



The Heart Truth®
Discussion Guide #4
Heart Attack Warning Signs

We all like to think that a heart attack could never happen to us. But what if it does? Do you know the signs of a heart attack? If you think you're having a heart attack, what do you do then?

Signs of a Heart Attack

- ♥ Chest discomfort—usually in the center of the chest, lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back, may feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain—most common sign in both men and women
- ♥ Discomfort in other areas of the body—one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach are common areas of discomfort
- ♥ Shortness of breath (with or without chest discomfort)—more common in women
- ♥ Cold sweat
- ♥ Nausea—more common in women
- ♥ Light-headedness

Take Action

When in doubt, check it out! If you think you may be having a heart attack, call 911 right away. Waiting to see if the symptoms improve could waste precious time needed before heart damage is irreversible. Don't try to drive yourself. Calling emergency medical personnel will allow treatment to start as soon as they arrive, and you will often get seen sooner at the emergency room if you arrive by ambulance.

Some people hesitate to call an ambulance or go to the emergency room because they are afraid of having a false alarm. Remember, even if you are not having a heart attack, heart attack-like symptoms need to be checked out to make sure there is not another underlying health problem that needs to be treated.

Making an emergency list can help medical professionals make the best decisions for your health in the event of a heart attack or other medical emergency. This list should contain all medications you are taking (including dose), medications and other substances to which you are allergic, regular doctor's name and phone number, and emergency contact person. Keep one copy in your wallet, one at home, and one at work. Let family, friends, and coworkers know where these lists are so that they can be easily found in case of emergency.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

- What are the warning signs of a heart attack? If you've known anyone who has had a heart attack, what symptoms did he/she experience?
- Create an action plan for medical emergencies. When you get home, share your action plan with your family and/or a close friend.

Adapted by Catherine Becker, Community Health Intern, UW-Extension, June 2011 from:

The Heart Truth® for Women: A Speaker's Guide. *The Heart Truth®*, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Revised December 2007. Information available at www.hearttruth.gov.

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American Heart Association, 2011. Information available at www.heart.org.

United States Department of Agriculture, 2011. Information available at www.choosemyplate.gov.

The content of this discussion guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute professional medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or recommendations of any kind. You should always seek the advice of your qualified health care professionals with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your individual needs and any medical conditions.

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HEART ATTACK SURVIVAL PLAN

Fill out the form below and make several copies. Keep one copy near your home phone, another at work, and a third copy in your purse.

Information for Emergency Medical Personnel and Hospital Staff

Medicines you are taking:

Medication Name	Dose	Times

Medicines to which you are allergic:

How to Contact Your Health Care Provider

Health care provider's name: _____

Phone number during office hours: _____

Phone number after office hours: _____

Person to Contact if You Go to the Hospital

Name: _____

Relation: _____

Home phone number: _____

Work phone number: _____

Cell phone number: _____