

# American College of Cardiology urges heart attack, stroke patients to seek medical help

17 April 2020

**CORONAVIRUS AND YOUR HEART**

Most of us are worried about the new coronavirus. **DON'T IGNORE HEART SYMPTOMS, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE A HEART CONDITION.**

**GETTING CARE IS CRITICAL** → You'll get better faster. You'll limit damage to your health.

**HEART ATTACK**

- ▶ Chest pain
- ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Discomfort in chest, arms, back, neck, shoulder or jaw

**STROKE**

- ▶ Numbness, weakness or loss of movement in your face, leg or arm, especially on one side
- ▶ Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- ▶ Loss of balance

**CALL 911**

If you think you are having a **HEART ATTACK** or **STROKE**. Heart attacks and strokes don't stop during a pandemic. Hospitals have safety measures to protect you from infection.

**CALL YOUR DOCTOR** if you have a heart condition and have questions or think you need a health visit. **DON'T DELAY** routine care. You may be able to get advice over the telephone or use telehealth for a virtual visit.

For more information about the new coronavirus for people with heart conditions, visit [CardioSmart.org/Coronavirus](https://www.cardiosmart.org/Coronavirus) @CardioSmart

Information provided for educational purposes only. Please talk to your health care professional about your specific health needs. To download or order posters on other topics, visit [Cardiosmart.org/Press](https://www.cardiosmart.org/Press).

"Due to fears of contracting COVID-19 or taking up space in hospitals, patients experiencing a [heart attack](#) or stroke are delaying their essential care, causing a new public health crisis," said Martha Gulati, MD, FACC, editor-in-chief of CardioSmart.org. "Hospitals and catheterization labs are still treating heart attack and stroke, not just COVID-19, and are taking the utmost precautions to ensure that the novel coronavirus not be spread. The faster a patient is treated, the higher the outcome of survival and lower the risk for complications. No patient should delay their care."

A new CardioSmart infographic, "Coronavirus and Your Heart: Don't Ignore Heart Symptoms," encourages patients to pay close attention to heart attack or stroke symptoms, particularly if they have a pre-existing heart condition, and call 911 immediately if they believe they're having a heart attack or stroke. The infographic details common heart attack and stroke symptoms and ensures hospitals are taking steps to protect them from COVID-19. The infographic also encourages patients to continue routine heart care to ensure they stay healthy, which may be accomplished through telehealth (remote or virtual visit) or a [phone call](#) with their clinician.

American College of Cardiology's CardioSmart infographic urges patients to call 911 if they're having a heart attack or stroke. Credit: American College of Cardiology

Through its CardioSmart patient initiative, the American College of Cardiology has issued guidance to encourage patients experiencing a heart attack or stroke to call 911. While hospitals across the United States are experiencing an influx of COVID-19 patients, clinicians are reportedly seeing fewer patients going to emergency rooms for heart attack or stroke. Experts worry that patients who need critical care are delaying their treatment over concerns about the novel coronavirus.

"We encourage clinicians to widely distribute these tools to their patients. Make sure that patients know when telehealth is an appropriate option, and when they should call 911 instead," Gulati said.

"Clinicians should work with patients to ensure medication adherence, and always continue to advocate for heart-healthy measures that can be taken even in times of self-isolation and social distancing."

CardioSmart serves as the ACC's patient engagement initiative. Reviewed by experts in the CardioSmart COVID-19 Response Work Group, the new infographic joins the full collection of ACC COVID-19 resources, including clinical bulletins, journal articles, patient summaries and more. For

more information about how COVID-19 affects patients with pre-existing [heart](#) conditions, and to download the full infographic, visit the CardioSmart COVID-19 Hub.

Provided by American College of Cardiology

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