

5. Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attack & Stroke

Heart Attack Symptoms

Symptoms of a heart attack are not the same for everyone. Sometimes heart attacks are sudden and painful, but many times they start with mild discomfort similar to indigestion.

The most common symptoms of a heart attack are:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest, typically lasting more than a few minutes or going away and coming back.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, left shoulder, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat
- Nausea
- Lightheadedness
- Fear or anxiety

Symptoms May be Different in Men & Women

The most common symptom for both men and women is chest pain, but women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea, and pain in the back, neck or jaw.

Address Symptoms Quickly

Heart attack treatments are most effective if started within one hour of when symptoms appear. Many people ignore the symptoms of a heart attack for too long and it may prove fatal. Get immediate medical attention and rapid transport to the hospital.

Stroke Symptoms

Symptoms vary by type of stroke. A stroke caused by a blood clot (ischemic stroke) has symptoms of:

- Numbness, weakness, or paralysis of the face, arm, or leg, typically on one side of the body
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes, such as dimness, blurring, double vision, or loss of vision
- Slurred or garbled speech
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination

Symptoms of a bleeding (hemorrhagic) stroke are similar to a clot stroke, but also include:

- Severe headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Neck stiffness
- Dizziness
- Seizures
- Irritability
- Confusion, trouble understanding
- Unconsciousness

In some people, symptoms can occur suddenly, within seconds. In others, stroke symptoms may progress slowly over hours or even days. For example, mild weakness may develop into an inability to move the arm and leg on one side of the body.

Some people suffer a series of small strokes over time, which results in a more gradual change in walking, balance, thinking, or behavior. Small strokes are difficult to recognize and can be mistakenly attributed to aging or confused with other conditions having similar symptoms.

For more information, see the American Heart Association, <http://www.americanheart.org>