

Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs

Objectives

By the end of this session, group members will learn:

- What a heart attack is
- Why it is important to seek treatment quickly if a heart attack happens
- The warning signs of a heart attack
- Why people delay in seeking help for a heart attack
- The benefits of calling emergency medical services
- How to plan ahead

Materials and Supplies

To conduct this session, you will need:

- "With Every Heartbeat Is Life" manual and picture cards
- Blackboard and chalk or several large pieces of paper, markers, and tape
- VCR and TV monitor



(Optional) **Note:** Arrange for a health professional to come to the session to discuss cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Handouts

Give group members these handouts during this session:

- "Learn What a Heart Attack Feels Like" (page 44)
- "Fast Action Saves Lives" (page 45)
- "Fast Action Saves Lives: Role Plays" (pages 46–48)
- "My Emergency Card" (page 49)
- "Tender Care for a Happy Heart" (page 50)

Session Outline

Introducing the Session

- 1. Welcome
- 2. Review of Last Week's Session
- 3. About This Session

Conducting the Session

- 1. The Facts Don't Lie
- 2. What Is a Heart Attack?
- 3. Importance of Rapid Treatment for a Heart Attack
- 4. What Are the Warning Signs of a Heart Attack?
- 5. Delay Can Be Deadly
- 6. The Role of Emergency Medical Services
- 7. How To Plan Ahead
- 8. Tender Care for a Happy Heart

Review of Today's Key Points

Weekly Pledge

Closing

Introducing the Session

1. Welcome

Welcome group members to the session.

2. Review of Last Week's Session

Say:

At the last session, we talked about the risk factors for heart disease.

Ask:

Who remembers the risk factors that we can prevent or control?



Note: Allow about 3 minutes for group members to respond.

Add the following risk factors if they are not mentioned:

- Overweight and obesity
- Physically inactive
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Smoking

Ask:

Would any of you like to share what you are doing to improve your heart health?



Note: Allow about 2 minutes for group members to respond.

Ask:

Has anyone completed the family health history?

Note: Give a prize to group members who have completed the family health history.

Ask:

Does anyone want to share what you have learned about your family health history?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to respond.

3. About This Session

Say:

Heart disease develops over many years. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, heart disease can result in a heart attack. That is why it is important to know the warning signs of a heart attack and what to do if you experience them.

Say:

Charles W. Chestnutt, an African American writer who lived during the late 1800s and early 1900s, said, "There's time enough, but none to spare."

Ask:

What does this quote mean to you?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to respond.



In today's session, we will discuss the warning signs of a heart attack and the importance of taking quick action if you experience warning signs. By the end of this session, you will know:

- How the heart functions
- What a heart attack is
- The importance of fast treatment for a heart attack
- The warning signs of a heart attack
- Why people delay seeking help for a heart attack
- The benefits of calling 9–1–1
- Steps you can take now to help you survive a heart attack
- How to prepare your emergency card

Conducting the Session

1. The Facts Don't Lie

Say:

- Each year about 1.2 million people in the United States will have a heart attack, and about half of these people will die.
- About half of the people who die of a heart attack will die before they reach the hospital.
- Among African Americans, about 65,000 men and 60,000 women have a heart attack each year.

To begin our session today, I would like to show a video about the importance of paying attention to heart attack warning signs.

Show the "Act in Time" video (14 minutes).

Say:

Now that we've seen the video, let's talk about it.

Ask:

- What did you see in the video?
- What did you hear in the video?
- How did the video make you feel?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to respond.

2. What Is a Heart Attack?

Say:

In the video, you heard facts about heart attacks. Now let's talk about what a heart attack is and how one happens.

■ Show picture card 2.1.



Say:

A normal artery allows blood to flow freely. A heart attack occurs when the blood supply going to a portion of the heart through one of the coronary arteries is blocked. Here's how this happens.

• Heart disease, which can lead to a heart attack, develops over time. Fatty deposits build up on the inside of the coronary arteries. When this happens, the arteries become narrow and not enough blood, oxygen, and nutrients get through to meet the needs of the heart.

- The coronary arteries can become blocked, usually by a clot. When this happens, the blood flow is closed off and a heart attack happens.
- If the blockage continues, part of the heart muscle will start to die.

- When a heart attack occurs, medical treatment can restore the blood flow to the heart. This keeps the heart muscle from dying.
- Treatments work best if given as soon as possible, within 1 hour after warning signs of a heart attack begin.
- When a part of the heart muscle dies, nothing can be done to restore it.

