

# Heart attack: Can One Prevent it in Old Age?

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Do you know that

- Heart attack is the leading killer of people over the world.
- Number of heart attacks are increasing in developing countries like India.
- 4 out of every 10 persons die of heart attacks, mostly within 1 hour before medical aid reaches them.
- It has been estimated that at least 7,00,000 people die of heart disease every year in India alone.

## WHAT IS HEART ATTACK?

For proper functioning the heart muscles need oxygen and essential nutrients, which are supplied to it by coronary arteries situated on the outer surface of the heart. There are 3 major coronary arteries, each with many smaller branches. These arteries can get narrowed due to deposition of cholesterol, found in animal fats and oils, in egg yolk and many other foods. If one of the coronary arteries gets completely blocked due to cholesterol,

a part of the heart muscle does not get blood supply and is deprived of oxygen and eventually it dies. This leads to heart attack (myocardial infarction).

## WARNING SYMPTOMS

- **Chest pain:** The pain of a heart attack is usually very severe and occurs in the centre of the chest and it may spread to the left arm, left jaw or right arm, even to epigastrium or back. This pain may last for 15-30 minutes. At times, the pain may be totally absent and there may simply be a feeling of uncomfortable pressure in the chest sometimes felt as 'gas' or abdominal bloating.
- **Anxiety:** Fear of impending death
- **Sweating**
- **Breathlessness**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Unusual wind or gas problem**
- **Fainting and unconsciousness (Collapse/ syncope)**

**Causes Of A Heart Attack**

**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE:** High blood pressure puts an extra strain on the heart as well as on the arteries supplying to the other organs of the body. The heart has to work against the increased resistance caused by thickening of arteries. Most people are not aware of high blood pressure as it may not produce any symptoms.

**HIGH CHOLESTEROL:** People with a high level of cholesterol in their blood are more likely to suffer from heart disease. High cholesterol levels in the blood are seen in people who eat a lot of fatty food, eg meat, butter, ghee, cream and cream products. Vegetable oils such as those made from corn, mustard or soya beans do not contain cholesterol and not cause an increased risk of heart disease.

**SMOKING:** Cigarette or bidi (smoking) can cause several lethal diseases of heart, cancer of the lungs, bronchitis and peripheral arterial disease (PAD). Death rate due to heart attacks is higher in smokers. The risk of getting a heart attack is high in habitual smokers.

**DIABETES MELLITUS:** People with diabetes have a higher risk of heart disease. Heart attacks occur at a young age in severe diabetics, particularly women.

**SEDENTARY LIFE:** Several studies have shown that people who do jobs sitting down for most of the day, such as clerks, officers, drivers, etc get heart attacks more often than those professions which need physical exercise e.g. farmers, labors, conductors, etc. Regular physical exercise reduces the risk of heart diseases and also keeps a person fit.

**OBESITY:** Obesity is a one of the risk factors for the development of coronary artery disease or a stroke. Much of the risk is mediated through the associated hypertension. It can be avoided by not eating fatty foods, too much sugar or alcohol and by doing regular physical exercise.

**STRESS AND MENTAL TENSION:** There is a strong relationship between stress, mental tension and heart disease. People who worry too much and who are always in a hurry, get high blood pressure and more heart attacks than those who are easy

going and care free.

**HEREDITY:** It has been known for some time that members in a family pass down health problems to their children. If one parent suffers a heart attack, then the chances of the child having a heart attack when they are older, is doubled.

**AGE:** Heart attacks usually occur in people aged 50-55 years. Although uncommon, heart attack may occur between 30-35 years of age.

**SEX:** Ninety percent of heard attack occurs in men. Women are at increase risk of having a heart attack as they grow older.

**IMMEDIATE MANAGEMENT**

- Make the person lie down comfortably. He or she should not exert himself/ herself as exertion may cause further damage to the heart.
- If the person is breathless, use a few pillows to raise his/ her head.
- Loosen his/her clothes and reassure the person.
- Determine whether the person is conscious or unconscious.
- If unconscious, take the person to the hospital as soon as possible.

**LONG TERM MANAGEMENT**

After the acute attack is over, the person needs to adopt all preventive measures as listed above. Homoeopathic remedies have proven their efficacy in prevention of further damage to heart muscles as well as to recover from immediate damage since homoeopathic therapy takes account of peculiarities of the person, causations, modifying factors etc.; each person is treated individually. Some homoeopathic medicines that are used for prevention are *Aconite*, *Naja*, *Crategues*, *Adonis*, *Digitalis*.

**PREVENTION**

One can significantly reduce the risk of heart attack if he/she follows the five golden rules.

1. Take balanced diet, avoid high intake of saturated fats and other food having high fat contents.
2. Avoid smoking.
3. Do regular physical exercise.
4. Avoid stress and tension
5. Go for regular medical checkup.