



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Listen to Your Heart

Awareness of Heart Attack Warning Signs and Actions Taken — 14 States, 2005

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

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

Is your heart trying to tell you something? Each year, nearly half a million Americans die from a heart attack. Had they known the warning signs, they might still be alive today. New treatments are available that can stop a heart attack before it kills, but they're only effective if administered soon after symptoms appear.

Dr. Robert Merritt is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. He's joining us today to discuss the symptoms of a heart attack and what a person should do if he or she thinks they might be having one. Welcome to the show, Rob.

[Dr. Merritt] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Rob, how common are heart attacks in the United States?

[Dr. Merritt] Every year, about 920,000 Americans suffer heart attacks. And about 450,000 of those are fatal. Unfortunately, half of these deaths occur within 1 hour of symptoms and before a patient seeks treatment or reaches a hospital.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are they a result of genetic makeup, lifestyle, or a combination of both?

[Dr. Merritt] It's a combination of genetic factors, as well as lifestyle choices we make here in the United States.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common warning signs of a heart attack?

[Dr. Merritt] The most common warning signs are pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, or back; feeling weak, light-headed, or faint; chest pain or discomfort; pain or discomfort in your arms or shoulders; and shortness of breath.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is it possible to distinguish between say soreness or indigestion and an actual heart attack?

[Dr. Merritt] It is difficult to distinguish the two, so we feel that it's best to seek care if you're uncertain.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should someone do if they think they are having a heart attack?

[Dr. Merritt] The best thing to do is to seek care immediately by calling 911.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kind of advancements have we seen in the treatment of heart attacks?

[Dr. Merritt] There are several new treatments available, most notably, the automated external defibrillators or AEDs, which are widely available at our work places, airports, health clubs, and other public areas. There are also advancements in drug treatments and a variety of new cardiac technologies. So it's important to remember that the faster you seek and receive treatment, the better your chances of survival.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about heart attacks?

[Dr. Merritt] At our website at www.cdc.gov/dhds.

[Dr. Gaynes] Rob, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Merritt] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] That's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us again next week. Until then, 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, 24/7.