

Parish Health News



Happy Heart Month! Sure, February is all about hearts in a Valentiny way, but it is also the month set aside to learn more about heart health. So, I want to talk about heart attacks, also known as myocardial infarctions. Yeah, I'm a great conversationalist at parties, too.

Anything that causes heart damage is a heart attack. A likely scenario would be build up in the arteries that provide blood to the heart becoming blocked. When the heart doesn't get enough perfusion, it starts complaining and parts of it can become damaged. To get our terms straight, a cardiac arrest means the heart completely stops. Although this can occur from a heart attack, that just isn't always the case. Hopefully, by knowing the symptoms and understanding when to call 911, some heart attacks can be stopped before they cause complete cardiac arrest.

Heart attacks can present with some very strange and unexpected symptoms. I once had a friend who said she just felt a bit unusually short of breath when she was working out at a gym. As it turns out, she was actually having a heart attack.

We've all seen the movies where a man clutches his chest and drops to the floor from a heart attack. Pretty dramatic, huh? Well, it can happen that way but often, especially for women, the symptoms may be more subtle. Here are some signs and symptoms for a heart attack.

- nausea and vomiting
- breaking out in a sweat
- suddenly feeling very, very tired
- dizziness
- heavy pressure or ache in the chest or between the shoulder blades
- pain in the jaw, head, upper body or even a toothache
- heartburn or indigestion
- sometimes, no symptoms at all (silent heart attack)

If you ever suspect you or a loved one or someone you just kind of like are having a heart attack, call 911. Don't try to drive to the hospital! Don't worry about feeling embarrassed if it turns out to be something less than a heart attack. Even healthcare professionals can't always tell the difference between acid reflux and a heart attack without cardiac testing. It's just not wise to put off seeking help when you think something is wrong.



And, as always, prevention is the best thing! Eat a heart healthy diet, manage your weight, exercise and talk with your primary care provider to see if an aspirin a day is wise for you.

I've got more information available for anyone interested. Check out the Parish Health pamphlets and brochures available in the glass cupboard just to the left of the entrance to the prayer room. I got a little carried away and ordered a lot of stuff so please help me out by taking some of it!

Stay healthy!

Sue Struck, RN

Walk for your heart!