

The purpose of this Health and Wellness alert is to increase the awareness of direct support professionals about common symptoms and risks associated with Heart disease and stroke. By being aware, you can ensure that people get immediate medical attention when experiencing these life-threatening conditions. As direct support professionals, you also play a role in encouraging heart health habits to promote good health. DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents (MUIs) and Unusual Incidents (UIs) prior to direct contact. This training includes the review of any Health and Welfare Alerts released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions or comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

[www.dodd.ohio.gov](http://www.dodd.ohio.gov)



**Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in the general population, as well as, with individuals with developmental disabilities.**

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in America today. It is critical to learn more about these conditions and what we can do to prevent them for ourselves and those we support.

“Heart disease” includes arteriosclerotic cardiovascular heart disease (ASHD, ASCVD), heart attack (myocardial infarction, MI), hypertension (HCVD), heart failure (CHF), congenital, rheumatic or valvular heart disease, arrhythmias, or cardiomyopathy. “Strokes” result from an interruption of the blood flow to the brain (cerebrovascular accident, CVA) and can also be a sign of heart disease.

People with disabilities are at increased risk for heart disease and stroke as they are more likely to have high blood pressure and other associated risk factors. People with disabilities have greater difficulty in keeping a healthy weight and in getting enough exercise – both important to heart health.

That is why it is so important to know the symptoms for heart attacks and stroke and know what to do.

#### **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK**

- Chest discomfort or discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweats
- Women are more likely to experience some of the other symptoms: shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, back or jaw pain
- Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most start slowly with mild pain or discomfort

#### **STEPS TO TAKE FOR HEART ATTACK:**

- Call 9-1-1
- CPR attempts always should be started immediately, unless a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is in place, and should continue until effective, rescue help has arrived or until death has been determined by a medical professional.

#### **YOUR FAST ACTIONS CAN SAVE A LIFE**

- Effective CPR immediately after sudden cardiac arrest can double or triple a victim's chance of survival!
- Chance of survival decreases 7-10% per minute if no CPR is started.

#### **SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF A STROKE**

- Suddenly feel numb or weak in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Suddenly have trouble seeing with one eye or both of them
- Suddenly have a hard time talking or understanding what someone is saying
- Suddenly feel dizzy or lose balance
- Have a sudden, very bad headache with no known cause

#### **STEPS TO TAKE FOR A STROKE:**

- Call 9-1-1 immediately
- Check the time symptoms first appeared
- Get to a hospital right away
- It is very important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long-term disability from the most common type of stroke.
- Remember **F-A-S-T**
  - F** – Face; drooping on one side of the face (eyes or mouth, vision)
  - A** – Arm weakness in one more than the other or can't be raised normally
  - S** – Speech difficulty-speak changes; garbled or not making sense
  - T** – Time to call 911 – the faster the treatment the better the recovery

## RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE:

- Age
- Smoking
- Family history
- Obesity
- High cholesterol
- Gender
- Physical inactivity
- High blood pressure



**Encourage Heart Healthy Habits!**

Several congenital syndromes such as Down Syndrome, Marfan Syndrome, and Prater-Willi Syndrome have a much higher risk of cardiac disease.

Risk factors for heart disease fall into two categories – *those you can change, and those you cannot*. You cannot control your family history, age or gender; however, there are things that can be done to prevent and/or control other risk factors.

Healthy eating habits, exercise and weight control are extremely important. Low fat, low cholesterol foods are heart healthy. The diet should emphasize lean meats, baked, roasted or grilled chicken (skinless) and fish, and multiple daily servings of fruits and vegetables. To promote heart health, also limit fatty, fried foods, salt, caffeine, alcoholic drinks and calories.

## OTHER WAYS TO PROMOTE HEART HEALTH:

- ♥ Start having conversations about healthy habits. Use the resources listed to the right. You can start by checking on the videos, posters and resources on line.
- ♥ Have everyone set some fun and easy health goals. Start simple like walk 15 minutes three times a week. Download a free printable health goals tracker on the internet.
- ♥ Get everyone involved by trying out a new healthy recipe.
- ♥ Encourage people to move more. Lead by example.
- ♥ Control cholesterol with medication if diet/exercise are not effective.
- ♥ Diabetics need to maintain blood sugar levels and be monitored closely for control.
- ♥ Normalize blood pressure through diet/exercise and/or medication.
- ♥ Good dental hygiene – gum disease and abscesses can lead to infections in the heart/blood.
- ♥ Get help to stop smoking
- ♥ Paint a wall space from floor to ceiling with chalk board paint or write-on-wipe off paint (available at hardware stores). Filling the whole space with art will use arms and legs for reaching and squatting to draw and color and reduce stress!
- ♥ Stress management-try some relaxation techniques like yoga.

## KNOW THE SIGNS AND WHAT TO DO:

- *Pain in chest, arms, jaw, back*
- *Unexplained fatigue.*
- *Shortness of breath.*
- *Abnormal skin pallor or bluish colored skin.*
- *Decrease in appetite or difficulty in swallowing.*
- *Agitation, which may be coming from chest pain (angina) or anxiety associated with the unpleasant inner sensation of cardiac rhythm changes*
- *Remember FAST (Face Drooping-Arm weakness-Speech Difficulty-Time to call 911)*

Call 911 immediately. CPR attempts always should be started immediately, unless a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order is in place, and should continue until effective, rescue help has arrived or until death has been determined by a medical professional. **Important: Don't wait!**

## Resources:

American Heart Association

American Stroke Association

<http://www.heart.org>

<http://heart.org/supportnet/work>

### Easy Read Resources for individuals and their caregivers

California DDS Safety Net-Learning tools for Heart Health –Great easy read resources including videos, posters, etc.

<http://www.ddssafety.net/health/heart-problems>

### Smoking Cessation & Healthy Living

The Ohio Disability and Health Program is one of 18 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-funded state programs that aim to improve the health and well-being of Ohioans who have disabilities.

<http://nisonger.osu.edu/odhp>

Learn about your risk factors by taking an on-line quiz offered by the Harvard School of Public Health

[www.healthyheartscore.com](http://www.healthyheartscore.com)

### Healthy Eating, Exercise and Stress

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyLiving\\_UCM\\_001078\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyLiving_UCM_001078_SubHomePage.jsp)

Center for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HeartMonth/index.html>

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