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How healthy is your heart?

Stanton, MI- An American has a heart attack every 25 seconds, and one dies each minute, making it the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women, and a major cause of disability.

That means that by the time you finish reading this article, nearly five people in the U.S. will have a heart attack, and two will die. Unfortunately, recognizing a heart attack isn't always easy.

Not all heart attacks mimic those we typically see on TV; where the actor suddenly clutches his or her chest, overcome with intense pain. More often, heart attacks start with mild pain or discomfort, leading the person to believe their condition isn't that serious. As a result, heart attack sufferers tend to wait too long before getting the help that could save their life.

"When it comes to surviving a heart attack, time is of the essence," said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director for the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD). "Knowing the signs and symptoms are crucial to surviving a heart attack with the most positive outcomes."

Symptoms of a heart attack may 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, with or without chest discomfort.
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

Also of the utmost importance is taking steps to control factors that put people at greater risk for developing heart disease and suffering a heart attack.

Risk factors include:

- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Tobacco use
- Secondhand smoke

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2- Heart Smart

- Alcohol use
- Unhealthy weight
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Poor diet
- Unmanaged stress and anger

“We are not powerless when it comes to preventing a heart attack,” said Graham. “We can help prevent, delay or minimize the effects of heart disease.”

Knowing the signs and symptoms of a heart attack, calling 9-1-1 right away, and getting to a hospital are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack.

For more information, talk with your doctor or visit the American Heart Association’s website at www.heart.org. Here, you can find additional heart-healthy tools, including healthy recipes and the Better U Program, a free 12-week online nutrition and fitness program that can improve your heart and overall health. Each week focuses on a different area of health and provides step-by-step guidance.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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