

WARNING SIGNS FOR HEART ATTACK AND STROKE

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, heaviness, or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort as listed above. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

Symptoms can occur with exercise or exertion, stress related situations, exposure to cold weather, after eating, or at rest.

If you or someone you are with has chest discomfort or symptoms listed above, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than a few minutes (no more than 5) before calling for help. Call 9-1-1. Get to a hospital right away.

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. Emergency medical services staff can begin treatment when they arrive -- up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. The staff is also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. Also, patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital.

If you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. If you're the one having symptoms, don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

Stroke Warning Signs (From the American Heart Association):

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

If you or someone with you has one or more of these signs, don't delay! Immediately call 9-1-1 or the emergency medical services (EMS) number so an ambulance (ideally with advanced life support) can be sent for you. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's very important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

FIT WALKING INTO YOUR LIFE WITH THE 10,000 STEPS A DAY PROGRAM

General Information:

The goal of taking 10,000 steps in a day is a rough equivalent to the recommended 30 minutes of activity most days of the week. This level of activity will help to reduce your risk of heart disease can help you to live a longer, healthier life. Most people will need to build up to 10,000 steps a day rather than start out at this level. The program below provides a guideline for a comfortable, gradual progression of activity over a 4-week period of time.

You will need to invest in a pedometer. Many pedometers provide a variety of settings to count distance walked in miles or calories expended as well as steps taken. For this program, we will use the steps taken mode. Be sure to read the instructions for your pedometer carefully to insure accuracy of measurement. Most pedometers are worn on your waistband lined up with the middle of either your right or left pant crease. Make sure the pedometer is level to the ground, as well, for accurate counting.

Week 1:

Measure your steps in a typical week. Don't try to walk more than normal. Each morning, reset the pedometer to "0". Wear it all day from the moment you get up until you go to bed, except when immersed in water. When you remove it at night, record the number of steps you've taken. Note if you have done any formal exercise that day, for example "20-minute treadmill walk" or if there is a reason for more or less steps that day "meeting all day" or "gallery walk tonight". At the end of this week, add steps for all seven days. Divide by 7. Multiply by 1.2. This is your goal for the next week.

Week 2:

Your goal is to boost your average daily steps by 20%. Find ways throughout your day to add steps – take stairs instead of elevators, park farther away from the building, walk to your colleague's office to speak to him/her rather than call or e-mail them, or take a walk on your lunch hour. At the end of this week, once again total your steps, divide by 7 and multiply by 1.2.

Week 3:

If you haven't reached 10,000 steps, or if your goal is substantial weight loss (in which case you many experts recommend 12,000 to 15,000 steps per day) you may need to add some formal exercise into your day. This may include a 20-30 minute walk in the morning or evening outdoors or on a treadmill.

Week 4 and beyond:

Some people find that just with three weeks of effort they've reached their steps/day goal and are walking 10,000 or more steps per day. But many find it takes several more weeks of boosting by 20% each week until they can create a 10,000 step a day habit. Even if you only try for 10% more each week, you'll soon find your days are full of opportunities for more steps. You'll also find that in short order you won't need a pedometer to tell you how you are doing.

Steven N. Blair, et al, Active Living Every Day, Human Kinetics, 2001.