Ask:

Are there any questions about what happens during a heart attack?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to respond.

3. Importance of Rapid Treatment for a Heart Attack

Say:

- Treatments for a heart attack have improved over the years. Twenty years ago, not much could be done to stop a heart attack.
- Today there are treatments that can open up the heart's arteries and restore blood flow.
- "Clot-busting" medicines and other artery-opening treatments can break up the clots and quickly restore blood flow to the heart.

■ Show picture card 2.2.



Say:

• There is also a treatment called angioplasty. A balloon is placed in the coronary artery and inflated to open the artery. This restores the blood flow.

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- Sometimes with angioplasty, doctors will insert a stent. A stent is a wire mesh tube.
- The stent stays in the artery and keeps it open to improve blood flow to the heart.

Say:

- These treatments should be given as soon as possible, within 1 hour after warning signs of a heart attack start.
- The more heart muscle that is saved, the better chance a heart attack patient has of surviving and returning to a normal life.

4. What Are the Warning Signs of a Heart Attack?

Say:

It is important to know how to recognize a heart attack. This activity should help you learn the warning signs of a heart attack.

Ask:

What warning signs would make you think someone is having a heart attack?

Note: Write group members' responses on a blackboard or on a large piece of paper taped to the wall.

Give each group member the "Learn What a Heart Attack Feels Like" handout (page 44).

Show picture card 2.3, and review the handout.

Say:

These are the warning signs most commonly reported by heart attack patients, both women and men:

• Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.





- Discomfort in one or both arms or the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Cold sweat
- Feeling light-headed
- Nausea or feeling sick to their stomach

The most common warning sign of a heart attack for men and women is chest pain or discomfort.

- Men and women do not need to have all of the warning signs to be having a heart attack.
- The warning signs mentioned are the most common ones, and most people experience more than one of them. Some signs can occur together. For example, chest discomfort often occurs with shortness of breath. Also, arm pain, sweating, and nausea may occur together.

Say:

Many people think that all heart attacks happen the way you see them on TV or in the movies—a person grabs his or her chest and falls to the floor. This is a myth. The reality is that not all heart attacks happen this way. Many heart attacks start slowly, with signs gradually getting stronger.

- A heart attack often is not a sudden, deadly event. A variety of warning signs may signal that someone is in danger.
- Sometimes the pain or discomfort is mild, and the signs may come and go.

Ask:

What do you think are other reasons why people do not recognize when they are having a heart attack?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to call out answers.

Add the following reasons if they are not mentioned.

- People may confuse the warning signs of a heart attack with the symptoms of other diseases, such as asthma.
- People may confuse the warning signs of a heart attack with the symptoms of a pulled muscle, indigestion, or the flu.
- Some people do not believe they are at risk for having a heart attack. When they have warning signs, they ignore them or wait to see if the signs get worse before they call for help.

5. Delay Can Be Deadly

Say:

People often wait too long before they seek medical care for the warning signs of a heart attack.

- Some people wait 2 to 4 hours, or even a day or more, before getting help.
- If you think a heart attack is happening, the most important thing to remember is this—call 9–1–1 in 5 minutes or less.

Say:

When people having heart attacks decide to seek help, they often do not call 9-1-1. Only half of all heart attack patients arrive at the hospital by ambulance.

Give each group member the "Fast Action Saves Lives" handout (page 45).



Say:

Let's go over how to take fast action when you think a heart attack is happening.

Note: Ask a volunteer to read the handout aloud.

Ask:

Think about yourself and your family—what might prevent you from calling 9–1–1 quickly if you think you are having a heart attack?



Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to respond. Write their answers on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper taped to the wall.

Add these reasons if they are not mentioned.

- They did not think their symptoms were severe enough.
- They were unaware that calling 9–1–1 has many lifesaving advantages.
- They believed that the emergency personnel would not respond to their call fast enough.
- They thought driving themselves to the hospital would be faster.
- They were concerned about being embarrassed when an emergency vehicle ambulance or fire engine—showed up at their door.
- They were concerned about the cost of the ambulance and medical care.
- They were afraid of being embarrassed if the symptoms were a false alarm.

Say:

If you are having a heart attack and you or someone else cannot call 9-1-1, have someone drive you to the hospital at once. Never drive yourself. You may pass out along the way, putting yourself and others in danger.

Say:

It is easy to talk about what to do when a heart attack happens, but it is not so easy to take the right action if you or someone you know is actually having symptoms. Let's take time to act out different scenarios to prepare you for a real situation.

