

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Heart Attack & Stroke Emergencies

The best way to have a healthy heart is to reduce the risk factors that are *controllable*. Encourage a healthy diet, exercise, and weight-loss program that works for the person. Make sure to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program because he or she might want to limit what the person in your care can do. An individual is more likely to change his lifestyle and stick with them, if he is a partner in the process.

The warning signs of a heart attack can be both sudden and intense *or* they can start out with mild aches and pains and develop slowly. It is important to be able to recognize these warning signs and report them immediately by calling 911:

- ✓ New chest pain or discomfort that lasts longer than 15 minutes and is not relieved by rest or medication
- ✓ Discomfort in other areas of the body (jaw, neck, back or arm)
- ✓ Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea/vomiting or lightheadedness
- ✓ Stomach pain that may feel like heartburn
- ✓ Fainting spell or loss of consciousness

### Heart Attack Signs in Women

Women who have had a heart attack recalled having warning signs up to a month before their heart attack. Their unique warning signs were not recognized or were misdiagnosed when they sought medical care. The most common early warning signs in

women are unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance, shortness of breath, indigestion and anxiety.

### Silent Heart Attack

Some estimate that nearly 50% to 80% of all heart attacks are *silent*. A silent heart attack can injure your heart just like a more obvious heart attack that doesn't allow oxygen to get to part of your heart. But if a person doesn't know that they or someone else is having a heart attack, they may not get the medical help you need to limit the damage. Knowing the subtle signs of a silent heart attack can help you identify one.

With a silent heart attack, symptoms can make you feel like:

- ✓ You have the flu.
- ✓ You have a sore muscle in your chest or upper back.
- ✓ You have an ache in your jaw, arms or upper back.
- ✓ You are very tired.
- ✓ You have indigestion.

About every 26 seconds, an American will suffer a coronary event, and about every minute someone will die from one. **If you are worried about symptoms the person in your care is experiencing, you should act quickly, be firm and insist that he or she gets help.**

**Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out. Minutes matter. Fast action can**



save lives. Call 911 if you or the person in your care, experience heart attack warning signs. An emergency medical services (EMS) team can begin treatment when they arrive. EMS staff are also trained to provide resuscitation efforts to someone whose heart has stopped. People with chest pain

who arrive by ambulance may also receive faster treatment at the hospital. For many reasons, it's best to call 911 so that an experienced EMS team can begin treatment and arrange rapid transport to the emergency room.

Source: Heart.org; ClevelandClinic.com; Caregiving in The Comfort of Home: Chronic Heart Failure

## Brain Attack – A Different Name for Strokes

Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death in women and kills more women than men. *Strokes* can differ in their *presentation*. Some can present with sudden, yet very subtle changes in speech, coordination, or strength. The person suffering this type of stroke may not even realize the change is occurring. This is why some people never seek medical care. Others may note something is “different,” but the symptoms are mild and attributed to “a bad day” or another problem. Other attacks are much more obvious and may present with a sudden weakness or inability to move one side of the body. Other signs and symptoms may include the sudden progressive loss of vision in one eye, like a “curtain coming down,” sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg on one side of the body, sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding, sudden changes in walking, balance or coordination or the onset of an unusual headache.

Here's a tool to help you remember what to look for, so you can call emergency assistance. Think FAST, act FAST:

### FAST – The Cincinnati Stroke Scale

**F**acial droop Look at the smile; have person show his teeth. Does the face look lopsided? If the face droops on one side, this could be a brain attack.

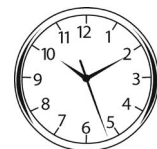


**A**rm weakness This could be subtle. The person could drop things, be unable to hold arms extended in front without one arm “drifting” down. In more severe cases, there may be inability to move the arm at all.



**S**peech Have the person repeat “You can't teach an old dog new tricks.” The speech should be clear. If slurred, garbled or abnormal in any way, or if the person is unable to speak at all, this could be a brain attack.

**T**ime Note the time the changes started. This is very important when determining what emergency treatment is given at the hospital.



Source: American Stroke Association

## Taking Care of Yourself— Reduce the Risk—Healthy Exercising

Exercise has been shown to reduce the chance of stroke, heart attack and cancer. It improves your mood too.

Select an activity you enjoy and can easily do.

Wear clothing that allows your body to breathe.

Listen to your body—begin slowly.

Make small changes to increase physical activity every day

Seek the advice of your physician and/or a qualified instructor for specific goals. As little as one week of aerobic exercise in older adults can improve heart rate. Being “young at heart” literally can happen at any age.



**NOTE**—Quick treatment is the best way to prevent long-term deficits from stroke or heart attack.

## Live Life Laughing!

I know how it will all end for me...One of my kids will unplug my life support to charge their phone!



### Inspiration

You can disagree with an argument, but not with a personal experience.

### Memory Care - Set Realistic Expectations

Know the person's limits, and then be encouraging and positive in helping him reach his goals. Look for small successes.

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**Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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***SAFETY TIPS* – Information Ready Pack**

- Keep 911 posted on all phones; cue it as a speed dial.
- Find out if your community has a certified stroke medical center ([www.strokecenters.org](http://www.strokecenters.org)).
- Keep a “ready pack” of information, including insurance, physician’s name and contact information, medication list, past medical problems and allergies. Keep this information updated. Also include in your ready pack:
  - ✓ Contact information for other family to be notified
  - ✓ Document of durable power of attorney if applicable
  - ✓ Copy of the person’s living will/advance directives, if applicable

**Know the signs and symptoms of brain attack and don’t hesitate to seek help.**

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

A blood clot blocking the blood flow through a blood vessel that feeds the heart causes a *heart attack*, possibly damaging or destroying a part of the heart muscle. A *stroke* happens when the arteries to the brain are narrowed or blocked so that too little blood reaches the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts and floods the brain. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. The most common early heart attack warning signs in women are unusual fatigue, sleep disturbance, shortness of breath, indigestion, and anxiety.  
T F
2. A silent heart attack can injure your heart just like a more obvious heart attack that doesn't allow oxygen to get to part of your heart.  
T F
3. If you are worried about symptoms the person in your care is experiencing, you should act quickly, be firm and insist that he or she gets help.  
T F
4. People with chest pain who arrive by ambulance will *not* receive faster treatment at the hospital.  
T F
5. The warning signs of a heart attack can be both sudden and intense *or* they can start out with mild aches and pains and develop slowly.  
T F
6. About every 26 seconds, an American will suffer a coronary event, and about every minute someone will die from one.  
T F
7. Quick treatment is the best way to prevent long-term deficits from a stroke.  
T F
8. Exercise has been shown to reduce the chance of stroke, heart attack and cancer.  
T F
9. If the person's face droops on one side, this could be a brain attack.  
T F
10. Noting the time that changes in a person started is *not* important for determining what emergency treatment is given at the hospital.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_