

CARDIAC EMERGENCIES

What you need to know

Risk Factors: Being over age 50, smoking, being overweight, having high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol, having had bypass surgery, having a previous history of heart trouble. Keep in mind that *anyone*, even a well-conditioned athlete, can develop heart problems! A person in cardiac emergency may only have one or two symptoms or may have several of them.

Congestive Heart Failure Signs/Symptoms

- ♥ Shortness of breath during activity or rest, which may wake you from sleep and may be accompanied by feelings of anxiety or restlessness
- ♥ Persistent wheezing or coughing (which can produce blood-tinged mucous)
- ♥ Swelling of feet, ankles, legs, or abdomen, or sudden weight gain (over a day or two); you may notice that your shoes suddenly fit tighter
- ♥ Feeling tired all the time and struggling with everyday activities, such as climbing stairs, carrying groceries, shopping or walking
- ♥ Lack of appetite and/or nausea
- ♥ Memory loss, confusion, or disorientation
- ♥ Rapid heart rate; palpitations (fluttering sensation in the chest)

Heart Attack Signs/Symptoms

- ♥ Chest pain, pressure, squeezing (a sensation like a rope is being tied around you or that an elephant is sitting on your chest), or fullness that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back
- ♥ Pain or discomfort may radiate to one or both shoulders or arms, the jaw, the back (especially between the shoulder blades), the neck, or the stomach
- ♥ Shortness of breath, with or without pain
- ♥ Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, light-headedness or fainting
- ♥ Women may have subtler and less intense symptoms than men, and may tend to ignore them

Other Problems That May Mimic Heart Trouble

- ♥ Kidney and liver problems can also lead to swelling and weight gain.
- ♥ Gallbladder attacks can often send pain to the upper abdomen (usually the right side), and may shift to the neck, shoulders or arms. Often the pain occurs after eating fatty foods.
- ♥ Heartburn or indigestion can cause burning pain in the upper abdomen and chest, usually occurs after eating or while lying down or bending over. It is usually relieved by antacids.

Remember, it is always best to err on the side of caution. If you or someone you care for experiences any of the aforementioned symptoms, it is always best to seek medical attention immediately. If in doubt, check it out. Call 911! It may save someone's life.