



BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

Can You Recognize a Heart Attack or Stroke?

WHAT TO DO WHEN EVERY MOMENT COUNTS

How would you react to a medical emergency? When it comes to life-threatening conditions like heart attack or stroke, every minute counts. Get to know the signs and symptoms of these health threats. If you think you or someone else might be having a heart attack or stroke, get medical help right away. Acting fast could save your life or someone else's.

Heart disease and stroke are 2 of the top killers among both women and men in the U.S. Nationwide, someone dies from a heart attack about every 90 seconds, and stroke kills someone about every 4 minutes, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Quick medical help could prevent many of these deaths. Fast action can also limit permanent damage to the body.

What Are the Signs & Symptoms?

Heart attack and stroke are caused by interruptions to the normal flow of blood to the heart or brain—2 organs that are essential to life. Without access to oxygen-rich blood and nutrients, heart or brain cells begin to malfunction and die. This cell death can set off a series of harmful effects throughout the body. The changes ultimately lead to the familiar symptoms of a heart or brain emergency.

You might know the most common symptoms of heart attack: sustained, crushing chest pain and difficulty breathing. A heart attack might also cause cold sweats, a racing heart, pain down the left arm, jaw stiffness, or shoulder pain.

Many don't know that women often have different heart attack symptoms than men. For instance, instead of having chest pain during a heart attack, women may feel extremely exhausted and fatigued or have indigestion and nausea.

"Many women have a vague sense of gloom and doom, a sense of 'I just don't feel quite right and don't know why,'" says Dr. Patrice



Desvigne-Nickens, a National Institutes of Health (NIH) expert in heart health.

The symptoms of stroke include sudden difficulty seeing, speaking, or walking, and feelings of weakness, numbness, dizziness, and confusion. "Some people get a severe headache that's immediate and strong, different from any kind you've ever had," says Dr. Salina Waddy, an NIH stroke expert.

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You Can Make a Difference

At the first sign of any of these symptoms, fast action by you, someone you know, or a passerby can make a huge difference. NIH-funded research has helped ensure that more people survive heart attacks and strokes every year. We now have medicines, procedures, and devices that can help limit heart and brain damage following an attack, as long as medical help arrives quickly.

If the heart is starved for blood for too long—generally more than 20 minutes—heart muscle can be irreversibly damaged, Desvigne-Nickens says. “You need to be in the hospital because there’s a risk of cardiac arrest [your heart stopping],” which could be deadly. At the hospital, doctors can administer clot-busting drugs and other emergency procedures.

With stroke, Waddy says, “The longer you wait, the more brain cells are dying,” and the greater the chance for permanent damage or disability.

Emergency treatment for stroke depends on the kind of stroke. The most common type, ischemic stroke, is caused by a clot that clogs a blood vessel in the brain. The clot-dissolving drug tPA works best when given soon after symptoms begin. NIH research shows that patients who received tPA within 3 hours of stroke onset were more likely to recover fully.

Other strokes are caused by a hemorrhage—when a blood vessel breaks and bleeds into the brain. “The patient can have a larger hemorrhage within the first 3 hours,” Waddy says. A hospital medical team can help contain the bleeding, so every moment counts.

Even if you’re unsure, don’t feel embarrassed or hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you suspect a heart attack or stroke. “You should not go get your car keys. Your spouse shouldn’t be driving you to the hospital,” advises Desvigne-Nickens. “The emergency crew is trained to treat these symptoms, and it could mean the difference between life and death.”

Heart attack or stroke can happen to anyone, but your risk increases with age. A family or personal history of heart attack or stroke also raises your risk. But some risk factors for heart attack and stroke are within your control. Treating them can dramatically reduce your risk.

Know the Symptoms

Don’t hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you see these symptoms of heart attack or stroke. Every minute counts.

Heart attack:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain, stiffness, or numbness in the neck, back, or one or both arms or shoulders
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat, nausea, dizziness

Stroke:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden severe headache, dizziness, confusion
- Sudden difficulty with vision, balance, speech

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Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Physical Activity Helps Seniors Stay Mobile

A carefully structured, moderate physical activity program helped vulnerable older people maintain their mobility. A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* shows that many frail older people can reap rewards from regular physical activity.

As you get older, reduced mobility can raise the risk for disease, disability, and even death. Regular physical activity offers known health benefits to a variety of people. But scientists hadn't identified a specific intervention to prevent mobility disability.

In the study, more than 1,600 adults, ages 70 to 89, who were at risk for disability were enrolled. They were randomly assigned to either a moderate-intensity physical activity program or a health education program focused on successful aging.

