A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Have a Healthy Heart
American Heart Month — February 2015
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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in the U.S.

Dr. Derrick Gervin is a researcher with CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. He's joining us today to discuss ways to keep our heart healthy. Welcome to the show, Derrick.

[Dr. Gervin] Thank you, Bob.

[Dr. Gaynes] Derrick, let's start with, what conditions are considered to be diseases of the heart?

[Dr. Gervin] Heart disease refers to several conditions that can affect your heart, ranging from heart rhythm problems to heart defects that are present at birth. The most common condition involves narrowing, or blockage, of the arteries that supply blood to the heart. When this process occurs, it can lead to heart attacks or even heart failure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is heart disease more common among any particular age, sex, or ethnic group?

[Dr. Gervin] Heart disease is the leading cause of death nationwide. Although it affects men, women, and adults of all races, there are chronic conditions and lifestyle factors that put people at a higher risk. This includes hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, poor diet, smoking, and physical inactivity. Age is also a risk factor, as is family history, race, and ethnicity. African-American men, and adults living in the southeast are at the highest risk for developing heart disease. More than 40 percent of African-Americans have high blood pressure and less than half have it under control. And Bob, some of the factors contributing to these health disparities include discrimination, cultural barriers, and lack of access to healthy foods and affordable health care.

[Dr. Gaynes] Derrick, what are the common symptoms of heart disease?

[Dr. Gervin] Heart disease doesn't always have symptoms, and, in some cases, it varies based on the condition or person. But the most common symptoms include pain or discomfort in the chest which is sometimes mistaken for indigestion or heartburn, as well as pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, back, arms, or even shoulders. There can also be

shortness of breath, irregular heart beat or palpitations, nausea, and feeling weak, dizzy, or light headed.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some ways we can decrease our chances of developing heart problems?

[Dr. Gervin] There are several things people can do and it starts with making healthy choices and managing medical conditions. For example, eat meals that are rich in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats, cholesterol, added sugar, and sodium. If you smoke, stop. If you don't smoke, don't start. Regular exercise is also important. Try walking for 10 minutes three times a day, five days a week. Also, know your blood pressure and have it checked regularly. Finally, if you have a medical condition, take your medicine and follow the doctor's instructions.

[Dr. Gaynes] How often should we have our heart checked out by a health care provider?

[Dr. Gervin] Get a check-up at least once each year. Even if you feel healthy, a doctor, nurse, or other health care professional can check for conditions that put you at risk for heart disease, such as high blood pressure and diabetes because these conditions can go unnoticed for a long time. And if you're experiencing symptoms that you think may be related to heart disease, you should see a health care provider as soon as possible.

[Dr. Gaynes] Derrick, where can listeners get more information about preventing heart disease?

[Dr. Gervin] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/heartdisease.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Derrick. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Derrick Gervin about preventing heart disease.

Help decrease your chance of developing heart disease. Get regular physical activity, eat a healthy diet, and control your blood pressure and cholesterol. Also, regular check-ups are important for early detection of any problems. If you're experiencing symptoms of heart disease, see a health care provider immediately.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC.*

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.