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Mid-Michigan District Health Department

615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702 • www.mmdhd.org

SUBMITTED BY/MEDIA CONTACT: Leslie Kinnee, Public Information Officer
989-831-3669, kinnee@mmdhd.org



Is your heart healthy?

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns, MI- By the time you finish reading this article, nearly five people in the U.S. will have a heart attack, two of which will not survive.

When we think of a heart attack, we usually envision someone suddenly clutching their chest, and falling to the floor, overcome with intense pain. But recognizing a heart attack isn't always that easy. More often than not, heart attacks start with mild pain or discomfort, leading the person to believe their condition isn't all that serious. As a result, heart attack sufferers sometimes wait too long before getting help.

When it comes to surviving a heart attack, time is of the essence. Know the symptoms of a heart attack to increase your odds of surviving with the best possible outcome. Symptoms 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.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort.

Other symptoms may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

It's also important to take steps to control factors that may put you at greater risk for developing heart disease and suffering a heart attack. Those risk factors include:

- High blood cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Tobacco use
- Secondhand smoke
- Alcohol use
- Unhealthy weight
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Poor diet
- Unmanaged stress and anger

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

For more information, talk with your doctor or visit the American Heart Association's website at www.heart.org. There you'll find a variety of tools to improve your heart and overall health. Topics include smoking cessation, weight and stress management, heart-healthy healthy recipes, tips for shopping and dining out, and much more.

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

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