



Know the Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack



About Heart Attack

If the blood supply to the heart is cut off, a heart attack results. Cells in the heart muscle that do not receive enough oxygen-carrying blood begin to die. The more time that passes without treatment to restore blood flow, the greater the damage to the heart. Having high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, smoking, and having had a previous heart attack, stroke or diabetes can increase a person's chances of developing heart disease and having a heart attack.

According to the American Heart Association, about 700,000 Americans will have an initial heart attack and another 500,000 will have a recurrent heart attack in 2004.¹ Almost half of people who have a heart attack will die from it. According to a CDC report, almost half of the cardiac deaths in 1999 occurred before emergency services and hospital treatment could be administered.²

It is important to recognize the signs of a heart attack and to act immediately by calling 911. A person's chances of surviving a heart attack is increased if emergency treatment is administered as soon as possible.

CDC's Public Health Efforts: CDC currently funds health departments in 32 states and the District of Columbia to develop, implement, and evaluate cardiovascular health promotion, disease prevention, and control programs and to eliminate health disparities. The programs emphasize the use of education, policies, environmental strategies, and systems changes to address heart disease and stroke in various settings and to ensure quality of care. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/cvh/stateprogram.htm>.

Symptoms of a Heart Attack

The National Heart Attack Alert Program notes these major signs of a heart attack:

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.

Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort 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, nausea, or light-headedness.

If you think that you or someone you know is having a heart attack, you should call 911 immediately.

For More Information:

For more information on heart disease visit our website at <http://www.cdc.gov/cvh> and the websites of the following CDC partners:

American Heart Association*	http://www.americanheart.org/
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute	http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov
National Heart Attack Alert Program	http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/nhaap/

References

1. American Heart Association. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics — 2005 Update. Dallas, TX: AHA, 2004. Available at <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200026>*. Accessed May 17, 2005
2. Zheng ZJ, Croft JB, Giles WH, Ayala CI, Greenlund KJ, Keenan NL, Neff L, Wattigney WA, Mensah GA. State-specific mortality from sudden cardiac death--United States, 1999. *MMWR* 2002;51(6):123–126. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5106a3.htm>. Accessed May 17, 2005

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