



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Heart Health*

World Heart Day — September 27, 2009

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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 your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

A healthy heart is the key to a healthy life. Each year, more than 17 million people die from cardiovascular disease, mainly heart disease and stroke, making it the leading cause of death worldwide.

Judy Hannan is Deputy Director of CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. She's joining us today to discuss how to maintain a healthy heart. Welcome to the show, Judy.

[Ms. Hannan] Good morning.

[Dr. Gaynes] Judy, are most heart problems genetic or the result of risky behaviors?

[Ms. Hannan] Well, there can be some genetic tendencies for people to have a higher risk of heart disease – they have a family history of early heart attacks, they have a family history of high blood pressure or fatty build-up in their arteries. The most important fact is that they get controlled the same way and it has everything to do with your behavior, so whether you have a family history or not, the things that you need to do are the same – stop smoking, decrease your sodium intake, eat healthier, exercise, stay a healthy weight.

[Dr. Gaynes] How would someone know if they have cardiovascular disease?

[Ms. Hannan] Cardiovascular disease is a very broad category. Let me start with what most about what people heart attack and most people think about the “movie heart attack” where somebody clutches their chest and quickly keels over. And that can be the symptom of a heart attack; symptoms also can be a little less dramatic. What you have is chest discomfort in the center of the chest; it can last for a few minutes or it can go away and come back. People have talked about feeling pressure or squeezing or fullness right in the center of your chest in both or your arms or one of your arms in the back, neck, or jaw cold sweatsnausea, light-headedness If you have those symptoms that I just described or any sort of combination of them, the important thing is to call 9-1-1 right away.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most effective strategies for preventing cardiovascular disease?

[Ms. Hannan] The most effective strategies are those behavioral ones we just talked about - so stop smoking, avoid being around second-hand smoke, decrease your salt intake, eat healthier – and generally more fruits and vegetables, exercise, and stay a healthy weight.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, if a person is trying to do all the right things to prevent cardiovascular disease, do they still need to be screened for the disease?

[Ms. Hannan] They sure do. Whether they're doing all those right things, or doing some of those right things, or doing none of those right things, they still can have cardiovascular disease without having symptoms. Both high blood pressure and high cholesterol are considered silent killers because you don't feel the symptoms. You should have your blood pressure checked at least every two years. And you should be tested for diabetes or sugar in your blood.

[Dr. Gaynes] If a person is diagnosed with high blood pressure or high cholesterol, what treatments are available?

[Ms. Hannan] Again, I'd like to re-emphasize, one of the first things the doctor is going to talk to you about are your lifestyle behaviors – all those things that I just mentioned as far as to stop smoking, watch your sodium intake, eat healthier, exercise, and stay at a healthy weight, but in addition, when you're diagnosed with hypertension or high cholesterol, there's a good chance that, at some point, your physician will need to put you on medication you need to continue taking them and just as hypertension was silent - you don't feel the symptoms - maintain the screening with your physician and maintain the medication regimen.

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

[Ms. Hannan] They can go to [www.cdc.gov/heartdisease](http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Judy. I've been talking today with CDC's Judy Hannan about ways to prevent cardiovascular disease.

Remember, controlling risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity can help you maintain a healthy heart. Other prevention strategies include avoiding tobacco use, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet, and getting regular check-ups.

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](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.