



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Workplace Stress Relief

Prevalence of Coronary Heart Disease and Stroke Among Workers Aged <55 Years --- United States, 2008-2012

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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.

The stress of everyday life can lead to all kinds of health problems. It's particularly a problem at work.

Dr. Sara Luckhaupt is a researcher with CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. She's joining us today by telephone to discuss the health impact of work-related stress. Welcome to the show, Sara.

[Dr. Luckhaupt] Thank you so much for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sara, let's start with how common are heart attacks and strokes in the U.S.?

[Dr. Luckhaupt] Well, they're pretty common and they're pretty serious. Cardiovascular disease, mostly heart attacks and strokes, is responsible for one in three deaths in the U.S.

[Dr. Gaynes] What kinds of employees are particularly susceptible to heart attacks and strokes?

[Dr. Luckhaupt] Well, one group includes workers in blue collar occupations, such as construction workers, factory workers, and truck drivers. And then also workers in service occupations, like hairdressers, nurse's aides, and cooks; they're at increased risk. There're also some industry groups with an increased risk and these include things like business support and travel services, landscaping and waste management, and hotels, restaurants, and bars.

[Dr. Gaynes] Why are certain kinds of employees at higher risk for cardiovascular diseases?

[Dr. Luckhaupt] Well, some of the things in the workplace that may increase the risk include exposure to particulate matter in the air, like inorganic dust, fumes, and diesel exhaust; also, exposure to noise and second smoke. And another likely risk is job stress. And job stress can occur on any job when there is a poor match between the demands of the job and the capabilities, resources, or needs of the workers. And this can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, and other types of emotional strain that may ultimately contribute to a heart attack or stroke.

[Dr. Gaynes] How can employers help alleviate stress among their workers?

[Dr. Luckhaupt] Well, employers can help by improving working conditions, such as increasing the amount of control that employees have over how and when they do their work. But even the most conscientious efforts to improve working conditions are unlikely to eliminate stress completely for all workers. So a combination of these types of organizational change and stress management programs is often the best approach. And employees should let their managers know if there are aspects of their jobs that could be changed to help decrease their stress. Employee representatives, such as unions, might be able to help with this. And remember, this is an important topic because it can have such serious consequences like heart attacks and strokes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Sara, where can listeners get more information about stress-related health problems?

[Dr. Luckhaupt] I suggest going to cdc.gov and typing *work stress* in the search box and there will be several useful links.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Sara. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Sara Luckhaupt about relieving stress in the workplace.

Employers should reduce employee stress through creating more stable work schedules and reduce chronic work hazards, such as secondhand smoke. They should also consider health promotion issues, such as encouraging employees to eat healthy diets, exercise regularly, and quit smoking.

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.