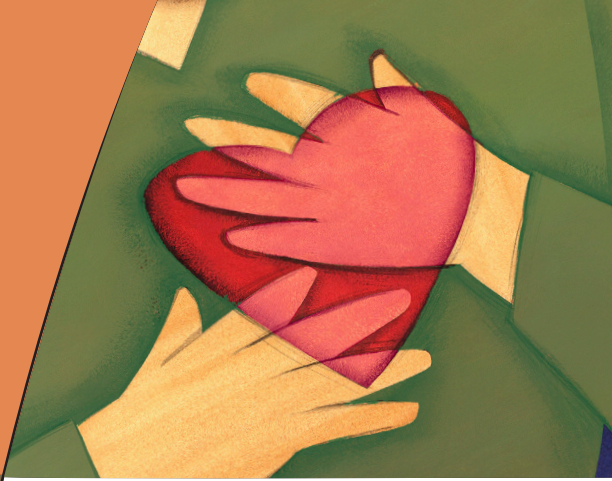


# Women and Heart Attack: Know the Warning Signs



“We have to get the messages across to young women that they are at risk for a heart attack, and they might experience typical and atypical symptoms. They also need to be aware of their own risk factors, including family history. Prevention and modification of risk factors is important for young women.”

Judith Lichtman, Ph.D, M.P.H.  
Assistant Professor,  
Yale School of Public Health

## CARE Tips

### Signs of a heart attack:

- Discomfort in the center of the chest lasting more than a few minutes.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or feeling light-headed.

The study was presented at the American Heart Association’s 8th Scientific Forum on Quality of Care and Outcomes Research in Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke on May 10, 2009.

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# Women and Heart Attack: Know the Warning Signs



Most women who have heart attacks don't recognize the warning signs. Yale School of Public Health researchers looked at 24 women, ages 55 and younger, who had heart attacks and were admitted to a Connecticut hospital. They found that:

- Many of the women did not know that less familiar symptoms could signal a heart problem. These symptoms include neck and shoulder pain, indigestion and feeling tired.
- Less than half of the women thought something was wrong with their heart.
- Almost all of the women had the typical symptom of chest pain.
- Most of the women took more than an hour to get to a hospital because they thought their symptoms were not real or were caused by something else.
- Most of the women had a family history of heart disease.

## **Bottom Line**

- Be familiar with the warning signs of a heart attack.
- Get frequent health check-ups, especially if you have risk factors like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, physical inactivity, diabetes and family history of heart disease.
- If you—or someone you are with—has chest discomfort and/or one of the other signs, do not wait longer than five minutes before calling 9-1-1 for help.

## **Definitions**

**Heart attack:** When arteries cannot supply enough blood to the heart muscle, a heart attack occurs. This causes permanent damage to the heart muscle, and parts of the heart muscle die.

**Indigestion:** Feeling of discomfort in the upper abdomen, including burning, belching, feeling of fullness, bloating and nausea.

CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement is committed to improving health in New Haven. One goal is to share important research findings in our community so that they are easily accessible to all—to educate, inform, and spur action. Yale investigators thank the women, men and children of New Haven who participated in research projects designed to improve health. We value your participation and recognize that you are central to these efforts. We hope that you can use this information to prevent disease and promote good health in your family and in our community.