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Heart Attack vs. Cardiac Arrest



Alexis Hill, D.O.

While many people think that a heart attack and cardiac arrest are the same, these conditions are not identical.

“A heart attack and cardiac arrest are both life-threatening medical emergencies, but there are some differences between the two,” explained Alexis Hill, D.O., an Internal Medicine physician affiliated with Salem Regional Medical Center (SRMC) and SRMC Primary Care-Lisbon.

Heart Attack

“A heart attack occurs when an artery is blocked and prevents blood and oxygen from reaching the heart. There are often warning signs that may occur suddenly or even hours, days or weeks before a heart attack.”

Symptoms of a heart attack may include:

- Chest pain or discomfort that lasts for more than a few minutes and may feel like a pressure, tightening, squeezing or fullness
- Pain or discomfort in the arms, jaw, back, neck or stomach
- Shortness of breath with or without chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea, weakness or lightheadedness
- Cold sweats
- Pale or gray skin color

Those showing signs of a heart attack should call 911 immediately.

“There are steps people can take to lower their risk of a heart attack, including eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity and not smoking,” she advised.

Cardiac Arrest

Cardiac arrest happens when the heart suddenly stops beating due to a problem with the heart, preventing oxygen from reaching the brain or other organs. A person in cardiac arrest may lose consciousness and stop breathing immediately.

“As with a heart attack, every minute matters, and immediate treatment greatly increases a person’s chance of survival,” Dr. Hill said. “Along with calling 911, treatments can include CPR and the use of an automatic external defibrillator, if one is available.”

Alexis Hill, D.O., Internal Medicine, sees patients ages 18 and older at SRMC Primary Care – Lisbon, located at 38506 Saltwell Road in Lisbon. Appointments with Dr. Hill can be scheduled by calling 330- 424-1404. She is affiliated with Salem Regional Medical Center's medical staff.