

## Am I Having a Heart Attack?

If you are reading this because you think you are having a heart attack -STOP. Call 911. Then chew an aspirin. Most people deny they are having a heart attack and instead of seeking emergency treatment, spent too much time searching online for information about heart attack symptoms. If you think that you're having a heart attack, it isn't the time to try and figure out if you're right or not, call 911 immediately!

"Heart attack signs" is among the most commonly searched terms, according to the search engine Google. The number of searches for that term has increased by 90 percent in the last five years or so, according to a company spokesperson. One of the many reasons for the "search" is people are afraid to make the call and embarrass themselves, if it turns out they're not in fact suffering a heart attack. Looking up "classic signs" isn't a sure answer to the question-even doctors have a tough time knowing without tests. It isn't always straightforward, many people, especially women, do not have the classic symptoms, when experiencing a heart attack. Women also have a higher risk of dying from a heart attack than men do, partly because they often don't realize they are having a heart attack and partly because they delay getting help. Women are less likely than men to have the typical "movie heart attack." Chest pain was not the main symptom in approximately 46% of the women who had a heart attack.



**So what are the classic symptoms?** You should pay particular attention to the following signs if you are over 50, have high blood pressure, have high cholesterol, are a smoker or have a family history of heart disease. A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to the heart is blocked, damaging the muscle. Chewing aspirin (either one regular or 4 baby) helps the heart by thinning the blood.

- Chest pain: Most people do call 911 or get to the emergency if they feel like they have an elephant sitting on their chest, but even this most common symptom may be hard to recognize. It may just feel like a squeezing that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back. It may be a chest fullness that isn't recognized as pain.

- Shortness of breath: Feel like you can't catch your breath, even when resting, this often occurs before the chest pain.
- Dizziness or lightheadedness: Feeling like you might pass out.
- Cold sweat: Sweating when you are cold or have a chill.
- Pain in the arm (especially left arm), back, neck, abdomen or shoulder blades: When the nerves of the heart are irritated because the heart isn't getting enough blood, discomfort or pain can radiate out to many places in the body. The pain is often described as an uncomfortable pressure, tightness or ache.
- Jaw pain: Jaw and throat pain are quite common. The feeling can start in the chest and move to the throat and jaw. It may not always be obvious. Sometimes people go to the dentist, because they think it's a toothache, when they were actually having a heart attack.
- Nausea and vomiting: Women are more likely than men to have this symptom, and they may think that they have the stomach flu rather than a heart attack.
- Overwhelming and unusual fatigue: This is a general symptom of a 21st century life! But is overlooked as a heart attack sign, but it is extremely common, so beware if you are unusually exhausted

\*\*The Nappanee EMS department, just completed recertification in CPR/AED training. If you would like to be certified in CPR contact the department at 773-5658.\*\*