired in the chest”.

What can you do to prevent further heart damage?

Remember that you are the key player on your health team! Without your efforts as the key team player, all the medical experts in the world may not be able to cure you.

- Stop smoking or chewing tobacco
- Reach and maintain your healthy weight
- Control high blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and diabetes
- Exercise regularly
- Do not drink excessive alcohol
- Seek a qualified doctor’s diagnosis regarding medication and surgery options
- Find support in following your doctor’s orders
- Know the names of all your medications, what they are for, and how often you take them
- Eat a healthy diet and get the needed help to follow through on good choices
- Keep your blood pressure low
- Learn how to monitor your own symptoms like unexplained weight gain or swelling
- Understand which of your foods contain added salt
- Keep your scheduled doctor’s appointments

*Resources:

Centers for Disease Control
American Heart Association
Brunilda Nazario, MD

Lisa Fields, Web MD
Women’s Cardiovascular Services of
California, San Francisco

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