The physical activity group gradually worked up to 150 minutes of weekly activity, including brisk walking, strength and balance training, and flexibility exercises. Sessions took place at a clinic twice a week and at home 3 or 4 times a week. The comparison group had 26 weekly health education workshops, later followed by monthly meetings.

Over the course of the study—an average of 2.6 years—the physical activity program significantly reduced the risk of major mobility disability by 18% compared to the education group. Physical activity participants were better able to maintain their ability to walk without assistance for about a quarter of a mile.

“We are gratified by these findings,” says Dr. Richard J. Hodes, director of the National Institutes of Health National Institute on Aging (NIA). “Participating in a specific program of aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility training activities can have substantial positive benefits for reducing risk of mobility disability.”



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Day In Day Out

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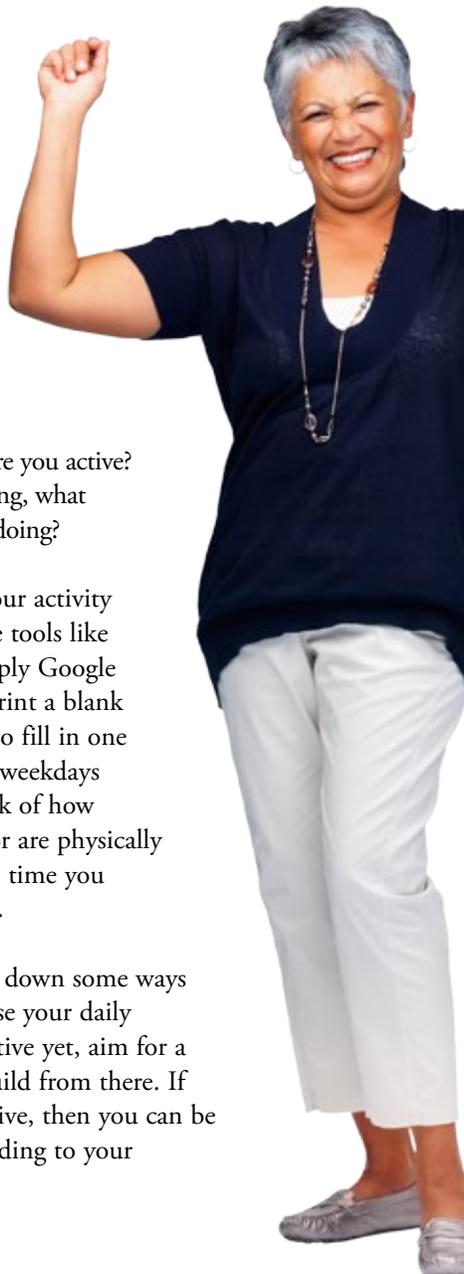
Physical Activity: Your Starting Point

When it comes to exercise, the key is to know your starting point and build slowly from there. Knowing where you are right now will help you pick activities that are realistic for you so that you can be successful.

Think about a typical weekday and weekend day. How much time do you spend sitting? How much time are you active? When you're up and moving, what kinds of activities are you doing?

To help you figure out your activity level, try using interactive tools like "My Starting Point" (simply Google the term). You can also print a blank activity log, if you'd like to fill in one by hand. For a couple of weekdays and a weekend, keep track of how much time you exercise or are physically active. Record how much time you spend doing each activity.

Try to think of and write down some ways you think you can increase your daily activities. If you're not active yet, aim for a modest beginning and build from there. If you are already pretty active, then you can be more ambitious about adding to your activities.



SET YOUR GOALS

Many people find that having a firm goal in mind motivates them to move ahead on a project. Goals are most useful when they are specific, realistic, and important to you. Your success depends on setting goals that really matter to you. Write down your goals, put them where you can see them, and review them regularly. Consider both short- and long-term goals.

Short-term goals will help you make physical activity a regular part of your daily life. For these goals, think about the things you need to get or do to be physically active. For example, you may need to buy walking shoes or fill out an activity log so you can figure out how to fit physical activity into your busy day. Make sure your short-term goals will really help you be active.

If you're already active, think of short-term goals to increase your level of physical activity. For example, over the next week or two, you may want to move gradually from walking to jogging, increase the amount of weight you lift, or try a new kind of physical activity. No matter what your starting point, reaching your short-term goals will make you feel good and give you confidence to progress toward your long-term goals.

After you write down your short-term goals, you can go on to identify your long-term goals. Focus on where you want to be in 6 months, a year, or 2 years from now. Long-term goals also should be realistic, personal, and important to you.



TakeCharge

WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN

Surviving Sepsis

Taming a Deadly Immune Response

Many people have never heard of sepsis, or they don't know what it is. But sepsis is one of the top 10 causes of disease-related death in the United States. The condition can arise suddenly and progress quickly, and it's often hard to recognize.

