

Silent Killers: Heart Attacks

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Personal Healthcare Information



Silent Heart Attack

- Known since the mid-1980's
- 40% to 60% of heart attacks are unrecognized and undiagnosed
- Symptoms are vague: nausea, sweating, not feeling well, absence of chest pain
- No previous history of angina (chest pain)
- May have few risk factors of heart disease
- If minor, it increases risk of fatal MI in near future

Kannel WB, et al. N Engl J Med 1984;311:1144–1147.

Kim HW, PLoS Medicine, 2009; DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000057.

Sheifer, SE, et al. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2000;35(1):119-126.



Special: Heart Attacks in Women

- Women were significantly more likely than men to present with:
 - fatigue
 - neck pain
 - nausea
 - right arm pain
 - dizziness
 - jaw pain
- Less likely to present with chest pain

Special: Asian Indian

- Genetic trait for Lipoprotein a in this population
- 50% of the heart-related deaths occur below the age of 50 years
- 10% of heart attacks occur below the age of 40
- Risk factor cannot be mitigated with diet and exercise
- Special attention to “silent” symptoms is really important
- Occurs in India, UK or US

Sharma M and Ganguly NK. Vasc Health Risk Manag. 2005 Sep; 1(3): 217–225.



Special: Second heart attack

- Symptoms may be different from the first heart attack
- Nearly half of people reported a difference in shortness of breath between first and second heart attacks
- Women were more likely to have a difference in shoulder blade pain, jaw pain, or nausea
- Patients with diabetes were more likely to have a mismatch in chest symptoms
- Patients with mismatched symptoms are more likely to die

Sudden cardiac death in athletes

- Extremely rare events
- Hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy
- The most common cause of hypertrophic left ventricular myopathy
- Difficult to detect in young people
- Family history of sudden cardiac death without risk factors

Koester M. J Athl Train. 2001 Apr-Jun; 36(2): 197–204.





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