

Healthy Habits

February 2007

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

February is American Heart Month

The American Heart Association estimates that close to 700,000 Americans will have an initial heart attack this year and another 500,000 will suffer a recurrent attack. Almost half of all people who have a heart attack will die from it. Better lifestyle habits can help you reduce your risk for heart attack and disease, though. Now is the perfect time to learn what you can do to keep your heart healthy.

How does a heart attack occur?

A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to the heart is stopped. Cells in the heart muscle that do not receive enough oxygen-carrying blood begin to die. The more time that passes without treatment to restore the blood flow, the greater the damage to the heart. Having high blood pressure or high blood cholesterol, smoking; and any previous heart damage, stroke or diabetes can significantly increase a person's chances of developing heart disease and having a heart attack.

Do Not Ignore List

For both men and women, heart attack symptoms may include the following:

Chest discomfort - most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.

Discomfort in other areas of the upper body - this can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

Shortness of breath - may accompany or come before chest discomfort.

Other symptoms - sudden dizziness, brief loss of consciousness, cold sweat, nausea, or a lightheaded feeling. These signs warrant immediate medical attention.

Who is at Risk?

Heart disease, is the number one killer of both men and women in the United States, yet it is still misdiagnosed or ignored often, especially in women who may experience different symptoms than their male counterparts. To place into perspective how devastating heart disease and stroke are to women, roughly 42,000 women die from breast cancer every year. In the same amount of time, heart disease and stroke combined kill more than half a million.



Contact 1-800-SENTARA (1-800-736-8272) for information regarding Sentara's "Healthy Heart", "Eating for Life" and smoking cessation programs

Major Modifiable Risk Factors

What does that mean? Good News. Major Modifiable Risk Factors are things that YOU can change. Things like physical inactivity, cigarette smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. By being mindful of those four things, you can significantly improve your risk of developing heart disease and heart attack. If you're inactive, doing anything is better than nothing! Studies show that people who have a low fitness level are much more likely to die early than people who have achieved even a moderate level of fitness. Smoking or living with high blood pressure and high cholesterol all leave you open to a wide host of health issues, including heart disease. By simply making better choices in your diet and lifestyle, you might be amazed at how much better you feel, inside and out.

Will the Beat Go On?

You can make the commitment to have a healthier heart. A healthy lifestyle *can* help you reduce your risk for heart attack. Remember to make food choices that are low in fat and cholesterol and exercise portion control. Make time to exercise. Whether it's included in a structured exercise program or just part of your daily routine, all physical activity adds up to a healthier heart. Also, avoid smoking, establish a relationship with your healthcare provider, and **do not** ignore the warning signs. Find out the latest information on a maintaining a healthy heart at www.optimahealth.com.

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