What are the warning signs of a heart attack?

The most common warning signs of a heart attack are outlined below. You may have just one of these symptoms, or you may have a combination of them. Symptoms can come on suddenly or develop over minutes and get progressively worse. Symptoms usually last for at least 10 minutes.

- **Discomfort or pain in the centre of your chest**—
  This can often feel like a heaviness, tightness or pressure. People who have had a heart attack have commonly described it as like “an elephant sitting on my chest”, “a belt that’s been tightened around my chest” or “bad indigestion”. The discomfort may spread to different parts of your upper body.

- **Discomfort in these parts of your upper body:**
  - feel short of breath
  - feel nauseous
  - have a cold sweat
  - feel dizzy or light-headed.

  Some people have also described feeling generally unwell or “not quite right”.

If you have heart attack warning signs, refer to your action plan and get help fast. Call Triple Zero (000) and ask for an ambulance.

Remember

- **People who have had a heart attack are at increased risk of having another.**

  People with coronary heart disease still delay seeking medical care the second time they experience warning signs of heart attack.

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for individual health advice provided by your doctor or cardiologist (heart specialist).
Why is a heart attack an emergency?
With a heart attack, every minute counts. Too many people lose their lives because they take too long to call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.

Getting to hospital quickly can reduce the damage to your heart muscle and increase your chance of survival. In hospital, staff will give you treatments that help to reduce this damage.

Why call Triple Zero (000)?
Calling Triple Zero (000) gets you:
• an ambulance fast
• treatment as soon as you phone
• advice on what to do while waiting for the ambulance to arrive.

Ambulance paramedics are trained to use special lifesaving equipment and to start early treatments for a heart attack inside the ambulance.

The ambulance is the safest and fastest way to get you to hospital. Attempting to get to hospital quickly in a private vehicle can be dangerous for the occupants of your vehicle and other road users.

It is always better to go to hospital and be told it’s not a heart attack than to stay at home until it is too late.

Want to know more?
For more information call the Heart Foundation Helpline on 13 11 12 or visit heartfoundation.org.au