Sepsis was once commonly known as "blood poisoning." It was almost always deadly. Today, even with early treatment, sepsis kills about 1 in 5 affected people. It causes symptoms such as fever, chills, rapid breathing, and confusion.

Anyone can get sepsis, but the elderly, children, and infants are most vulnerable. People with weakened immune systems, severe burns, physical trauma, or long-term illnesses (such as diabetes, cancer, or liver disease) are also at increased risk.

At one time, sepsis was thought to arise from an overgrowth of bacteria or other germs in the bloodstream. We now know that sepsis actually springs from 2 factors: first an infection (such as pneumonia or a urinary tract infection) and then a powerful and harmful response by your body's own immune system.

"With sepsis, the fight between the infection and the body's immune response makes the body like a battleground," says Dr. Derek Angus, a critical care physician at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. "In the case of severe sepsis, that fight results in vital organ dysfunction, which puts one's life in peril."

The Dangers of Sepsis

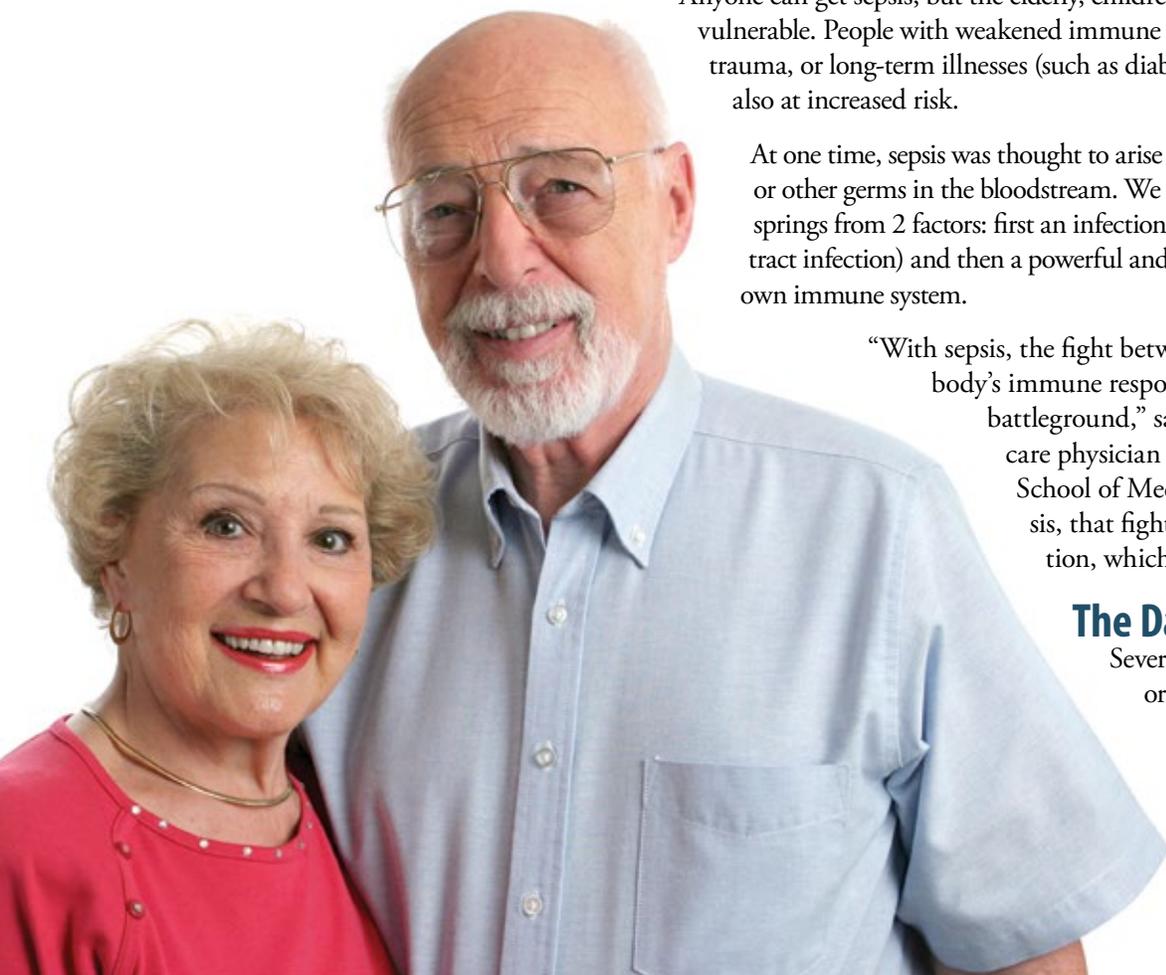
Severe sepsis can damage essential organs like the liver and kidneys.

