

PAINS YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE

There's no reason to get alarmed by every little twinge, but these symptoms should prompt you to call a doctor—fast. *by BARBARA BRODY*



1

A “thunderclap” headache

COULD BE:
An aneurysm, which is a balloon-like area in an artery

FIX IT: If you experience head pain that comes on suddenly and is severe, call 911. (You may also get dizzy and notice blurred vision.) Bleeding in the brain due to a ruptured aneurysm isn't all that common, but when it does happen, swift action is key. Surgeons can save your life by sealing off the weakened spot.

2

Tooth pain that wakes you up

COULD BE:

Teeth grinding

FIX IT: Frequent clenching can cause the nerve within the tooth to become inflamed and the protective enamel to wear away. You might even end up cracking teeth down to the root, which leads to extraction. Call your dentist so he or she can figure out the problem. The complications from grinding, which is often brought on by stress, can be prevented by wearing a night guard.

3

Dull stomach pain that gets sharper as it moves lower to the right of your abdomen

COULD BE:

Appendicitis

FIX IT: If you feel this sensation, go straight to the ER. (Usually it gets more intense over a 24-hour period as it shifts location.) You're likely going to need surgery—soon. If the appendix bursts, bacteria from the colon can leak into the abdomen, which is dangerous.

4

Mid-back pain coupled with fever

COULD BE:

A kidney infection

FIX IT: Don't assume that your temperature, nausea and back pain are just a stomach bug. This condition develops when bacteria that infiltrate the urinary tract spread to the kidneys, making the infection much more severe. (You might start with UTI symptoms, like pain during urination, but some people don't notice anything until later.) You'll likely need antibiotics ASAP, so call your doctor.

7

An unexplained ache between your shoulder blades

COULD BE:

A heart attack

FIX IT: About 30% of people who have heart attacks don't get the classic chest pressure. Pain between shoulder blades is common in women, as is jaw pain, shortness of breath and nausea. If you have these symptoms (you'll likely have more than one), you need care ASAP.

6

Menstrual cramps that don't get better with medication

COULD BE:

Endometriosis

FIX IT: If meds like Advil aren't helping, this condition—in which tissue grows outside the uterus—might be to blame. Endometriosis impedes fertility, and it's common (40% to 60% of women whose periods are very painful may have it). Unless you're trying to conceive, your doc can start you on oral contraceptives. If pain persists, you may need to have the tissue surgically removed.

5

A tender spot on your calf

COULD BE:

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

FIX IT: If one small area of your leg is painful, you could have DVT, a blood clot in the deep veins. (The spot may also be red and warm to the touch.) DVT is more likely if you use birth control pills or recently took a long car or plane ride. Unless your leg is very swollen or the pain is getting worse rapidly, you can probably wait a day to see your doctor instead of going to the ER, but don't delay any longer. The clot could increase in size—or break off, move toward the lungs and stop blood flow.