

MAFES Dawg Tracks

January 17, 2011

How to Handle a Heart Attack



This newsletter is about an issue that none of us wish to encounter - either directly or indirectly (yourself or someone else). I believe that this subject is important enough that I have done a newsletter for Extension as well. Losing family members to heart disease drives home the importance of this subject. Heart attacks are a leading cause of deaths among Americans.

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), 631,000 people died in the U.S. of heart disease in 2006. (26 percent of deaths were related to heart disease). That's one in every four Americans. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that heart disease will cost the U.S. 316.4 billion dollars in health care services, medication and lost productivity each year.

Since heart attacks are so common, it is important for everyone to know how to help a patient. We constantly promote everyone getting certified in CPR.

Following are seven possible signs of heart attack:

- Obviously, chest pain is the classic symptom. Pain may occur suddenly. It may occur even when the person is at rest.
- The pain may radiate to one or both arms, and up to the jaws, neck or back. The pain may be described as intense and is usually constant.
- The person may also experience fear and may feel that he or she is going to die.
- Weakness, especially in the arms, is another symptom. Perspiration and skin pallor may also be present.
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing may occur.
- Weak and rapid pulse, or possibly a decrease in the pulse rate may also be a symptom.

There are many possible symptoms for a heart attack. They can get confused with other ailments, such as digestive problems or muscle strains. However, these symptoms need to be taken seriously! The individual may not take these symptoms seriously, but a co-worker will and therefore may save the person's life.

Many heart attack patients die before they can get medical help. Immediate help can be a lifesaver. This is where knowing CPR comes into use. With a CPR certification, you never know when you might use it and contribute to saving one's life.

Actions to consider when there is a suspicion of a possible heart attack:

- Call for medical help immediately - the speed on which you get a heart attack patient to the hospital is a major factor in trying to preserve the person's life.
- Prepare to administer CPR or call a person trained in CPR. Keep the patient calm, quiet and still, lying down, if possible. Continue to reassure the victim that help is on the way.

Eight Lifestyle Habits for a Healthy Heart:

- Quit Smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight. Eat a diet low in fat and cholesterol.
- Control your blood pressure. Use medication if necessary.
- Exercise regularly.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Have regular physical examinations.
- Follow your doctor's orders if you're under a care for heart problems.

Many heart attacks can be prevented and a lot of victims saved. If we adopt healthy lifestyles we can have a comfortable life and you never know, but this might influence a friend or co-worker.