



Health & Fitness Weekly Wellness Message



Tomorrow is Valentine's Day; a day we celebrate by giving cards and candy shaped like a heart. The American Heart Association (AHA) agrees we should focus on the heart, just not paper or confectionary ones. Because cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, remain the number one killer of Americans, the AHA has declared this month as American Heart Month.

When it comes to a heart attack or stroke – every second counts. Do you know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke? More importantly, would you know what to do if it happened? Fast action can save lives. Don't wait more than 5 minutes to call 9-1-1 or your emergency response number. It's important to learn the signs. Remember this, even if you're not sure if it's a heart attack, have it checked out!

Heart attack warning signs include:

- **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.** May happen with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs.** May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Women have a higher risk of dying from a heart attack than men do, partly because they often don't realize they're having a heart attack and partly because they delay getting help. **Women are less likely than men to have the typical "Hollywood heart attack,"** so it is important to pay attention to these symptoms common to women:

- **Discomfort, tightness, uncomfortable pressure, fullness,** squeezing in the center of the chest lasting more than a few minutes, or comes and goes.
- **Crushing chest pain.**
- **Pressure or pain that spreads** to the shoulders, neck, upper back, jaw, or arms.
- **Dizziness or nausea.**
- **Clammy sweats, heart flutters, or paleness**
- **Unexplained feelings of anxiety, fatigue or weakness** - especially with exertion.

- **Stomach or abdominal pain.**
- **Shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.**

When it comes to a stroke, the warning signs include **SUDDEN:**

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Severe headache with no known cause.

For information and tips on how you can keep your heart healthy, click on the following link: <http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=84>

To assess your risk for stroke, access the stroke risk scorecard at the following link: http://www.stroke.org/site/DocServer/Scorecard.Q._08.pdf?docID=601

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