

Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

Who is at risk for a heart attack?

Individuals with the following cardiac “risk factors” are at increased risk:

- Family History
- Smoking
- Hypertension/High Blood Pressure
- Diabetes
- High Cholesterol
- History of Vascular Disease/Blockage

What is happening during a heart attack?

The heart has small arteries which are under constant stress beating 100,000 times or more daily. “Plaque” can form within these vessels and over time can become inflamed like a small pustule. Plaque rupture can occur during period of excess stress to the vessel. This can block flow within the artery. If there is no blood flow to the heart muscle after 30 minutes it begins to die.

What are the classic signs of a heart attack?

Chest pain in the middle of the chest that feels like a pressure or squeezing. The pain may radiate to the jaw or left arm. Shortness of breath and sweating with the discomfort is common. An impending “sense of doom” or a feeling like you may die can accompany these symptoms. It usually is unrelenting. Some individuals may use a “fist” under their left chest to communicate the pain. This is called the “Levine sign.”

Are there differences between men and women? Elderly?

Women tend to have more stomach related symptoms and tend to wait longer to seek treatment. The elderly tend to complain of more fatigue, weakness, and shortness of breath. If there is a change and the individual is concerned, then they should seek prompt evaluation.

When do you seek attention/call doctor?

Symptoms can come and go over days or weeks. Some individuals don’t have typical symptoms, especially women who complain of indigestion, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue. The key is to know your body and when something changes, act on it!!!

Why is it important to act fast?

Time is muscle. The longer one waits the more damage to the heart!