

Straight Arrow News

The Voice of the Arrowhead Gardens Residents Community

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Heart Attacks

What Every Woman Should Know (and Men, too)

Normally, we associate an impending heart attack with crushing chest pain. And, often, for men *and* women this is true. However, recent studies have identified several symptoms that women uniquely exhibit, often with no accompanying chest pain.

Researchers are identifying symptoms in women that can be easily interpreted. These include:

- Neck, jaw, shoulder, upper back or abdominal discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- *Right* arm pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sweating
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Unusual fatigue



A search of the web presented a wealth of information regarding this new understanding of heart attacks in women. One of the best discussions was from Dr. Suzanne Steinbaum, Director of The Heart and Vascular Institute at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

She explains that while the well-known heart attack symptoms can include chest pain and radiating discomfort in the *right* arm (*left* arm for men), there are several other ways your body may be telling you that something isn't quite right, potentially, with your heart.

She specifically details four silent heart attack symptoms that women, in particular, should most definitely be aware of:

- Shortness of breath may occur even intermittently for a few weeks before a woman experiences a heart attack. She advises that if you are used to doing a certain amount of activity and then, all

of a sudden you can't get enough air, it's a cause for concern.

- Irregular back pain in the lower or upper back can indicate stress to the heart muscle.
- Jaw pain, when a dentist is unable to find a cause, can often be directly linked to a heart condition, particularly when it occurs only during physical exertion. "Sometimes the heart isn't able to give a good signal and, instead, the pain can radiate to the neck, jaw and back," Dr. Steinbaum says.
- Nausea and flu-like symptoms are often reported days and weeks before a heart attack.

I'm Glad I Moved Here!

I moved into Arrowhead Gardens, down the hall from where my sister Laura lives, after "retiring" from caretaking of others. In my new home, maintenance is part of my rent, so there are no gutters to clean, no gardens to weed, no windows to wash, and no appliances to repair.

What I found here was my longed-for Artist Colony! I have two-hour art classes with a skilled teacher, who works with us individually and teaches skills, such as how to draw eyes. I am in a drum circle taught by a famed 80-year-old ex-jazz drummer. In December, I sang in a chorus that gave two Christmas concerts. I take Tai Ji Quan lessons for seniors to help develop a peaceful attitude and good balance. On alternate days, I am in an aerobic fitness class. I've joined the line dancing class and will participate in the Reader's Theater group.

If you or a friend aren't feeling normal or are experiencing any of the symptoms above, don't delay; call 911. It is better to take care of yourself and prevent damage to your heart, in the event you are having a heart attack. Dr. Steinbaum recommends, "A woman's intuition is a very strong thing; don't ever discount it."

NOTE: The AGRC Wellness Project is working with the Heart Institute in Seattle to schedule a workshop in the near future discussing women's cardiac issues.

– Linda Phillips



Photo by John Hosum

For the price of the rent of my apartment, which I call my "artist garret," I am part of this wonderful multi-ethnic vibrant community in my age group.

Management provides vans to take us places. Once a month, we have birthday parties, as well as Karaoke, movies in a comfortable theater, and special events throughout the year. An active residents organization provides many services, and volunteers put on seminars and meals.

I am getting to know individuals with fascinating life experiences. We often have a lot of fun, and I realize that Arrowhead Gardens is much more than an Artist Colony – it's my home.

– Jewel Bergan-Brumbaugh

