



Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

IF YOU SURVIVE THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE of heart attack or stroke, it is a shocking wake-up call and a lucky second chance to take better care of yourself. Unfortunately, many women hear the whispers of their intuition pleading with them to change, but wait until their body's symptoms are 'shouting' at them before they jump into action.

Lynn, is a mother, grandmother, artist, teacher, student, and stroke survivor. Like many fifty-seven year old women, Lynn's life was full of stress, obligations, life duties, and expectations, which got in the way of Lynn's intentions to take care of her health.

"Over a four year period, I felt guilty for not taking better care of myself. I am a professional mural artist, which carries many physical demands. I figured these physical demands ensured adequate exercise. I was going through a divorce and I was asked to take care of an ill family member which required I relocate to California for approximately six months. I returned to Spokane exhausted, depressed, with headaches, and an inability to sleep. Knowing I have

a family history of high blood pressure and heart disease, I made an appointment at my doctor's office and joined a gym, determined to feel better. I found no cause for alarm when my appointment was several weeks away, as many of my symptoms seemed *expected* in relation to menopausal symptoms, including heart palpitations, ringing in my ears, night sweats, and an inability to turn my brain off at night. With my visit one week away, I started to experience tingling in my lips and face. Soon my speech became thick, my left side wasn't as strong, and I couldn't keep my car from pulling to the left. My blood pressure was 197/107. Concerned, I called my doctor's office and they told me to monitor my blood pressures and bring them with me to my appointment, which was still five days away. Two days later, I awoke with numbness on the left side of my face and my left arm and leg wouldn't move correctly. I was taken to the emergency room and was told that I had suffered a stroke. Now that I look back at this experience, I recognize that intuitively I knew that the symptoms I attributed to menopause were not normal and it was fear that prevented me from acting on my intuition."

WRITTEN BY
AMY DONEEN AND CRAIG T. HUNT

As illustrated by Lynn's experience, ignoring the whispers of your intuitive voice can endanger your life. Why do some people take preventive action while others resist? Psychologist James Prochaska PhD, explains that when we undertake major change, we move through five stages.

Pre-contemplation is the first stage of change; Lynn was aware that her family history put her at increased risk for heart attack or stroke, and for four years intuitively knew that she should be doing more to care for herself. In stage two, *contemplation*, she considered making lifestyle changes, but didn't follow through. Upon returning from California she had made the decision to change, and entered stage three, *preparation*, Lynn joined a gym and made an appointment to see her physician. By

WARNING SIGNS

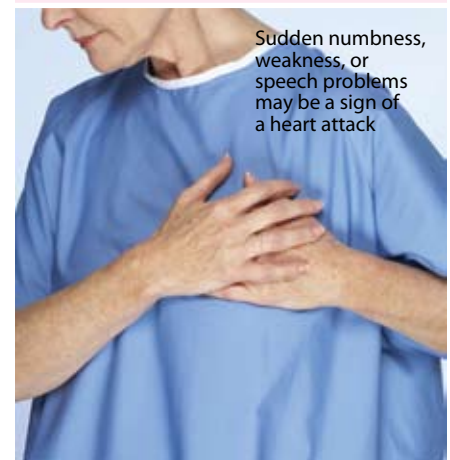
What are the warning signs of a stroke or heart attack?

- Sudden numbness or weakness
- Sudden speech problems or confusion
- Sudden change in vision
- Sudden trouble with balance, coordination or walking
- Sudden or severe headache.
- Fatigue, nausea, shortness of breath
- Anxiety or sleep disturbance
- Any upper body discomfort, including chest, jaw, arm, shoulder, back, or esophagus

What should I do if I experience these symptoms?

- Call 9-1-1 immediately. It is imperative that emergency medicine is accessed early.
- Don't second guess your symptoms. If you don't feel "right" seek medical care.

Provided by The American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org



Sudden numbness, weakness, or speech problems may be a sign of a heart attack

now, her body was sending her loud signals that something was wrong, yet fear kept her from being more aggressive in seeking immediate help. Lynn's stroke forced her into stage four, identified as *action*, after her stroke, Lynn was referred to the Heart Attack and Stroke Prevention Center, where she went through a series of tests to determine her overall vascular health. "This one action probably saved my life. I found out I was diabetic, had arteries of a seventy year old woman, and have high blood pressure and high cholesterol. My treatment included personalized nutrition, lifestyle education, and a comprehensive medical ther-

GET THE FACTS

Heart attack and stroke statistics according to the American Heart Association.

- ❑ More women than men die from cardiovascular disease, while 65% of women who have a heart attack have no prior symptoms.
- ❑ 6 out of every 10 stroke deaths occur in women.
- ❑ Every 45 seconds, a woman in the United States has a stroke.
- ❑ Stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in our country.
- ❑ Stroke is the leading cause of disability in our country yet only 2% of stroke care is spent on pharmaceuticals and 50 % is spent on nursing home care.

apy program."

Now in the fifth stage, *maintenance*, Lynn has integrated these overdue changes into a lifestyle and is "happy to report that I am painting again and have made a full recovery. Knowledge has empowered me to look forward to a healthy life and promising future."

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