Note: Ask for volunteers in the group to form three teams of two people each. Give each team one of the three different role plays in the "Fast Action Saves Lives: Role Plays" handout (pages 46–48).



Note: Ask the teams to take a few minutes to read the role play, decide who will play the characters, and think about what they will say. Then **ask** each team to present their "drama" to the group.

Ask:

Now that you have seen the three scenarios, what do you think is the **main action** you must take when someone is having the warning signs of a heart attack?

Note: Allow a moment for group members to call out the answer. If no one gives the correct answer, **say:**

The answer is to call 9-1-1 in 5 minutes or less.

6. The Role of Emergency Medical Services

Say:

Our actors did a great job of showing us why it is important to call 9-1-1 right away. Calling 9-1-1 is like bringing the hospital emergency department to your door.

Ask:

What are the benefits of calling emergency medical services?



Note: Allow 3 minutes for group members to respond.

Add these answers if they are not mentioned:

- Emergency personnel arrive fast and can start treatment right away. They may carry oxygen, heart medicine, pain relief medicine, aspirin, or other medications that can help in case of a heart attack.
- In many locations, emergency personnel are linked to the hospital. They can send information about a patient's condition to the emergency department before the patient arrives at the hospital.
- Heart attack patients who are brought by ambulance receive faster treatment than patients who have someone drive them to the hospital.

• Your heart may stop beating during a heart attack. Emergency personnel carry equipment to restart the heart if that happens.



Note: Most communities have the 9-1-1 system. However, if your community does not, say:

The best way to get the care you need is to call the local emergency medical number. In our community, that number is ______.

Say:

It is a good idea to plan ahead for who will take care of your family in an emergency. Emergency medical personnel will usually contact a relative or friend to make arrangements, if necessary.

Ask:

What would you plan to do if you suddenly had to go to the hospital in an ambulance?

Note: Allow about 5 minutes for group members to discuss their answers.

7. How To Plan Ahead

Say:

We have learned a lot today about heart attacks and what to do if one happens. Here's the good news: Planning ahead with your family can help you survive a heart attack. Here are things you can do now to prepare for a possible heart attack.

Show picture card 2.4.



Say:

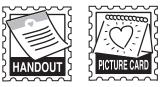
You now know the warning signs of a heart attack. Talk to your family and friends about these signs and the importance of calling 9-1-1 right away.





You and other adults in your family should talk to your doctor about your risk of a heart attack and how to lower it.

Show picture card 2.6, and give each group member the "My Emergency Card" handout (page 49).



Say:

You and your family should have a plan of action in case of an emergency. This plan should include an emergency card. This card gives health care providers the information they need to know about you in case of an emergency. Let's look at your emergency card. The emergency card includes the following information:

- Name, relationship, and phone number of emergency contacts who should be called if you have to go to the hospital
- Emergency numbers in your area
- Name and phone number of your doctor or clinic
- Your health conditions
- Current medicines
- Known allergies
- Any other important information

Make copies for all adults in your family and encourage them to fill out the card.

Note: Allow 3 minutes for group members to complete the card.

- Ask for volunteers to tell you how they would explain the importance of making a survival plan to their family members.
- Ask group members to tell you how they would make sure that all of their family members (such as a grandparent, spouse, or uncle) know what to do in case of a heart attack.
 - Note: Allow 2 or 3 minutes for group members to respond.

More Information

Aspirin: Take With Caution

A person who is thinking about using aspirin for heart problems should talk to a doctor first. If the doctor thinks that aspirin is a good choice, it is important to take the correct dose.

If a person has had a heart attack or stroke, aspirin can help lower the risk of a second one. It can also help keep arteries open in persons who have had heart surgery. It has also been shown that healthy women who take a low dose of aspirin every other day may prevent a first stroke. Aspirin may also prevent a first heart attack in women over the age of 65.

8. Tender Care for a Happy Heart

Say:

After you finish preparing your emergency card, try some of these actions.

Give group members the "Tender Care for a Happy Heart" handout (page 50).

Note: Allow 2 to 3 minutes for group members to read the handout.

Ask:



Which of these things would you like to do first?

Note: Allow about 3 minutes for group members to respond.

Say:

Choose one or two action items from this handout that you would like to do during each week of the training. Then, write down the date that you complete each action.

Let's review the main points that we learned today.

What is a heart attack?

