

It's vital that everyone learn the **warning signs of a heart attack**. These are:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.
- **Other symptoms.** May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

These signs of heart attack may look very different in someone who is non-verbal. For example, the individual who is non-verbal, may rub or reach for their chest, or may become restless. Pain in areas of the upper body may also show as restlessness or irritability.

The two signs that may be most easily detected are shortness of breath or breaking out in a cold sweat.

**Direct support professionals:**

- Do you know how to measure the rate of someone's breathing?
- Do you know how to observe for sweating and how to report your observations?

**Nurses and QMRPs:**

- Do you include signs and symptoms of heart attack in your initial training?
- Do you regularly review this information with your staff?
- Do you encourage an atmosphere of "better safe than sorry" in your agency?

For more information about preventing heart attacks see:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/rhar/rhar.htm>

From the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>