



Every year there are 735,000 Americans who suffer heart attacks according to the CDC. 525,000 (71%) of them are first-time heart attack victims. 795,000 people experience a stroke in the US per year.

Strokes are the leading cause of serious long-term disability, and the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States. More than 75% of stroke victims are over the age of 65.

Heart attacks and strokes are an unfortunate reality in our country. There is a good chance that sometime in your lifetime you will witness someone suffer from a heart attack or stroke or you yourself will be a victim.

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and stroke. It is equally important to know what to do if someone around you is having a heart attack or stroke. Recognizing an emergency and getting the individual the proper care quickly can mean the difference between life and death.

Signs and Symptoms of a Heart Attack

In movies and TV, we often see a person turn completely white and begin to clutch their chest when they are having a heart attack. While this could be the case in real life, it often is not. Many of the signs and symptoms of a heart attack are much more subtle.

Here are some of the signs:

- Chest pain or discomfort.
- Upper body pain or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or upper stomach.

- Shortness of breath.
- Nausea, lightheadedness, or cold sweats.

Not all of these must be present to be a heart attack. Pay attention to your body and what it is telling you. If you think you or someone near you is displaying heart attack symptoms do not brush them off.

Signs and Symptoms of a Stroke

Sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm, or leg on one side of the body.

- **Abrupt loss of** vision, strength, coordination, sensation, speech, or the ability to understand speech.
- Sudden dimness of vision, especially in one eye.
- Sudden and severe headache with no other cause followed rapidly by loss of consciousness — indications of a stroke due to bleeding.
- **Sudden loss of balance**, possibly accompanied by vomiting, nausea, fever, hiccups, or trouble with swallowing.
- Brief loss of consciousness.
- Unexplained dizziness.

What to Do If Someone Has a Heart Attack or Stroke

- Call 911.
Even if it ends up not being a heart attack or stroke it is truly better to be safe than sorry. Getting the proper medical attention quickly is their best chance to live and minimize effects.
- Try to keep the person calm and have them sit or lie down.
- Have the person take an aspirin if you suspect it's a heart attack as long as they are not allergic and are conscious to do so.
- If the person stops breathing, you or someone else who is qualified should

perform CPR. If you don't know CPR, the 911 operator can assist you until the EMS personnel arrive.

Summary

Because of the sheer number of heart attacks and strokes each year, there is a good chance someone you know could experience one. Knowing what to look for when dealing with someone who is having a heart attack or stroke is critical. You can be the difference in whether a victim gets the care they need quickly. Take heart attack and stroke symptoms seriously. If something seems wrong talk to the person or get a supervisor involved. Know what the emergency response plan at your worksite for a medical emergency like a heart attack or stroke. Knowing who to call, what the address of the worksite is, and who is CPR trained onsite can save the victim's life.