



Heart Attack or Stroke? Call 911 First. And Fast.

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Many people in Washington die or are disabled from heart attack, cardiac arrest, and stroke because they do not get lifesaving treatment in time.

Timely treatment can mean the difference between returning to work or becoming permanently disabled. It can mean the difference between life and death. Reducing the time it takes for people having a heart attack or a stroke to get medical care is the goal of Washington's new [Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System](#). Calling 9-1-1 when you or someone else is experiencing heart attack or stroke symptoms activates the Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System.

Why Call 9-1-1 First and Fast?

Heart attack and stroke are life-and-death emergencies, and treatments available for heart attack and stroke work best when you get to the hospital quickly. Every second wasted is heart or brain tissue lost, increasing the risk for death or disability. So don't delay - get help right away by calling 9-1-1. Emergency medical services (EMS) providers are equipped with knowledge and resources that can save your life and can get you the treatment you need in the shortest amount of time.

WARNING SIGNS OF HEART ATTACK, STROKE & CARDIAC ARREST

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense — the "movie heart attack," where no one doubts what's happening. But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Don't wait too long before calling 9-1-1.

- **Chest Discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, lightheadedness, or unusual fatigue.
- As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

Stroke Warning Signs

F.A.S.T. is an acronym for the most common signs and symptoms of stroke. These signs tend to appear suddenly.

- **Face.** Ask the person to smile. Does the face look uneven?

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- **Arms.** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift down or is it unable to move?
- **Speech.** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does their speech sound strange? Strange speech could be slurred, the wrong words may come out, or the person is unable to speak.
- **Time** to call 9-1-1.

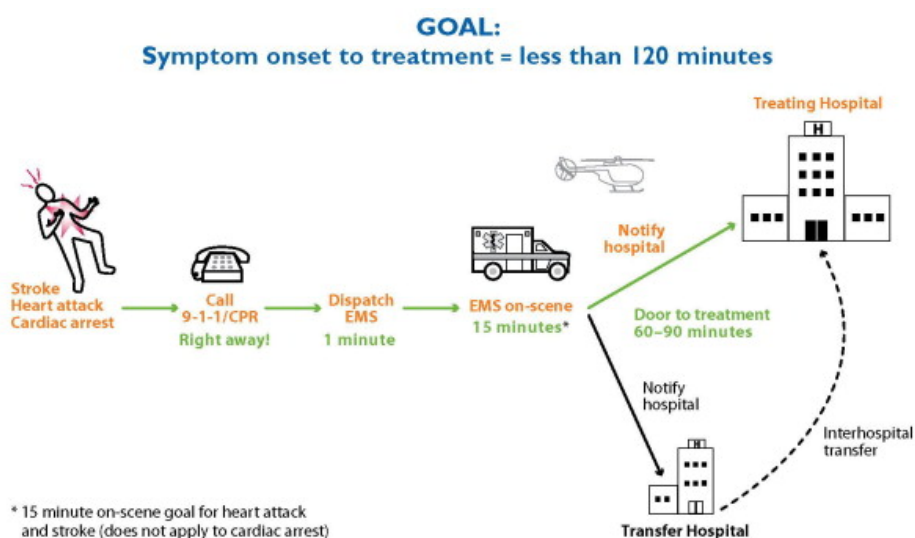
A sudden severe headache with no known cause and sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes are also warning signs of a stroke. When you notice any of these signs, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) may reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke. tPA is the only FDA-approved medication for the treatment of stroke within three hours of stroke symptom onset.

Cardiac Arrest Warning Signs

- **Sudden loss of responsiveness.** No response to tapping on shoulders.
 - **No normal breathing.** The victim does not take a normal breath when you tilt the head up and check for at least five seconds.
- If these signs of **cardiac arrest** are present, tell someone to call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number and get an AED (if one is available) and you begin **CPR** immediately.

If you are alone with an adult who has these signs of cardiac arrest, call 9-1-1 and get an AED (if one is available) before you begin CPR.

Washington State Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System



To improve outcomes for thousands of people, Washington is changing the way emergency medical services triage cardiac and stroke patients. A new law has created the Washington State Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System, modeled after the state's trauma system. The goal is to reduce the time it takes for people having a heart attack or a stroke to get medical care.

With the new system, standard guidelines for EMS call for patients to be taken directly to a hospital that can provide specialized care. If there isn't one close by, patients will be rapidly assessed by the local hospital and transferred immediately to the treating hospital. The public can help by learning heart attack and stroke symptoms and calling 9-1-1 immediately when they or someone they're with have these symptoms. They can also help by learning to do CPR.

Visit the [WA Department of Health website](#) for more information about the Emergency Cardiac and Stroke System.



Thank You to Our Partners

The *Call 9-1-1 First. And Fast.* public education campaign is a partnership between the American Heart Association and these organizations:



Related Links

- [Emergency Cardiac & Stroke System Fact Sheet](#)
- [WA Dept. of Health Emergency Cardiac & Stroke System Website](#)
- [American Heart Association Heart Attack Website](#)
- [Video: Heart Attack Warning Signs](#)
- [American Stroke Association](#)
- [Cardiac Arrest](#)
- [Hands Only CPR](#)
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The Warning Signs

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