

# February is



## American Heart Month *Know Your Signs and Symptoms*

Each year, about 1.1 million Americans will have a heart attack, and about 460,000 will die. About half of these people will die of a heart attack before they reach the hospital.

When a heart attack occurs, quick action and medical treatment can restore the blood flow to the heart and save parts of the heart muscle from dying. But this can happen only if the person receives medical help right away. Treatments work best if given within 1 hour of when symptoms begin.

“Uncertainty is normal. People are often not sure they are having a heart attack for various reasons.” Some heart attacks are sudden and intense; however, most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some signs that can mean a heart attack is happening.

Call 9-1-1 immediately at the onset of heart attack symptoms.

- **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 occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Breaking out in a cold sweat.**
- **Nausea.**
- **Lightheadedness.**

**Chest pain can be a symptom of other serious conditions besides a heart attack. Regardless of the cause, seek prompt medical care for chest discomfort or pain.**

## Healthy Lifestyle: Diet, Nutrition, Exercise & Fitness

A healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. Physical activity in your daily life is an important step to preventing heart disease. You can take a few simple steps at home, at work, and at play to increase the amount of physical activity in your life. Many people make it harder than it is. It is important to remember that it is the overall

pattern of the choices you make that counts. As you make daily food choices, read nutrition labels and base your eating pattern on these recommendations:

- Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat.
- Select fat-free, 1% fat, and low-fat dairy products.
- Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet.
- Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day.
- Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars.
- Select and purchase foods lower in salt/sodium.
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation. That means no more than one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man.
- Keep an eye on your portion sizes.

#### **And**

**Do not smoke.** Smoking puts an added strain on the heart muscle because it causes the blood vessels to clamp down or constrict. Smoking may also make the heart beat faster, raise your blood pressure, and/or reduce blood flow.

Thanks to the American Heart Association Journals: (<http://circ.ahajournals.org/content> ) More information available from the American Heart Association ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)), and the National Heart Lung & Blood Institute ([www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)).