

A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO HEART ATTACK SYMPTOMS



It can stalk its female victims without warning or notice. It can be quiet and subtle. It can be disguised in ways such as fatigue, indigestion, sleep disturbances, shortness of breath and even general muscle weakness. In many cases, it is painless and overlooked until it is almost too late. The "it" we are talking about is the way women have heart attacks.

Pamela Marcovitz, M.D., medical director of the Ministrelli Women's Heart Center at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak says, "A woman's heart attack symptoms can be so much different than those felt by men. It's one reason that many more women die when they have a heart attack. Too many people still think of a heart attack as a man's disease."

Dr. Marcovitz also points out, "In some studies, less than 30 percent of women report having severe chest pains and traditional 'elephant on the chest' pressure usually associated with heart attacks. Yet, other studies show that chest pain symptoms may be present in up to 70 to 80 percent of heart attacks in women, but the symptoms may be less severe."

Pamela Marcovitz, M.D.



In one National Institutes of Health study, women's major symptoms prior to their heart attacks were:

- unusual fatigue (70 percent)
- sleep disturbance (48 percent)
- shortness of breath (42 percent)
- indigestion (39 percent)
- anxiety (35 percent)

Other symptoms reported by women leading up to a heart attack can include:

- heartburn
- sweating
- back and jaw pain
- **pain between the shoulder blades**

The bottom line from Dr. Marcovitz is that symptoms in women are not as predictable as those in men and that is why women should know their family heart history, understand their lifestyle risk factors and make sure they have regular heart checkups incorporated into their overall health care plan.

If you think you are having a heart attack – don't delay – CALL 911 and seek medical attention immediately.

Cardiac arrest warning signs

- sudden loss of responsiveness
- no response to tapping on shoulder or calling name
- no normal breathing

Action:

- you or someone else call 911 and get the AED (automated external defibrillator)
- start CPR
- use the AED as soon as it arrives