CARE Tips for All:

Make sure you and your loved ones know the signs of a heart attack.

Call 911 for any symptoms including:

- discomfort, pressure, heaviness or pain in the chest, arm, or below the breastbone
- discomfort that moves from the chest to the back, jaw, throat or arm
- heart burn, upset stomach or vomiting
- dizziness, nervousness, sweating, shortness of breath or extreme weakness
- rapid or irregular heart beats

CARE Tips for Patients with Heart Disease:

- Ask your doctor about depression screening.
- Seek medical help for depression, especially if you are a woman age 60 or younger.

CARE Research Briefs


Heart Health & Depression

Yale Center for Clinical Investigation
CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement

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Depression is common among people who had heart attacks. Those who are depressed seem to be sicker and have more physical symptoms such as chest pain. Yale University and local New Haven study participants contributed to two studies examining the relationship between heart attacks and depression.

To improve care for those patients who suffer from heart attacks and depression, researchers wanted to know who was most at risk for depression and if the timing of the depression resulted in poorer health 6 months after a heart attack. Women and men who had heart attacks completed a survey that measured depression during hospitalization and 1 month later. Results show:

- Women 60 years of age or younger had the highest rates of depression after heart attacks.
- Having depression during hospitalization or 1 month later is an important risk factor for poor health outcomes:
  - hospitalized again
  - more chest pain
  - physical limitations
  - lower quality of life

Definitions

**Heart attack:** The coronary arteries fuel the heart muscles with their blood supply. When these arteries cannot supply enough blood to the heart muscle, a heart attack occurs. This causes permanent damage to the heart muscle, and parts of the heart muscle die.

**Depression:** Depression is a common medical condition.

- **Emotional symptoms:** sadness, loss of interest in things that usually make you happy, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, and trouble making decisions.
- **Physical symptoms:** tiredness, aches and pains, eating and sleeping too much or too little.

**Bottom Line**

- Depression is more common in younger women who have had heart attacks.
- Poor health after heart attacks is more common when the patient is also depressed.