- A heart attack occurs when a coronary artery becomes blocked, and blood flow is closed off.
- If the blood flow is stopped, parts of the heart muscle start to die.

What stops a heart attack?

• Quick action and medical treatment restores blood flow and saves heart muscle.

Why is it important to get treatment quickly?

- Quick treatment can prevent the heart muscle from dying.
- It is best to receive treatment within 1 hour after warning signs start. This will improve chances of survival and will help save the heart muscle.
- "Clot-busting" and other medicines open up the artery and restore blood flow.
- Angioplasty opens the artery and restores blood flow.

What are the warning signs of a heart attack?

- Your chest may hurt or feel squeezed.
- One or both of your arms, your back, or your stomach may hurt.
- You may feel pain in your neck or jaw.
- You may feel like you cannot breathe.
- You may feel light-headed or break out in a cold sweat.
- You may feel sick to your stomach.

What should you do if you experience these warning signs?

- Call 9–1–1 in 5 minutes or less, even if you are not sure you are having a heart attack. Calling 9–1–1 gets you treated more quickly.
- Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Weekly Pledge



Say:

Our quote today states, "There's time enough, but none to spare." This quote is especially true if you or your family members experience warning signs of a heart attack.

Say:

You have learned a lot today about how to be prepared if a heart attack happens. Now let's think about how you can practice what you have learned. Please think of one change you can make. This will be your pledge for the week.

Say:

Be specific about **what** you plan to do, **how** you plan to do it, and **when** you will start. Here are some examples:

- Within the next week, I will think about what to do if a heart attack happens at home, at work, in the middle of the night, or in other situations.
- I will talk with family and friends within the next week about the heart attack warning signs and the need to call 9–1–1 right away.
- I will set up an appointment within the next month to talk to my doctor about my heart attack risk.

Note: Allow 5 minutes for group members to think of a pledge.

Would anyone like to share his or her pledge with the group?

Note: Write down pledge ideas on the blackboard or on a large piece of paper taped to the wall.

(Optional) Say:

A personal value is a quality that you consider valuable or important. Personal values can help you make changes in your everyday life to improve your health.

Say:

Today, the value is **serenity.** Serenity helps you stay calm, even when you face problems or worries. It can help you manage stress and anger, which are two things that can bring about a heart attack.

Ask the group members to share how serenity, or another personal value, can help them keep their pledge.

Note: Allow 3 minutes for group members to share their ideas.

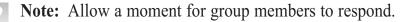
Say:

We will talk about how you did with your pledge at the next session.

Closing

Say:

Thank you for coming today. What did you think of today's session?



Say:

The next session is about physical activity. Please wear comfortable clothing and walking shoes.

Please continue to work on your family health history.

Note: Think about today's class. What worked? What didn't work? Have you made any changes in your own life that were covered in today's session?

Learn What a Heart Attack Feels Like

Act fast. Call 9–1–1. It could save your life.

Clot-busting medicines and other treatments can stop a heart attack as it is happening. **These treatments work best if given within 1 hour of when heart attack signs begin.** If you think you are having a heart attack, call 9–1–1 right away.

KNOW THE HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS:



You may feel like you can't breathe.

You may feel light-headed or break out in a cold sweat.

You may feel sick to your stomach.

Fast Action Saves Lives

YOU MAY NOT BE SURE IT IS A HEART ATTACK.

A heart attack may not be sudden or very painful. You may not be sure what is wrong. But it is important to check it out right away.



ACT FAST. CALL 9-1-1.



Call 9–1–1 in 5 minutes or less. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

When you call 9–1–1, an emergency vehicle arrives right away. Medicines can be given at once.

TO HELP SURVIVE A HEART ATTACK, TAKE THESE STEPS:

Learn the warning signs of a heart attack, and act fast if you feel them.

■ Talk with family and friends about the warning signs and the need to call 9–1–1 right away.

Ask your doctor about your heart attack risk and how to lower it.

Complete the "My Emergency Card" handout (page 49).

Fast Action Saves Lives: Role Plays

Role Play 1: At Home

Actor 1

You are at home having breakfast with your spouse. You tell your spouse that you woke up not feeling well. You have a variety of warning signs, including:

■ You feel some pressure and discomfort in your chest.

■ Your arm hurts.

- You feel short of breath.
- You feel a little light-headed.

Actor 2

You look worried—you are not sure what is wrong, but your spouse looks sick. You tell your spouse you have recently heard about the signs of a heart attack and are worried that this may be the problem. You say that maybe it is best if you call 9-1-1.

