

Would You Recognize a Female Worker Having a Heart Attack?



February is Heart Month. According to the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#), heart disease and stroke kill one in three Canadians before their time—and heart disease is the #1 killer of women. (Want to know your risk of heart disease and stroke? Take this [risk assessment](#).)

Speaking of heart health, the signs of a heart attack in a woman aren't always the same as in a man. So a woman having a heart attack—and her co-workers—may not even realize what's happening until it's too late to do anything. Thus, it's important to educate yourself and your workers on how a heart attack may present itself in a woman.

Signs of a Heart Attack

The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) says that women having a heart attack may think that other health problems or drug side effects are causing their symptoms or that the symptoms will go away on their own. As a result, they don't always get the health care they need to prevent complications or death from a heart attack.

Chest pain is the most common symptom in both sexes. But women may also experience these other symptoms:

- Unusual fatigue that gets worse with activity
- Difficulty breathing
- Heartburn that's unrelieved by antacids

- Nausea and/or vomiting that's unrelieved by antacids
- Anxiety
- Tightening and pain in the chest that may extend into the neck, jaws and shoulders
- General feeling of weakness
- Paleness
- Sweating.

Some women may have few of these symptoms, while others may have all of them at the same time. Symptoms may suddenly appear and then disappear. And women often report symptoms up to *one month* before the heart attack.

If a woman in your workplace has any of these symptoms and you or she think she may be having a heart attack, immediately call 911 or go to the nearest emergency medical centre.