

## Help.....I Think I'm Having a Heart Attack!



Coronary heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States for both men and women. Nearly half of all heart attack deaths each year happen to women, yet women are less likely than men to believe they are having a heart attack and are more likely to delay in seeking emergency treatment. 45%, or close to half, of all heart attacks occur in individuals under age 65. So don't think you're immune!

We frequently hear about what to do if a co-worker, friend, or even a passer-by is having heart attack symptoms. But what should you do if you are alone and feel one or more of the following symptoms?

- Pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest lasting more than three to five minutes and not relieved by resting
- Discomfort in one or both arms, your back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Light-headedness, fainting, sweating, or nausea

Don't even think about driving yourself to the hospital, unless there is absolutely no other option. Instead:

- Call 911 immediately. Even if you are not sure this is a heart attack, get checked out at an emergency room. Time is critical. Don't wait more than five minutes to call 911. Emergency medical services staff will begin treatment as soon as they arrive, and you will get the fastest treatment at the hospital if you arrive by ambulance.
- Chew a plain, uncoated regular strength aspirin to inhibit blood clotting unless you are allergic to aspirin or have been instructed by a medical professional not to take it. "Current guidelines say to chew four baby aspirin or one adult aspirin," advises Dr. Sharonne Hayes from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. "We know from huge, multinational studies that this simple action reduces your risk of dying from a heart attack."
- Take nitroglycerin if you have a prescription for it, but never take anyone else's medication.

Emergency medical personnel can diagnose a heart attack and begin treatment immediately. They can even revive a heart that is beating erratically or has stopped beating. Emergency medical technicians are always willing to take calls to get possible heart attack victims evaluated. Even if the 911 call turns out to be a false alarm, feeling a little embarrassed is preferable to risking death or a permanently damaged heart.

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