

HOW TO SURVIVE A HEART ATTACK WHEN ALONE

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Ultimately, recognizing the symptoms, calling immediately for help and taking aspirin or nitroglycerine quickly are the best ways to survive a heart attack when alone.

Prompt medical treatment is necessary during a heart attack to prevent damage to the heart muscle and death, but what do you do if no one is there to help?

What is a heart attack?

According to the Mayo Clinic, a heart attack, also known as a **myocardial infarction**, usually occurs when a blood clot blocks the flow of blood through a coronary artery. Coronary arteries lead into the heart, and an interruption of blood flow can damage the heart muscle or result in death.

Warning signs are usually mild, and some people may attribute them to other health conditions.

Because of this, the average person waits approximately **3 hours before seeking medical attention** for a heart attack.

Symptoms include:

- Pressure or tightness in the chest
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating or a cold sweat
- Abdominal pain
- Feeling of heartburn
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Cardiac arrest
- Nausea
- Irregular pulse
- Discomfort in the back, neck, or jaw

It is important to know that heart attacks can occur without any symptoms, and if warning signs do appear, they can often be different for men and women.

What are the warning signs of a heart attack for women?

"Although men and women can experience chest pressure that feels like an elephant sitting across the chest, women can experience a heart attack without chest pressure," Nieca Goldberg, M.D., medical director for the Joan H. Tisch Center for Women's Health at NYU's Langone Medical Center, told the American Heart Association (AHA). "Instead they may experience shortness of breath, pressure or pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen, dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting, upper back pressure or extreme fatigue."

The AHA indicates women should be on the watch for signs of:

- Uncomfortable pressure in the chest which comes and goes or remains constant
- Pain or discomfort in the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath without chest pain
- Cold sweat
- Nausea
- Lightheadedness
- Rapid or irregular pulse

Unlike men, the most common symptoms in women are jaw pain, back pain, shortness of breath, and nausea/vomiting.

<http://voxxi.com/2013/02/28/heart-attack-symptoms-women>

What do you do to survive a heart attack when alone?

"Many deaths could be prevented by acting quickly and getting treatment right away," Dr. Robert Frankel, Director of Interventional Cardiology, said in a Maimonides Medical Center report. "A person will commonly feel pressure or heaviness in their chest, which can travel to their shoulder, left arm or neck."

According to Frankel, the most important thing an individual can do to survive a heart attack when alone is to recognize the symptoms. The goal is to get to an emergency medical center where the artery can be unblocked in under 90 minutes. Research shows calling an ambulance is more effective than driving to a hospital by yourself.

Once the emergency response team has been called—or even before that time—individuals waiting at home should take between 162 and 325 mg of aspirin.

Individuals who suspect a heart attack should CHEW (not swallow) one tablet of 325 mg aspirin¹.

Why aspirin? The Harvard Medical School indicates aspirin in the event of a heart attack is critical because clots within the arteries continue to grow with every passing minute. Aspirin inhibits platelets from sticking to one another, thus preventing the blood clot from worsening.

Current recommendations indicate an individual has the best chance of surviving a heart attack if they chew the aspirin before swallowing rather than downing the pills whole. Research suggests chewed aspirin needs only 5 minutes to reduce platelet activation by 50 percent and by 14 minutes, maximum platelet inhibitors.

If swallowed whole, aspirin tablets will still work; however they take up to 12 minutes to reach 50 percent efficacy and 26 minutes for full platelet effect.

Don't have aspirin tablets? Individuals can also take Alka-Seltzer tablets with 4 ounces of water. According to a study by Harvard Medical School, Alka-Seltzer takes 8 minutes to affect platelets by 50 percent and 16 minutes for full efficacy. This product contains aspirin, citric acid and sodium bicarbonate, making it effective in a heart attack situation.

Harvard Medical School indicates for optimal results during a heart attack, one tablet of 325 mg aspirin should be chewed as quickly as possible. Coated tablets should be avoided; the coating will significantly slow the rate of absorption into the body, even when chewed.

If you are alone and have had a history of heart issues, you may have another important medication already on hand. This medication, states the Mayo Clinic, is nitroglycerin. If you suspect you are having a heart attack, you should take your nitroglycerine immediately, as directed. Never take someone else's nitroglycerin as this could cause serious complications.

Ultimately, recognizing the symptoms, calling immediately for help and taking aspirin or nitroglycerine quickly are the best ways to survive a heart attack when alone.

While there is no guarantee of survival, these tips provide the best chance for obtaining medical intervention in time.

¹If you take an oral baby aspirin once a day, take it at night. The reason: Aspirin has a 24-hour "half-life". Therefore, if most heart attacks happen in the early hours of the morning, the aspirin would be strongest in your system. Aspirin lasts a very long time in your medicine chest. Years. (When it gets old, it smells like vinegar.) It is important to always have ASPIRIN in your home.