

American Heart Month — February 2019

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, and heart attacks are a major category of heart disease; someone in the United States has a heart attack every 40 seconds (1). February is American Heart Month, an ideal time to remind all adults to focus on their hearts and encourage them, their families, friends, and communities to learn the important signs and symptoms of heart attack and how to respond. Recognizing that someone might be having a heart attack and calling emergency services (9-1-1) are crucial for optimizing access to lifesaving emergency cardiac care and receipt of advanced treatments and improving survival. Five common symptoms of a heart attack are 1) pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back; 2) feeling weak, lightheaded, or faint; 3) chest pain or discomfort; 4) pain or discomfort in the arms or shoulder; and 5) shortness of breath. If someone is suspected to be having a heart attack, 9-1-1 should be called immediately.

A report in this issue of *MMWR* shows that, although the percentage of persons who are aware of all five heart attack symptoms increased from 39.6% in 2008 to 50.2% in 2017, sociodemographic disparities existed (2). Education is needed to more widely disseminate information about how to recognize a possible heart attack and contact life-saving emergency services.

References

1. Benjamin EJ, Blaha MJ, Chiuve SE, et al.; American Heart Association Statistics Committee and Stroke Statistics Subcommittee. Heart disease and stroke statistics—2017 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation* 2017;135:e146–603. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIR.0000000000000485>
2. Fang J, Luncheon C, Ayala C, Odom E, Loustalot F. Awareness of heart attack symptoms and response among adults—United States, 2008, 2014 and 2017. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2019.68:101–6.

Awareness of Heart Attack Symptoms and Response Among Adults — United States, 2008, 2014, and 2017

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Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States (1). Heart attacks (also known as myocardial infarctions) occur when a portion of the heart muscle does not receive adequate blood flow, and they are major contributors to heart disease, with an estimated 750,000 occurring annually (2). Early intervention is critical for preventing mortality in the event of a heart attack (3). Identification of heart attack signs and symptoms by victims or bystanders, and taking immediate action by calling emergency services (9-1-1), are crucial to ensure timely receipt of emergency care and thereby improve the chance for survival (4). A recent report using National

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