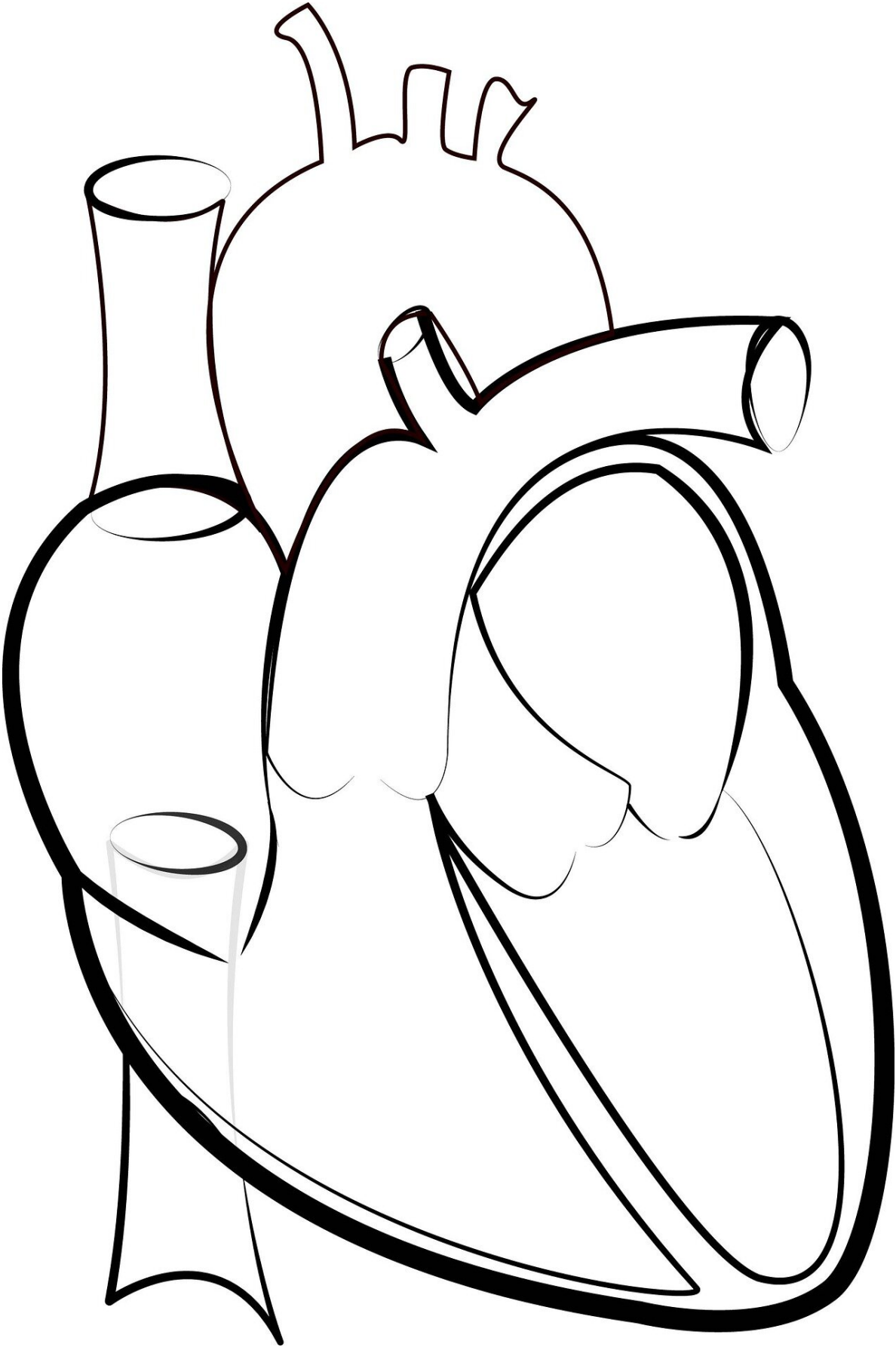


Heart attack symptoms in women are often different than men

February 10 2024, by Amanda Dyslin



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Sweating, nausea, dizziness and unusual fatigue may not sound like typical heart attack symptoms. However, they are common for women and may occur more often when resting or asleep.

Unlike with men, pain, pressure or discomfort in the chest are not always severe or even the most prominent heart attack symptom in women. That's why women need to understand their unique symptoms while also working to reduce their risk of [heart disease](#).

"It's important to first recognize the [risk factors](#) of developing heart disease and then work to curb behaviors that might exacerbate that risk," says Chatura Alur, M.D., family medicine physician at Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato. "Some factors play a more significant role in the development of heart disease in women than what are considered the tradition risks, such as high cholesterol, obesity and [high blood pressure](#)."

Women should also control these risk factors to help prevent heart disease:

- Diabetes
- Mental stress and depression
- Smoking
- Sedentary lifestyle

Certain conditions, including menopause, broken heart syndrome and pregnancy complications also may increase a woman's risk for heart

disease.

"Women of all ages should take heart disease seriously," says Dr. Alur. "Many women tend to downplay their symptoms and not seek care until heart damage has already occurred and an emergency room visit becomes necessary. We want women to understand the importance of listening to their bodies, understanding what feels normal to them, and seeking care before symptoms become severe."

Heart Month is a great time to brush up on knowledge about heart disease in women. Here are a few facts you may not have known.

Heart disease affects women of all ages

The combination of birth control pills and smoking boosts heart disease risks by 20% in [young women](#), according to the American Heart Association. Risk also increases as women age. Overeating and leading a [sedentary lifestyle](#) are factors that lead to blocked arteries over time. Don't let your age lull you into a false sense of security.

Heart disease isn't all about self-care

Unfortunately, all the salads and yoga in the world can't eliminate your heart disease risk. Family history often plays a factor.

Knowing your heart health numbers can help

The American Heart Association recommends you start getting your cholesterol checked at age 20, or earlier if your family has a history of heart disease. It's also important to have your blood pressure checked regularly.

Women can have heart attacks without previous symptoms

According to the American Heart Association, 64% of women who die suddenly of [coronary heart disease](#) had no previous symptoms.

When women experience [symptoms](#) of a heart attack, those signs often are misinterpreted. Women's symptoms often are vague—shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain. Other women experience dizziness, lightheadedness, pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen, and extreme fatigue. If something feels off or not right, don't wait to seek [medical attention](#).

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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