

**About every  
40 seconds,  
someone in the  
United States has  
a heart attack  
or stroke<sup>1</sup>**



**Recognizing heart  
attack and stroke  
symptoms saves lives.**

## **Recognizing heart attacks**

It happens every minute of every day, all year long. Every heart attack behaves differently, but the result is ultimately the same. The blood flow that brings oxygen to the heart muscle is severely reduced or cut off completely<sup>2</sup>.

For the person experiencing the heart attack, symptoms can vary. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. It can come on suddenly and intensely or start off mild, and it may go away and come back.

**Heart attacks are the #1 killer of women,** perhaps because the symptoms are not initially recognized as a heart attack. The symptoms listed on the right are most common. Women may dismiss them, thinking that they are signs of less severe conditions like acid reflux, the flu or just normal aging<sup>2</sup>.

Heart attack symptoms include:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the chest or torso
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Nausea with or without vomiting
- Lightheadedness
- Indigestion
- Heartburn

## Recognizing stroke symptoms

Strokes are one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Strokes also involve the arteries, but those leading to the brain. Arteries carry oxygenated blood.

The majority of strokes occur when an artery to the brain is blocked by a clot. Another type of stroke, although less common, occurs when an artery in the brain ruptures. When either type of stroke happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen it needs, so brain cells die.

As soon as a stroke occurs and the blood flow to the brain is disrupted, the region of the body controlled by the affected part of the brain stops working as it should. It's this change in activity that causes the specific symptoms we can often spot.

The hope is you never have to recognize any of the symptoms of either a heart attack or a stroke. Minutes matter. By being aware of and educated about these signs, you could save the life of a loved one or even yourself.

Here's how to identify a stroke F.A.S.T:<sup>2</sup>

### Face drooping

Does one side of the face droop, or is it numb?

Ask the person to smile. Are both sides able to move?

### Arm weakness

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

### Speech difficulty

Is speech slurred, are they unable to speak or are they hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

### Time to call 911

If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get them to the hospital immediately.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/facts.htm>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/about-heart-attacks>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.heart.org/en/about-us/heart-attack-and-stroke-symptoms>

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