An even more extreme disorder occurs when blood pressure

plummets—a condition known as septic shock.

"With septic

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TakeCharge

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shock, the immune response that's trying to fight infection can actually lead to a dangerous drop in blood pressure," Angus says. As blood pressure falls, tissues become starved for oxygen-rich blood. Organs can fail, which could lead to death.

By some estimates, severe sepsis or septic shock strikes nearly 1 million Americans each year. At least 200,000 of them die in the hospital shortly afterward. Many who survive recover completely. But others have lasting problems, including permanent organ damage and thinking difficulties (such as problems with planning, organizing, and multitasking).

Sepsis can be triggered by many types of infections. "But the most common cause of sepsis is community-acquired pneumonia," Angus says. Scientists are still working to understand why some people with infections develop severe sepsis or septic shock while others don't.

Treating Sepsis

Researchers are exploring new ways to diagnose, reverse, or prevent this serious and costly condition. Treatment for sepsis is most successful if the condition is spotted early and then treated quickly with antibiotics to fight the infection and fluids to maintain blood pressure.

In a large National Institutes of Health-funded clinical trial of sepsis care, Angus and his colleagues found that a relatively simple strategy worked as well at preventing deaths as did more complex and costly approaches. "The study helped to clarify that a lot of the treatment steps we'd been using are essential, but the extra steps with sophisticated and invasive procedures aren't always necessary to improve survival," Angus says.

Sepsis is a health emergency that requires swift medical care. See a doctor or get emergency assistance if you feel unwell and have a combination of the symptoms listed in this article.

Signs of Sepsis

Sepsis can be hard to spot, because its early symptoms are similar to many other conditions. Medical personnel look for these signs:

- Fever or low body temperature (hypothermia)
- Chills
- Rapid heart rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Skin rash
- Confusion and disorientation
- Light-headedness caused by a sudden drop in blood pressure





ToYourHealth

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

Massage Therapy

What You *Knead* to Know

Many people associate massage with vacations or spas and consider them something of a luxury. But research is beginning to suggest this ancient form of hands-on healing may be more than an indulgence—may help improve your health.

Massage therapists use their fingers, hands, forearms and elbows to manipulate the muscles and other soft tissues of the body. Variations in focus and technique lead to different types of massage, including Swedish, deep tissue and sports massage.

In Swedish massage, the focus is general and the therapist may use long strokes, kneading, deep circular movements, vibration and tapping. With a deep tissue massage, the focus is more targeted, as therapists work on specific areas of concern or pain. These areas may have muscle “knots” or places of tissue restriction.

Some common reasons for getting a massage are to relieve pain, heal sports injuries, reduce stress, relax, ease anxiety or depression, and aid general wellness. Unfortunately, scientific evidence on massage therapy is limited. Researchers are actively trying to understand exactly how massage works, how much is best, and how it might help with specific health conditions. Some positive benefits have been reported.



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ToYourHealth

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“Massage therapy has been noted to relax the nervous system by slowing heart rate and blood pressure. Stress and pain hormones are also decreased by massage, reducing pain and enhancing immune function,” says Dr. Tiffany Field, who heads a touch research institute at the University of Miami Medical School. Much of her research focuses on the importance of massage for pregnant women and infants. Some of her studies suggest that massage may improve weight gain and immune system function in preterm infants.

What the Science is Saying

A recent study looked at how massage affects muscles at the molecular level. The findings suggest that kneading eases sore muscles after exercise by turning off genes associated with inflammation and turning on genes that help muscles heal.

A recent study found that an hour-long “dose” of Swedish massage therapy once a week was optimal for knee pain from osteoarthritis, especially when practical matters like time, labor and convenience were considered. Other research suggests that massage therapy is effective in reducing and managing chronic low-back pain, which affects millions of Americans.

If you're considering massage therapy for a specific medical condition, talk with your health care provider. Never use massage to replace your regular medical care or as a reason to postpone seeing a health care professional.

Every therapist and every massage is unique. If you decide to try massage therapy, work with different therapists until you find one that meets your needs. One of the best ways to get a great massage is to communicate with your therapist. Most will check in with you during your session for feedback, but—if not—speak up!



Getting a Safe Massage

- If you have a medical condition, ask your health care provider if massage therapy is right for you.
- Before beginning massage therapy, ask about the therapist's training, experience and credentials. Also ask about the number of treatments that might be needed, the cost and insurance coverage.
- Massage should not hurt. If you feel pain, tell your therapist.
- Tell your health care providers about all complementary and alternative practices you use, including massage.