Actor 1

You insist it is nothing, probably just indigestion. It will pass; you will be fine.

Actor 2

You reply by telling your spouse why it is important to call 9–1–1 right away:

Even if you are not sure it is a heart attack, it is best to check it out.

- If it is a heart attack, fast treatment can prevent damage to the heart.
- Getting to the hospital quickly means that treatment can start right away and maybe save your life.

You call 9–1–1.

Fast Action Saves Lives: Role Plays (continued)

Role Play 2: At Work

Actor 1

You are at work one afternoon, and you see that your coworker does not look well. You ask if anything is wrong.

Actor 2

You reply that you came to work this morning not feeling quite right. You describe the warning signs:

A heavy feeling in the center of the chest

Difficulty catching your breath

- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Feeling light-headed
- Some pain going down the left arm

Actor 1

You say you have heard that these signs may mean a heart attack. If so, it is best to get it checked out right away at the hospital. You offer to call 9-1-1.

Actor 2

You give your coworker many reasons why this is not necessary.

- You ate a big lunch, and it's just indigestion, nothing serious.
- You don't want to cause a scene at work and get everybody worried.
- You want to wait and see if the pain goes away in a little while.
- If you went to the hospital, no one would be there to pick up your grandson from daycare.

Actor 1

You tell your coworker why it is important to call 9-1-1 right away. You make the call.

Fast Action Saves Lives: Role Plays (continued)

Role Play 3: At Night

Actor 1

You are at home one night reading a magazine when you suddenly start to feel very sick. You call your neighbor on the phone to say you are not feeling well. You describe the signs.

- You suddenly feel a very bad pain in the center of your chest.
- You are out of breath, and you are breaking out in a cold sweat.

You feel it is something bad, and you think you should drive yourself to the hospital. Will your neighbor go with you?

Actor 2

You tell your neighbor you are worried because these symptoms sound like the warning signs of a heart attack. You say in this case it is best to call 9-1-1, not to drive yourself, so you will get to the hospital safely and be treated right away.

Actor 1

You protest that you don't want to wake up the neighborhood and cause a big scene with the siren and all the lights; it's easier to drive.

Actor 2

You tell your neighbor why it is better to call the emergency service.

- Emergency personnel can start medical care right away.
- If your heart stops beating, emergency personnel can revive you.
- Heart attack patients who arrive by ambulance tend to receive faster treatment when they get to the hospital.

Actor 1

You agree that this makes sense. You ask your neighbor to call 9-1-1 for you right away and then come over to be with you.

Cut along dotted lines. Fold card in half and paste with a glue stick (Fold 1). Fold in half again to make your own personal wallet card (Fold 2).

	Emergency Numbers Date of Birth:	Emergency Contacts:	Local Clinic/Hospital:		Local Police Department:	(FOLD 1)	No List current medications, known allergies, and any other information. No No Known Allergies:
My Emergency Card	Home Phone:	acts:	Relationship				Do you have any of the following conditions? Heart Disease □ Yes Previous Heart Attack □ Yes High blood pressure □ Yes High blood cholesterol □ Yes Diabetes □ Yes Other
ard			Phone				Do you have any of t Heart Disease Previous Heart Attack High blood pressure _ High blood cholesterol Diabetes Other

My Emergency Card

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HANDOUT—SESSION 2

Tender Care for a Happy Heart

Choose one or two action items from this handout that you would like to do during each week of the training. Then, write down the date that you complete each action.

Action	Date	Action	Date
Say something nice, positive, or uplifting to someone.		Call a friend you have not seen for a long time.	
 Allow additional time to do things and get to places without rushing. 		Look at yourself in the mirror and say, "I am special and unique."	
 Try a new hobby such as arts and crafts. Look for an activity that will allow you to make 		 Write down how you feel. At the end of the day, think about the things that were good and the things you can improve. 	
new friends.Show gratitude to at least five people.		Rest. Go to bed 1 hour earlier than usual.	
 Tell your loved ones that you love them. 		 Listen to soft music to relax. 	
Do something nice for someone.		Help someone in need.Plant a garden.	
□ Think about three things that make you happy.		Be thankful for your family.	
Value what you have, and try to see the		Seek support in your faith community.	
positive side of things.		□ Speak calmly.	
Do something special for yourself.		Take 15 minutes to breathe deeply and relax.	
 Laugh and be positive. If you like jokes, tell one. 		Be kind to someone with whom you have differences.	