

## **Your Heart and You**

Heart disease is not just a man's disease. Heart attack and stroke and other cardiovascular diseases are devastating to women. In fact, coronary heart disease, which causes heart attack is the single leading cause of death for US women. Nearly twice as many women die of heart disease, stroke and cardiovascular diseases as from all forms of cancer.

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to a section of the heart muscle becomes blocked. This section of the heart muscle becomes damaged from lack of oxygen and begins to die. Heart attack is a leading killer of both men and women in the US.

Heart attacks occur most often as a result of coronary artery disease (CAD). In CAD, a fatty material called plaque builds up over many years on the inside walls of the coronary arteries (the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to your heart). An area of plaque can rupture, causing a blood clot to form on the surface of the plaque. If the clot becomes large enough, it can mostly or completely block the flow of oxygen rich blood to the part of the heart muscle fed by the artery. Acting fast can save your life and limit damage to your heart.

Symptoms of heart attack:

- Chest discomfort or pain
- Upper body discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea. Vomiting, light-headedness or fainting, breaking out in a cold sweat
- Pounding or extra heartbeats
- Sudden extreme fatigue

What to do if someone is having a heart attack:

- Call 9-1-1 immediately
- Only take an ambulance to the hospital
- Have the person chew an uncoated aspirin

Each year about 1.1 million people in the US have heart attacks and almost half of them die. Many more people could recover if they got help faster. Of the people who die, about half die within an hour of the first symptoms and before they reach the hospital.

### **THE HEART OF THE MATTER:**

Heart disease is the number one killer of US men and women each year. It is important to know the symptoms and to get help immediately.