



Heart Health Fact Sheet



A heart attack is where the heart muscle is damaged because blood is not flowing to it properly and it does not receive enough oxygen. During a heart attack, blood clots prevent blood from flowing freely down the coronary arteries. This is typically caused when plaque in your arteries ruptures, causing disc-shaped blood platelets in your coronary arteries to stick together around the rupture which then blocks the arteries. It is also known as acute myocardial infarction (AMI) and acute coronary syndrome (ACS).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Women experiencing a heart attack tend to have 'atypical' symptoms. Rather than focussing on stereotypical male symptoms such as chest pain, you need to be aware of more subtle signs, including the following:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Abdominal, shoulder, upper back, neck and jaw pain
- Sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Palpitations
- Extreme fatigue
- Light headedness

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

The leading cause of a heart attack is underlying coronary artery disease, which is when cholesterol deposits build up in the arteries to form plaque. Too much plaque reduces blood flow and blocked arteries lead to a heart attack.

There are different types of heart attacks:

- **Unstable Angina:** Angina is a condition where your heart muscle has a temporary deprivation of oxygen, leading to chest pain and discomfort, but is relieved by rest and medication. Unstable angina when you experience chest pain or discomfort even while resting.
- **Non-ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction (NSTEMI):** This is when the damage to your heart muscle may be considered relatively small or only temporary.
- **ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction:** It means a large part of your heart muscle has been impacted due to an extended period of reduced blood supply.
- **Coronary Spasm:** The coronary arteries can spasm intermittently, leading to reduced blood supply to your heart muscle.

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Heart Attack

WHAT ARE THE STATISTICS?

According to the Victor Chang Institute, around 50 Australian women per day will die of a heart attack.

- More than 56,000 women a year are hospitalised for heart attacks.
- Approximately 40% of women's heart attacks are fatal, because many women are unaware of the symptoms.
- A study of 1.1 million people who had heart attacks revealed 42% of women did not feel any chest pain.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

It is essential to seek immediate treatment if you suspect that you, or someone you know, is having a heart attack. The longer a heart attack progresses, the higher the likelihood of death.

Treatment options include:

- **Coronary angiogram and stenting:** A balloon is inflated inside the blocked artery to allow blood to flow back to the heart muscle. Once open, doctors insert a stent, a mesh-like tube, to keep the artery open.
- **Medication:** Thrombolytics are drugs which dissolve clots that have developed in your coronary artery.
- **Coronary Bypass Graft Surgery:** Also known as CABGs, this is when surgeons transplant arteries from your arms, legs or chest and reattach them to the damaged coronary arteries, which allows the blood to flow through to the heart.
- **Defibrillators:** These may be used to shock your heart back to rhythm if it has stopped or gone into a dangerous rhythm after a heart attack.

RESOURCES

AUS

- <https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/your-heart/heart-attack-warning-signs>
- <https://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/cardiovascular-health/symptoms-of-heart-attack-stroke-in-women>

US

- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/warning-signs-of-a-heart-attack/heart-attack-symptoms-in-women>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/in-depth/heart-disease/art-20046167>



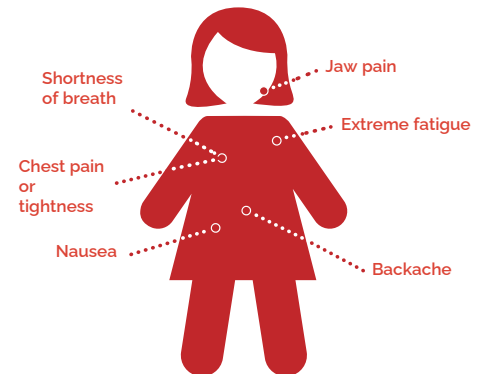
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HEART ATTACK SIGNS IN WOMEN

Warning signs differ between men and women. Women's symptoms include chest discomfort which radiates up to the throat, jaw and through to the back and shoulder blades, extreme fatigue, shortness of breath, heart fluttering, light-headedness and nausea.



HER HEART
RESOURCES



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