



# Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs

## Use the **T.I.M.E.** Method To Help Your Patients Make a Heart Attack Survival Plan

### Why Your Patients Need To Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs

Coronary heart disease is the leading killer of both men and women in the United States. Each year, about 1.1 million Americans suffer a heart attack. About 460,000 of those heart attacks are fatal. Disability and death from heart attack can be reduced with prompt thrombolytic and other artery-opening therapies—ideally given within the first hour after symptom onset. Patient delay is the largest barrier to receiving therapy quickly.

#### Heart Attack Warning Signs

- ▲ **Chest discomfort** (pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest)
- ▲ **Discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach**
- ▲ **Shortness of breath** (often comes with or before chest discomfort)
- ▲ **Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness**

#### Uncertainty Is Normal

Most people think a heart attack is sudden and intense, like a “movie heart attack.” The fact is that many heart attacks start slowly as mild pain or discomfort. People who feel such symptoms may not be sure what is wrong.

#### Delay Can Be Deadly



Most heart attack victims wait 2 or more hours after symptoms begin before they seek medical help. People often take a wait-and-see approach or deny that their symptoms are serious.

Every minute that passes without treatment means that more heart muscle dies.

#### Calling 9-1-1 Saves Lives

Minutes matter. Anyone with heart attack symptoms *should not wait more than a few minutes—5 minutes at most—to call 9-1-1.*

### Use the T.I.M.E. Method:

#### Talk with your patients about—

- ▲ Risk of a heart attack.
- ▲ Recognition of symptoms.
- ▲ Right action steps to take/rationale for rapid action.
- ▲ Rx—give instructions for when symptoms occur (based on patient history).
- ▲ Remembering to call 9-1-1 quickly—within 5 minutes.

#### Investigate—

- ▲ Feelings about heart attack.
- ▲ Barriers to symptom evaluation and response.
- ▲ Personal and family experience with AMI and emergency medical treatment.

#### Make a plan—

- ▲ Help patients and their family members to make a plan for exactly what to do in case of heart attack symptoms.
- ▲ Encourage patients and their family members to rehearse the plan.

#### Evaluate—

- ▲ The patient’s understanding of risk in delaying.
- ▲ The patient’s understanding of your recommendations.
- ▲ The family’s understanding of risk and their plan for action.

#### Additional Resources

Find information and educational materials at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Web site: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov) and the American Heart Association Web site: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)



## Recommended Responses to Patient Concerns

### Anxiety about heart attack:

#### *Am I going to have a heart attack?*



- ▲ There are things you can do to reduce your risk of a heart attack.
- ▲ If you have had a heart attack, you can do things to increase your chance of survival if you have another one.

#### *I am afraid that I'll die.*



- ▲ Most people survive heart attacks.
- ▲ New drugs and treatments are effective.
- ▲ It is important not to delay getting help.
- ▲ Quick treatment reduces the chance of dying.

#### *I am afraid of surgery.*



- ▲ Many persons do not need surgery following a heart attack; they receive drug therapy.
- ▲ Persons having surgery usually do very well afterwards.

### Concerns about going to the hospital emergency department:

#### *I have other responsibilities that I can't ignore.*

- ▲ You can make arrangements for backup help ahead of time.
- ▲ Heart attack patients receive treatment quickly.

### Concerns about calling 9-1-1:

#### *The lights and sirens would be embarrassing.*

- ▲ It might be a little embarrassing, but receiving medical attention quickly is much more important and can save your life.

#### *Someone else could drive me to the hospital.*



- ▲ Ambulance staff can start medical care immediately, such as giving oxygen and medications to make you feel better.
- ▲ If your heart stops beating, emergency professionals can revive you.

#### *I could drive myself to the hospital.*

- ▲ You might pass out along the way, endangering yourself and others.

### Concerns about embarrassment if it really isn't a heart attack:

- ▲ Calling 9-1-1 when you thought you needed it, but didn't, is better than not receiving life-saving treatment.
- ▲ It can be hard to recognize a heart attack; it is important that a health professional evaluate you to be certain.

### Concerns about upsetting family and others:

- ▲ Talking about a plan in advance helps to calm fears.
- ▲ Making a plan can increase your chances of survival.

In partnership with:



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