Signs & Symptoms

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women in the U.S. who are pregnant or gave birth in the last 5 months (postpartum).

**Symptoms** to watch for in late pregnancy and up to five months postpartum:

- Extreme swelling or weight gain
- Extreme fatigue
- Fainting
- Persistent cough
- Chest pain or fast heart beat
- Severe shortness of breath (especially when lying down)

If you have any of these symptoms and they don’t go away:

- Contact your OB, midwife, family medicine doctor, or your primary care provider
- Describe your symptoms clearly and explain how sick you feel
- If your symptoms arise postpartum, be sure to tell the provider that you recently had a baby
- If your provider says your symptoms are normal, ask what symptoms should cause you to call or come back

**Go to the Emergency Department**

If you have persistent chest pain or severe shortness of breath, or otherwise feel extremely sick. If possible, take someone with you.

**Any woman** can develop heart disease in pregnancy or postpartum, but you are at **higher risk** if you:

- Have prior heart disease
- Are over 40 years old
- Have preeclampsia or high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Are African-American (4X greater risk and 8-10X more likely to die of heart disease)
- Are obese

**Bottom line**

- Trust your instincts when you feel something is wrong
- When you see a healthcare provider, bring your partner, friend or family member who can support you and help explain these symptoms are not normal for you
- Seek a second opinion if you don’t feel listened to or your symptoms are not taken seriously

Get online support and information:  
www.myheartsisters.com  |  www.womenheart.org

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