

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



February, 2010

Heart Health - The Basics



The top three causes of death in the United States and a leading cause of serious disability is; (1) coronary heart disease, (2) cancer and (3) stroke. Two of the top three involve the heart. That's why it's so important to reduce your risk factors, know the warning signs, and know how to respond quickly and properly if warning signs occur.

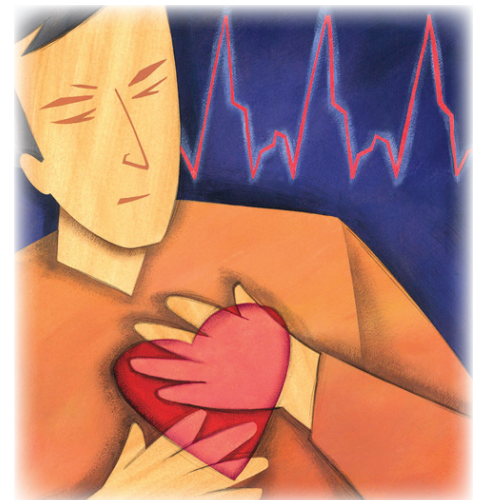
Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. What are the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening?

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath** with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness

Heart Attack Causes

While the step-by-step process leading to heart attack is not fully understood, major risk factors are well-established. Some can be controlled. Of these, the main ones are high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking, and a sedentary lifestyle. Stress is also believed to raise the risk, and exertion and excitement can act as triggers for an attack.

Men over the age of 50 with a family history of heart disease are predisposed to heart attack. High levels of estrogen are thought to protect premenopausal women fairly well from heart attack, but the risk increases significantly after menopause.



(Over)

Heart Health the basics . . . (Continued)

Heart Attack Treatment

A heart attack is a medical emergency that must be quickly addressed by conventional medicine.

Heart attack victims are usually hospitalized in special coronary care units (CCU) for at least 36 hours. Standard drug therapy includes a painkiller such as morphine, vasodilators such as nitroglycerine to expand blood vessels, beta-adrenergic blocker drugs to calm the heart, and aspirin to reduce clotting activity.

Emergency angioplasty, and possibly surgery, might be performed to remove a clot, reopen a clogged artery, or bypass blocked arteries.

Once past the critical phase of a heart attack, patients continue to receive beta blockers to slow the heart, nitrates to increase heart

blood flow, and anticoagulants such as heparin, warfarin, or aspirin to prevent further blood clotting.

Heart Attack Prevention.

Regular aerobic exercise and a heart healthy diet greatly enhances efforts to prevent and recover from a heart attack.

The basic goals of a heart-healthy diet are to keep salt, sugar, and saturated fat to a minimum to control cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight. Eating magnesium-rich foods such as nuts, beans, bran, fish, and dark green vegetables may help prevent a heart attack.

Fruits, vegetables, and grains supply many of the antioxidant vitamins such as, A, C, E, that neutralize free radicals. Eating

root vegetables such as carrots may also help prevent heart attack. These vegetables lower cholesterol over the long term and reduce blood-clotting activity.

Omega-3 fatty acids have also received a lot of attention for being heart healthy by lessening inflammation in the body. Omega-3s can be found in olive oil, canola oil, walnuts, and flax seed.

Sources: WebMD.com. and AHA.com



Benefits Corner

Spring 2010 County Health Pool Training

Don't miss out on the CHP Educational Training that will be held at your entity in March, April or May of 2010. The CHP benefit administrators will be presenting the following topics:

- The health of the pool.
- Loss analysis by entity.
- Costs of procedures specific to your entity.
- Clarification on the prescription drug program/mail order and other programs available as a member of CHP.
- Other tools to assist you in becoming a wise healthcare consumer.

Check with your entity for the date(s) and time(s) that CHP will be presenting this training at your entity.

Over Age Dependents

As a reminder, CHP covers dependents age 19-25 if they meet one of the following eligibility criteria:

- Financially dependent on you or your spouse; or
- A full time student; or
- Living at the same legal residence as you or your spouse.