

# Researchers find dying from a heart attack while having sex is rare

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A team of researchers at St George's University of London has found that people dying from a heart attack during or soon after having sex is rare. In their paper published in the journal *JAMA Cardiology*, the group describes their study of data from St George's cardiac pathology center, and what it showed about people dying from heart attacks related to sexual activity.

Movies and [television shows](#) have often depicted characters, particularly older males, having a heart attack and dying while in the throes of passion. In this new effort, the researchers looked into the risk of death from heart attack due to the passion and energy associated with sex.

Their work involved poring over [patient records](#) at St George's cardiac pathology center for examples of people dying during sex and totaling them. After looking at 6,847 patients dying (over the prior 16 years) of a sudden heart attack, they found that only 17 of them occurred either during or within one hour of engaging in sexual intercourse, a rate of just 0.2%. The researchers note that 11 of those 17 cases were male, but they were not old. The average age was just 38.

The researchers note that their results contradict prior studies showing that most such deaths happen with [older men](#). But they found that most of the younger men who died of a heart attack while having sex had a preexisting heart condition. More specifically, they found that nine of the deceased patients had no heart problem at all—their hearts simply stopped beating, a phenomenon known as a sudden arrhythmic death syndrome. And two of them died due to [aortic dissection](#), in which, as it sounds, the aorta tears and the heart becomes starved for blood and oxygen and stops beating. The researchers note that this happens most commonly in people that over-exercise or take [illegal drugs](#) such as cocaine that tax the heart. They also note that they found more deaths in women than were expected.

The researchers conclude that most people, and particularly older people, do not have to worry about having a [heart attack](#) and dying while having sex.

**More information:** Gherardo Finocchiaro et al, Association of Sexual Intercourse With Sudden Cardiac Death in Young Individuals in the United Kingdom, *JAMA Cardiology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamacardio.2021.5532](#)

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