

## PAY ATTENTION: SYMPTOMS OF SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITIONS



womenshealth.gov

I-800-994-9662

TDD: I-888-220-5446

The following shows some symptoms that could be signs of serious health conditions, which should be checked by a doctor or nurse. It is important to note that you might feel symptoms in one part of your body that could actually mean a problem in another part. Even if the symptoms don't seem related, they could be. Keep track of your symptoms. If you have any of these symptoms, make an appointment to see your doctor. Listen to what your body is telling you, and be sure to describe every symptom in detail to your provider.

Note: A chart of diagnostic tests that your provider might order are found later in this guide.

### Signs of a heart attack

Some symptoms of a heart attack can happen a month or so before the heart attack. Before a heart attack, women may have had one or more of these symptoms:

- unusual tiredness
- trouble sleeping
- problems breathing
- indigestion
- anxiety

**During** a heart attack, women may have one or more of these symptoms:

- pain or discomfort in the center of the chest
- pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- other symptoms, such as shortness of breath, breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness

**If you have any of these symptoms, go to an emergency room right away or call 911.**



### Signs of a stroke

Signs of a stroke happen suddenly and are different from signs of a heart attack:



- sudden or developing problems with speaking or understanding
- sudden or developing problems with sight
- sudden or developing problems with balance, coordination, walking, and dizziness
- sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arms, or legs
- sudden severe headache with no known cause

**If you have any of these symptoms, go to an emergency room right away or call 911.**

### Symptoms of reproductive health problems

- bleeding or spotting between periods
- itching, burning, or irritation (including bumps, blisters, or sores) of the vagina or genital area
- pain or discomfort during sex
- severe or painful bleeding with periods
- moderate to severe pelvic pain
- unusual (for you) vaginal discharge of any type or color or with strong odor



### Symptoms of breast problems

- nipple discharge
- unusual breast tenderness or pain



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- breast or nipple skin changes: ridges, dimpling, pitting, swelling, redness, or scaling
- lump or thickening in or near breast or in underarm area, or tenderness

### Symptoms of lung problems



- coughing up blood
- persistent cough that gets worse over time
- repeated bouts of bronchitis or pneumonia
- shortness of breath
- wheezing

### Symptoms of stomach or digestive problems



- bleeding from the rectum
- blood or mucus in the stool (including diarrhea) or black stools
- change in bowel habits or not being able to control bowels
- constipation, diarrhea, or both
- heartburn or acid reflux (feels like burning in throat or mouth)
- pain or feeling of fullness in stomach
- unusual abdominal swelling, bloating, or general discomfort
- vomiting blood

### Symptoms of bladder problems



- difficult or painful urination
- frequent urination or loss of bladder control

- blood in urine
- feeling the urge to urinate when bladder is empty

### Symptoms of skin problems



- changes in the skin, such as changes in existing moles or new growths
- moles that are no longer round or have irregular borders
- moles that change colors or change in size (usually get bigger)
- frequent flushing (a sudden feeling of heat)
- jaundice (when the skin and whites of the eyes turn yellow)
- painful, crusting, scaling, or oozing sores that don't heal
- sensitivity to sun

### Symptoms of muscle or joint problems



- muscle pains and body aches that are persistent, or that come and go often
- numbness, tingling (pins and needles sensation), or discomfort in hands, feet, or limbs
- pain, stiffness, swelling, or redness in or around joints

### Symptoms of emotional problems



Note: These symptoms can have a physical cause and are usually treatable.

- anxiety and constant worry
- depression: feeling empty, sad all the time, or worthless

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- extreme fatigue, even when rested
- extreme tension that can't be explained
- flashbacks and nightmares about traumatic events
- no interest in getting out of bed or doing regular activities, including eating or sex
- thoughts about suicide and death
- seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations)
- seeing things differently from what they are (delusions)
- "baby blues" that haven't gone away two weeks after giving birth and seem to get worse over time
- thoughts about harming yourself or your baby after giving birth
- headaches that last longer than a couple of days
- seeing flashing lights or zigzag lines and temporary vision loss before a headache starts
- spreading pain in face that starts in one eye
- severe pain on one or both sides of head with upset stomach, nausea, or vision problems

### Symptoms of headache problems

- headaches between the eyes
- headaches that come on suddenly



### Symptoms of eating or weight problems

- extreme thirst or hunger
- losing weight without trying
- desire to binge on food excessively
- desire to vomit on purpose
- desire to starve (not eat at all)

