

February 2009 Adult Health Bulletin

Get Heart Smart

Do you know the # 1 cause of death in Kentucky and the United States? It is cardiovascular disease. In 2001, an estimated 38 percent of all deaths in Kentucky were due to cardiovascular disease. You might ask, what exactly is cardiovascular disease? The term is used to describe diseases that affect the heart and circulatory system. These include:

- Coronary artery disease (disease of the blood vessels in your heart)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Congestive heart failure (the heart is not able to pump enough blood to your organs)
- Congenital disease (heart or blood vessel defects or damage that someone is born with)
- Cerebrovascular disease (disease of the blood vessels in the head)

It's Not All in Your Head

One in nine women from ages 45 to 64 have some form of cardiovascular disease, and this ratio increases from one in three at age 65 and up. In fact, almost 39 percent of all female deaths in America occur from cardiovascular disease.

Women who have any chest discomfort or chest pain should immediately see their doctor and ask for the appropriate tests to make sure they are ok. Insist on your heart being checked out. It is not uncommon for women to report less typical symptoms than men before a heart attack. Women often experience symptoms such as indigestion, heartburn, fatigue, or jaw or shoulder pain. Do not let your doctor dismiss your concerns as nothing serious, or due to anxiety or stress. If you have any doubt, get it checked out!

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Chest Discomfort

- Discomfort in the center of the chest that last for several minutes
- Chest pain that comes and goes
- Uncomfortable chest pressure that may feel like a squeezing, fullness, or pain

Upper Body Discomfort

- Discomfort or pain in one or both arms, the back, jaw, neck or stomach

Shortness of breath

- With or without chest pain
- A cold sweat
- Nausea
- Lightheadedness



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

The American Heart Association recommends that even if you are not sure that your symptoms may be from a heart attack, have them checked out. In this situation, every minute matters! Calling 911 and emergency medical treatment is usually the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment.

Emergency medical services paramedics will begin treatment immediately when they arrive and are trained to revive someone in the event their heart has stopped. If you can't get emergency medical services, have someone drive you to the hospital. Don't drive yourself unless there is absolutely no other option.

Heart disease does not care if you are male or female, rich or poor. It is an equal opportunity killer. You don't have to be a statistic! You CAN'T change your age, gender, ethnicity, or family history. But there are some things that you CAN do and some changes that you CAN make:

- Stop smoking
- Keep your cholesterol level low
- Adopt a healthy diet that is low in fat and high in fruit, vegetables, and fiber
- Lose weight
- Keep your blood pressure in check
- Engage in regular physical activity
- Ask your doctor about taking an aspirin a day
- Reduce your stress level



Healthy lifestyle habits can help you to reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease and help to prevent a heart attack or stroke.

A healthy heart is just a beat away!

Sources

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