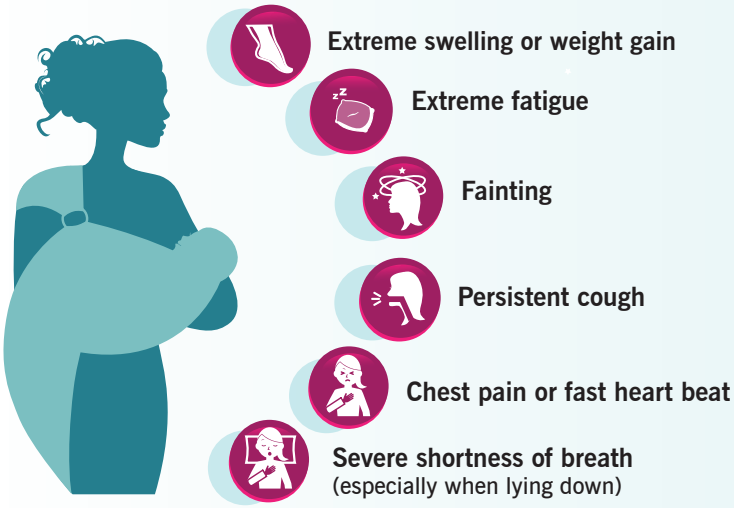
Signs & Symptoms of Heart Disease

During Pregnancy and Postpartum

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:



NOTE: While some of these symptoms are common in late pregnancy, they may be a sign of heart disease especially if they are severe and do not go away after treatment.

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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