

NEWS RELEASE

Nearly half of all heart attacks may be 'silent'

May 19, 2016

Nearly half of all heart attacks may be silent and like those that cause chest pain or other warning signs, silent heart attacks increase the risk of dying from heart disease and other causes, according to new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation*.

A heart attack does not always have classic symptoms, such as pain in your chest, shortness of breath and cold sweats. In fact, a heart attack can occur without symptoms and it is called a silent heart attack (blood flow to the heart muscle is severely reduced or cut off completely).

"The outcome of a silent heart attack is as bad as a heart attack that is recognized while it is happening," said Elsayed Z. Soliman, M.D., MSc., M.S., study senior author and director of the epidemiological cardiology research center at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. "And because patients don't know they have had a silent heart attack, they may not receive the treatment they need to prevent another one."

Researchers analyzed the records of 9,498 middle-age adults already enrolled in the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC), a study analyzing the causes and outcomes of atherosclerosis – hardening of the arteries. Researchers examined heart attack differences between blacks and whites as well as men and women. Over an average of nine years after the start of the study, 317 participants had silent heart attacks while 386 had heart attacks with clinical symptoms. Researchers continued to follow participants for more than two decades to track deaths from heart attack and other diseases.

They found that silent heart attacks:

- made up 45 percent of all heart attacks;
- increased the chances of dying from heart disease by 3 times;
- increased the chances of dying from all causes by 34 percent; and
- were more common in men but more likely to cause death in women.

Read the entire American Heart Association news release.

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