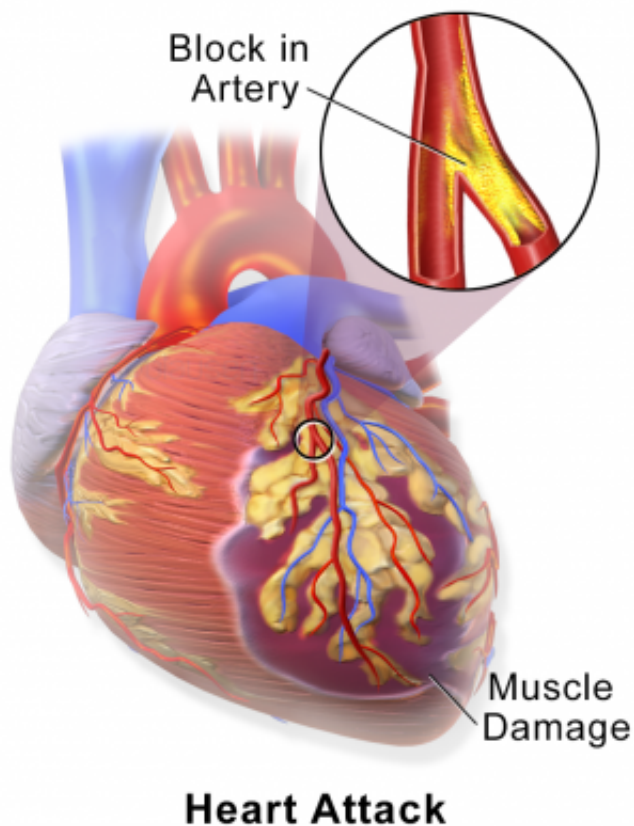


Higher rates of stress-related emotional factors in women linked to heart attacks, study suggests

March 22 2017, by Melva Robertson



Myocardial Infarction or Heart Attack. Credit: Blausen Medical Communications/Wikipedia/CC-A 3.0

A recent study by researchers at the Rollins School of Public Health

(RSPH) at Emory University suggests that among young survivors of heart attacks, women, more than men, have a higher vulnerability to emotional factors and are more likely to develop abnormal blood flow to the heart (ischemia) during stress.

The team, led by Viola Vaccarino, MD, PhD, professor and Wilton Looney Chair of Epidemiology at RSPH, performed [myocardial perfusion imaging](#) tests with mental stress and conventional (exercise/pharmacological) stress on 314 patients averaging 50 years of age who had survived a myocardial infarction (MI) in the previous 8 months. Patients' psychosocial characteristics were compared with those of 112 healthy community controls.

Results showed that, compared to control women, women with MI had twice the rate of major depression, four times the rate of [posttraumatic stress disorder](#) (PTSD), and reported more childhood adversities. Among men, these differences were negligible. These conditions were also more common in women with MI compared with men with MI.

The team also found that the rate of decreased blood flow to the heart during both stress conditions was twice as high in women with MI as in men with MI.

Results of the study were presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychosomatic Society on March 16th in Seville, Spain.

"The findings from our study provide evidence that stress-related [emotional factors](#) are significantly linked to early-onset [myocardial infarction](#) among women" explains Vaccarino. "Women may be more vulnerable to stress as a trigger of heart attacks, or they may have a greater emotional response to the cardiac event itself."

Provided by Emory University

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