8 Health Terms You're Using Wrong

BY GINA ROBERTS-GREY

Don't be confused by these similar-sounding conditions.

Cardiac Arrest   Heart Attack

The former causes a total body shutdown while the latter can be silent. Nevertheless, signs of either mean you should call 911 immediately. Every second counts.

● Your heart stops suddenly during cardiac arrest, halting the flow of blood and oxygen through your body and usually causing you to collapse, explains cardiologist Joel Kahn, MD, author of *The Whole Heart Solution*. About 80% of cardiac arrests occur in a home setting.

● "Attacks can be so slight they're only noticeable with a blood or other test," says Kahn. Sometimes a heart attack can be so intense you have extreme chest pain, struggle to breathe or experience nausea. In all instances muscle cells start to die because a blockage (usually caused by plaque) prevents oxygen-rich blood from fully circulating throughout the organ.
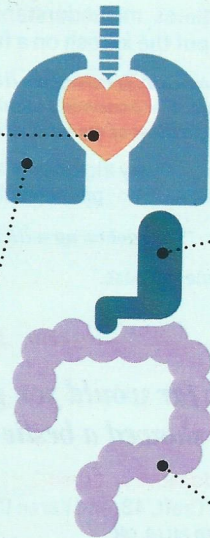
1 in 8
Roughly how many **cardiac arrest victims** survive in the U.S.

Heartburn   GERD

Either can make you think you bit off more than you should have chewed. But one is a symptom and another a disease. How often you feel pain is a key difference.

● A smoldering—even roaring—sensation in your chest or stomach is a signal that stomach acid is traveling up into your esophagus and throat. "It may be worse when lying down," says Nitin Kumar MD, a gastroenterologist and internist at the Bariatric Endoscopy Institute in Addison, IL. Triggers include everything from overeating and obesity to specific foods, like tomatoes and chocolate.

● Frequent heartburn (more than once a week) is a sign you have gastroesophageal reflux disease. Don't just self-medicate frequent flare-ups with antacids—see your doctor. "Untreated, GERD can lead to esophageal inflammation, scarring and narrowing or the precancerous condition Barrett's esophagus," says Kumar.

40%
Number of heartburn sufferers who say the effects of a fiery gut at night hurts their ability to function the next day.

Asthma   COPD

Coughing, wheezing and difficulty catching your breath occur in both. But the triggers, your body's reaction and how urgently you need to act is where they diverge.

● Allergens like pollen and irritants like air pollution commonly spark an attack. "Exposure causes narrowing of air tubes in the lungs, which hampers airflow," explains allergist and pulmonologist Bradley Chipps, MD, a spokesperson for the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. Inability to breathe can be an acute health crisis that requires inhaled medicine to open airways quickly. It also makes asthmatics more likely to end up in the ER.

● Inflammation, usually caused by long-term cigarette smoking or exposure to air pollution, is responsible for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It permanently destroys parts of the lungs' air sacs, explains Chipps. Shortness of breath, chronic cough or even frequent bronchitis can be frustrating and exhausting but do not typically require ER treatment.

65%
Approximate number of **asthma-related deaths** occurring in women.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)   Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

While symptoms are similar (bloating, abdominal discomfort, diarrhea or constant constipation), the cures are a world apart and only one causes inflammation.

● IBS sparks bowel issues that are usually relieved after a trip to the bathroom. Dietary changes (such as avoiding chocolate, fried foods and alcohol) and OTC medicines (like Kaopectate and Imodium) may help, says gastroenterologist Gina Sam, MD, MPH, director of the Gastrointestinal Motility Center at The Mount Sinai Hospital in NYC.

● This umbrella term applies to two digestive diseases: Crohn's and ulcerative colitis. "Symptoms like blood in the bowl aren't flushed away after a bowel movement," says Sam. "They persist, and can worsen, without strong, specific medication, often immunosuppressants." Untreated, colitis, for example, makes you six times more likely to develop colorectal cancer.

1 in 3 Odds a **child will develop IBD** if both parents have it.

Illustration by **DAVE FOSTER**