

HEALTH QUARTERLY

Heart Disease: Know the Risk Factors and Prevent It

Did you know that heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the United States? And, according to the American Heart Association, a heart attack strikes someone in the United States about every 43 seconds. "Although these statistics are worrisome, you can help to protect yourself by knowing your risk for a heart attack and the signs and symptoms to look for," says Gerald Sotsky, M.D., director, Valley/Cleveland Clinic Affiliation and chair, Cardiac Services, Valley Medical Group.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that key factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking. Believe it or not, about half of Americans (47 percent) have at least one of these three risk factors! The CDC also lists the following medical conditions and lifestyle choices that can also put people at a higher risk for heart disease:

- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use

Fortunately, heart health can be easier to achieve than you might think. It doesn't require hours of grueling exercise or giving up all of your favorite foods. A few simple



Dr. Gerald Sotsky

lifestyle changes can make all the difference.

Here are some tips to get you on your way:

- Exercise 30 to 60 minutes a day on most days of the week. This can be as simple as taking a daily walk.
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Quit or don't start smoking
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes, limiting highly refined carbohydrates and saturated fats.

According to the CDC, the five major symptoms of a heart attack are:

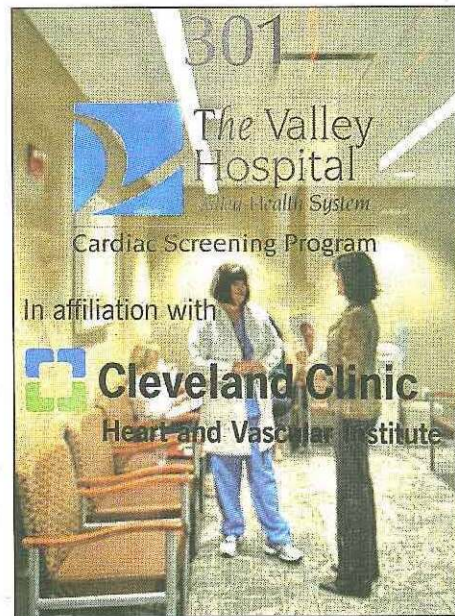
- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck, back
- Feeling weak, light-headed, or faint
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in arms or shoulder
- Shortness of breath

Additionally, it is important to note that women may also experience pain or discomfort in the stomach, nausea, breaking out in a cold sweat or extreme fatigue.

The Valley Heart and Vascular Institute offers a free, comprehensive risk assessment Cardiac Screening Program for women and men between the ages of 20 and 79. Call 201-447-8535 for more information or to make an appointment. You may also request an appointment online at www.ValleyHeartAndVascular.Com.

Dr. Sotsky explains that "It is important to listen to your body and, if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, you should contact your physician. If the pain and/or symptoms are severe, you should call 911 or proceed directly to the emergency room."

As an affiliate of Cleveland Clinic Heart and Vascular Institute, Valley's cardiac physicians take a collaborative approach to patient care, working together with the experts at Cleveland Clinic to share knowledge, expertise, and best practices. Using the latest technologies and medical devices, along with advanced treatment techniques, the cardiac experts at Valley can address a wide variety



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Cardiac screenings are available at The Valley Heart and Vascular Institute.

of cardiac conditions. You can view the hospital's directory of VMG heart specialists, many of whom offer online appointments, at www.ValleyMedicalGroup.com.