

By Keith Jones, Scottsdale Healthcare



# Heart Attacks Are Stealthier Than You Think

**WE'VE ALL SEEN** it in the movies. The actor suddenly clutches his chest before falling over dead. Instantly, we know he has had a heart attack.

But the truth is that most heart attacks start slowly with mild pain or discomfort rather than being sudden and intense, according to the American Heart Association.

The movies have one thing right, however—chest pain or discomfort can be a sign of a heart attack. It may be a steady pain. Or it may go away and come back.

**“Some people get a feeling of inexplicable doom. They know something is wrong, but can't quite say what...”**

“Most people complain of a pressure or a tightness—a squeezing or band-like constriction during a heart attack. It is usually, but not always, in the mid chest and often is described as indigestion in the chest,” says Scottsdale Healthcare cardiologist Lawrence Cook, M.D.

While chest pain is often associated with a heart attack, it's not a universal symptom that is always experienced, according to Scottsdale Healthcare cardiologist David Rizik, M.D.

Other symptoms include nausea, sweating, shortness of breath, and discomfort that seems to spread to other parts of the body, typically shoulders, neck, lower jaw and arms.

“Some people get a feeling of inexplicable doom. They know something is wrong, but can't quite say what,” says Dr. Cook.

Remember, you may have one or several symptoms and they may come and go.

## Act Fast

Many people don't recognize or want to believe they're having a heart attack so they delay calling 9-1-1 or going to the hospital. That can increase the chances of disability or death.

The American Heart Association notes that calling 9-1-1 is usually the fastest way to get treatment. Emergency medical personnel can begin treatment for heart attacks right away and quickly transport you to the hospital.

Recognizing the vital role of emergency medical personal, Scottsdale Healthcare has developed strong partnerships with the local fire department and paramedics. When fire department members and paramedics are in the field, they can do an EKG, call the emergency room at Scottsdale Healthcare Thompson Peak Hospital and speak to a physician to coordinate the patient's care.

This collaboration is one reason why

Scottsdale Healthcare Thompson Peak Hospital was recently accredited as a Certified Chest Pain Center, a recognized facility for rapidly diagnosing and treating chest pain to prevent further injury to the heart.

Scottsdale Healthcare Shea Medical Center and Scottsdale Healthcare Osborn Medical Center also are accredited as Certified Chest Pain Centers by the Society of Chest Pain Centers

“Certification as a Chest Pain Center means a dedication to rapid diagnosis and treatment, which are the keys to interrupting the deadly progression of a heart attack. If you don't meet the criteria for a heart attack, further diagnosis and provocative testing will be recommended so you leave the hospital with a low risk of cardiac issues, or you will be referred for aggressive intervention,” says Dr. Cook.

The Scottsdale Healthcare hospitals' accreditation and was awarded because of their ability to provide a higher level of care through detailed coordination of emergency services. Chest Pain Centers also must meet high standards for patient care, diagnostic and rehabilitation services, and community education programs.

“A certified Chest Pain Center means you can get expert, state-of-the-art care for heart disease and heart attack symptoms 24/7,” says Dr. Rizik. “It is a great resource that is for and about caring for patients and our community.” ■

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