

Heart Disease and Stroke Facts: Signs and Symptoms of Heart Attack

What is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack happens when blood supply to part of the heart stops or is severely reduced by a clot. A loss of blood supply, even for a few minutes, injures or kills heart cells leading to disability or death.¹

Heart Disease in Alaska

- Heart diseases was the 2nd leading cause of death in Alaska in 2006²
- Heart disease accounted for over 1/3 of the total hospitalization costs for Alaska in 2007 at \$515 million³
- Less than 1/3 of Alaskans who have suffered a heart attack report being referred to cardiac rehabilitation³

A Heart Attack is an Emergency! Minutes count!!

Call 9-1-1. An ambulance is the fastest way to receive lifesaving treatment. You will receive treatment sooner than getting to the hospital by car and faster treatment at the hospital. The best chance of surviving a heart attack is rapid emergency medical care. It is critical to:

1. **Know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack**, so you can identify one in yourself or someone else early.
2. If you or someone around you shows one or more signs of a heart attack, **immediately call 9-1-1.**

Signs of Heart Attack¹

Here are the signs to look out for:

- **Chest Discomfort** – Consistent or recurrent pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- **Upper Body Discomfort** – Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach;
- **Shortness of Breath;**
- Other signs include **cold sweats, nausea, or light headedness.**

Women are more likely than men to experience symptoms in addition to chest pain, particularly shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, back pain, or pain in the lower jaw.

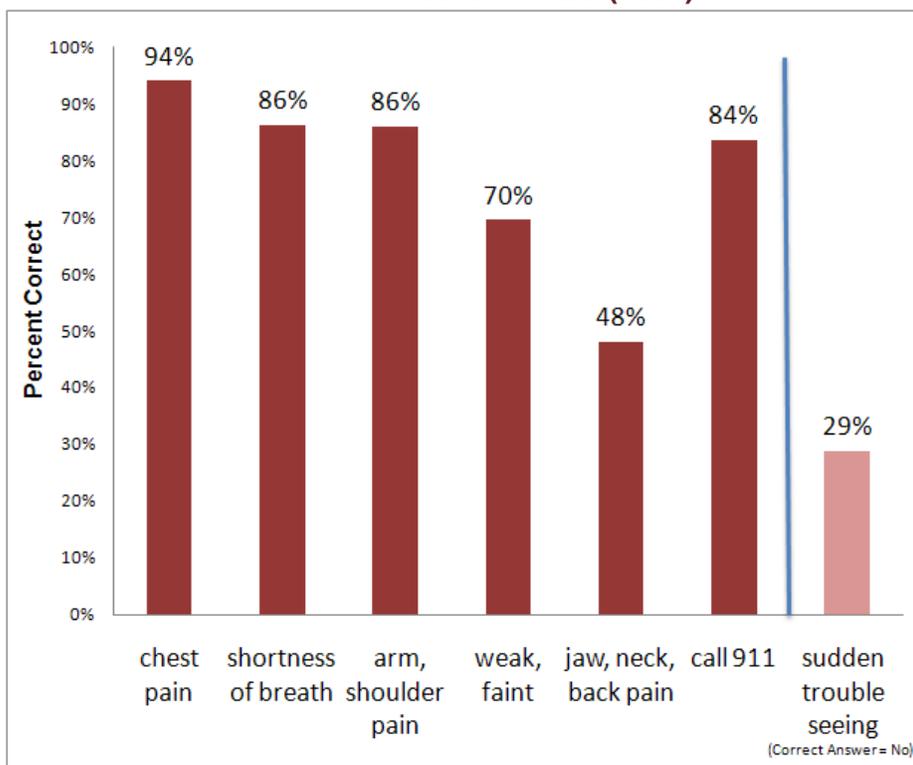
Produced by the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, Division of Public Health, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (5/25/2010)



Alaskans' Awareness of Heart Attack Signs & Symptoms

- In 2002, Alaskan adults were asked to identify heart attack signs and symptoms (see chart).⁴
- 8% of Alaskan adults correctly identified all heart attack signs and reported they would call 9-1-1 as a first response.⁴

Percentage of Alaskans Who Correctly Identify Heart Attack Signs & Symptoms. Alaska BRFSS (2002)



Take Heart Alaska⁵ is a statewide coalition of agencies, organizations, and individuals working together to improve cardiovascular health in Alaska.

Mission: To increase heart health among all Alaskans by advocating for individual and community-based commitment to healthy lifestyles, and improving access to preventive services, evidence-based cardiovascular treatment, and secondary prevention.

Committees: The four committees of the Take Heart Alaska Coalition are Healthy Lifestyles, Public Education, Professional Education, and Treatment & Secondary Prevention.

¹The American Heart Association, available at: <http://www.americanheart.org>.

²Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics; ³The Burden of Heart Disease and Stroke in Alaska: Mortality, Morbidity, and Risk Factors, available at:

http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/pubs/burden_Dec09.pdf; ⁴Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; ⁵Take Heart Alaska available at: www.takeheart.alaska.gov