

# Silent Heart Attacks

**I**t is true that most of the heart attacks are associated with sharp chest discomfort, often radiating to the arm, neck, or jaw, sometimes associated with shortness of breath and sweating. However, there are many more heart attacks which go unrecognized, and the symptoms are subtle such as, unexplained fatigue, and weakness, shortness of breath or nausea.

There are instances where heart attacks are truly silent without any warning symptoms, and discovered eventually in your doctors office during an electrocardiogram.

It is well known that overt heart attacks are linked to a higher risk of a stroke.

**heart Attack-Stroke Link** Some of the heightened risk of stroke comes from shared risk factors, including higher blood pressure, diabetes, and elevated cholesterol levels, all of these are risk factors for both heart attack and stroke Sometimes when you have a heart attack, it damages the heart muscle in the wall of the left lower chamber of the heart called left ventricle.

This damage prevents the heart from contracting normally which will result in stagnation of the blood in the area of the damaged heart muscle and may form blood clots there. These blood clots may travel to the brain, causing a stroke.

Patients with diabetes are more likely to have silent heart attacks, probably because of the fact that they often have related problem called neuropathy ( involvement of nerves) which will prevent the pain perception. Sometimes people may attribute the discomfort of a heart attack to indigestion or muscle strain, or an illness such as flu.

Most of the unrecognized heart attacks are discovered on an electric cardiogram in your doctors office. Electrocardiograms are not full proof. Sometimes, you need additional test such as echocardiogram to confirm the diagnosis. People with known heart disease, often gets electrocardiogram regularly, but others may not get electrocardiogram on a regular basis.

By age 65, you should have at least one electrocardiogram done. The need for other tests will depend on your cardiovascular risk factors. Knowing that you have an unrecognized heart attack might be somewhat uncomfortable and unpleasant, but this information is useful. This knowledge may give you extra incentive to follow a heart, healthy diet, regular exercise, and regular medical check up.

If you have a silent heart attack and if your LDL cholesterol is more than 70 mg/dL, you should take cholesterol lowering drugs. You should also aim for good blood pressure control. If you have diabetes, your doctor may want to have you take certain newer medications known as SGLT-2 Inhibitors or GLP-1 Agonists.

These medications not only help the diabetes, but also can prevent heart attacks and strokes.

**TYPICAL SYMPTOMS OF HEART ATTACK** -squeezing type of discomfort in the middle of the chest. - Chest discomfort, which radiate to the shoulders, arms, and neck -Sweating

**LESS TYPICAL SYMPTOMS OF HEART ATTACKS** -shortness of breath -weakness or unexplained fatigue. -Nausea or vomiting -Dizziness or lightheadedness -Mid back pain or jaw pain.

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