

Seasons of Faith and Hope

February 2026

February 6th is National *Go Red for Women* Day this year.

Go Red for Women is the American Heart Association's national movement to end heart disease and stroke in women. Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women. On Friday, February 6 wear red to be seen, to make an impact, to call attention to cardiovascular health.

WHAT IS A SILENT HEART ATTACK?

According to the American Heart Association, a silent heart attack, also called silent ischemia, is a heart attack that has either no symptoms, minimal symptoms or unrecognized symptoms. A heart attack is not always as obvious as pain in your chest, shortness of breath and cold sweats. Deborah Ekery, M.D., a clinical cardiologist, explains "it is like any other heart attack where blood flow to a section of the heart is temporarily blocked and can cause scarring and damage to the heart muscle".

People who have "silent heart attacks" are more likely to have non-specific and subtle symptoms, such as:

- Indigestion or
- A case of the flu or
- They think that they strained a muscle in their chest or upper back
- The discomfort may be in the jaw, upper back or arms

A silent heart attack happens when the flow of blood is blocked in the coronary arteries by the buildup of plaque. Women and physicians may also be more likely to chalk up symptoms of a silent heart attack to anxiety and dismiss them.

Risk Factors for a Silent Heart Attack in Women

Risk factors for a silent heart attack are the same as those for a recognized heart attack and include:

High blood pressure

High cholesterol

Obesity

Family history of heart disease

Age

Smoking

What to do During a Silent Heart Attack

Often women do not realize they are experiencing a medical emergency. If you do notice symptoms of a silent heart attack, try to stay calm and call 911 immediately. When you get to the hospital, make it clear that you think you may be having a heart attack and not an anxiety attack. Advocate for yourself or, if you can, bring along someone who will advocate for you.

How to Prevent a Silent Heart Attack

Listen to your body, and if something is not right, talk with a doctor.

It is important to:

- Know your risk factors
- Be aware of your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid smoking

See the American Heart Association Infographic ***Know Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke*** that accompanies this document.