

A sensation described as strong, irregular, fluttering, or racing heart beats is a common complaint for patients experiencing an AMI. However, it is also common in patients experiencing anxiety, a panic attack or with arrhythmic disorders. Often, patients will say they “felt my heart skip a beat.”

Diaphoresis

Sweaty-sweatband

Sympathetic response to pain in myocardial infarctions as well as dysfunction of the myocardium can result in development of diaphoresis or excessive sweating, along with other skin and membrane changes like pallor and coolness to the touch.

Fear of Impending Doom

Guy in Fear of Impending Doom

In severe cases, patients simply may describe a sensation "they may die." This can occur in an acute myocardial infarction, as well as other presentations like patients with anxiety or a panic attack.

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea & Vomiting

Although not a specific finding, patients often experience nausea and vomiting when experiencing an MI. However, this can also occur in a patient experiencing epigastric discomfort related to GERD, pancreatitis or other digestive disease processes. A comprehensive patient assessment including history and physical examination is important to differentiate.

Shortness of Breath

S.O.B.

Shortness of breath occurs due to a mixture of response to ischemic pain and a body's response to increase perfusion to the damaged myocardial tissue. This is taxing to the body (metabolically demanding), and some patients may also report fatigue.

Considerations

Monitor for Arrhythmias

Monitor for Broken Arrhythmia-drum

The loss of capable cardiac tissue due to infarction results in large areas of dysfunctional myocardium. There is a high risk of developing cardiac arrhythmias and other complications following an unmitigated or severe acute myocardial infarction (AMI). Heart rhythms should be monitored during and after treating an AMI, and arrhythmias such as ventricular fibrillation and ventricular tachycardia can still develop even after successful management of an AMI.