

Heart Attack Signs in Women

Eight signs are not chest pain. Put this on the fridge and call 911 for anything on the green side.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from Mayo Clinic, the American Heart Association & CDC · sources below

If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911 now. Do not wait, and do not drive yourself.

✓ Call 911 For These

Chest Pressure or Tightness

- Center of the chest
- Pressure, squeezing or fullness
- Lasts more than a few minutes
- Or goes away and comes back

COACH'S TIP Still the most common sign in women and men.

Pain Above the Waist, Off-Center

- Neck, jaw or throat
- Shoulder or upper back
- One or both arms
- Upper stomach

COACH'S TIP Some women describe upper back pressure like a rope being tied around them.

Shortness of Breath

- With chest discomfort
- Or with none at all
- Winded doing the ordinary

COACH'S TIP It counts on its own. No chest pain required.

Nausea, Vomiting or Heartburn

- Nausea or vomiting
- Indigestion
- Heartburn

COACH'S TIP The symptom most likely to send a woman to the medicine cabinet.

Unusual Fatigue and Weakness

- Tiredness that will not lift
- Out of proportion to the day
- Sudden weakness

COACH'S TIP Often reported in the days before, not only during.

Cold Sweat or Dizziness

- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness

COACH'S TIP No exertion, no heat. That is the tell.

✗ Do Not Do This

Do Not Wait to See If It Passes

- No 20-minute debate
- No lying down first
- No waiting for a partner

COACH'S TIP Call 911 right away. Do not delay.

Do Not Drive Yourself

- Unless you truly have no other way
- An ambulance starts treatment
- Help is beside you if you arrest

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic is specific about this one.

Do Not Blame Reflux, Flu or Aging

- The three usual explanations
- Heartburn is on the symptom list
- New and unusual beats familiar

COACH'S TIP These are the three women reach for most.

Do Not Wait for Chest Pain

- A heart attack can occur without it
- Some women have no symptoms
- Diabetes can mask the pain

COACH'S TIP Waiting for the television version costs time.

Do Not Rule It Out at Rest

- Symptoms often begin at rest
- Or during sleep
- Emotional stress can trigger them

COACH'S TIP The exertion test points the wrong way in women.

Do Not Assume Clear Arteries

- Heart attack without severe blockage
- Small vessel heart disease
- A past clean test is not a pass

COACH'S TIP Nonobstructive disease is more common in women.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing before you need them

1 in 5 Female deaths from heart disease, 2023 (304,970 women)

56% Of US women know it is their No. 1 killer

45.7% Of US women have high blood pressure, the major risk factor

Sources: Mayo Clinic, Heart disease in women: Understand symptoms and risk factors (2024) · American Heart Association, Heart Attack Symptoms in Women (reviewed 2024) · CDC, About Women and Heart Disease. **Educational content, not medical advice.** Call 911 for suspected heart attack symptoms.