



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Common Killers

World Heart Day — September 28, 2008

Recorded: September 30, 2008; posted: October 2, 2008

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Susan Laird] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Susan Laird, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

In the wide world of sports, rankings are constantly changing. But in the public health arena, some things never change. For the past several decades, heart disease and stroke have been the first and third leading causes of death in the United States, respectively.

Dr. Mary George is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss ways to avoid becoming a victim of heart disease and stroke. Welcome to the show, Dr. George.

[Dr. George] Thank you. It's great to be here today.

[Susan Laird] Dr. George, how many people die each year from heart attacks and strokes?

[Dr. George] Around the world, over 17 million people die each year, and here in the United States, over 800 thousand people die each year.

[Susan Laird] Is this number going up or down or has it stayed about the same?

[Dr. George] Well, the good news is that the rate of death from cardiovascular disease has been declining in the United States for over a quarter century, but the decline has not been consistent across all demographic groups.

[Susan Laird] Well, what are the risk factors for these conditions?

[Dr. George] Some of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease are things that we cannot change, such as family history, being a man, race, and age. Other risk factors are things that we do have the power to change by living healthier lives. Those include things like high blood pressure, tobacco use, high cholesterol, diabetes, heavy alcohol use, inactive lifestyle, and being overweight.

[Susan Laird] So what can people do to decrease the likelihood of suffering a heart attack or stroke?

[Dr. George] Number one, know your numbers. People should know what their blood pressure is and their cholesterol. We can prevent and control high cholesterol. We can prevent and control

high blood pressure by eating a healthy diet, regular physical activity, not smoking, and having a healthy weight. We can control diabetes, again, often times with diet, not using tobacco, only moderate alcohol use, and maintaining a healthy weight and an active lifestyle.

[Susan Laird] Dr. George, what are some of the warning signs or symptoms of a heart attack or stroke?

[Dr. George] The warning signs of a heart attack are often chest discomfort, which some people describe as a feeling like an uncomfortable pressure or squeezing, fullness, or pain in their chest. They may also experience pain in their neck, their back, their shoulders, their arms, their jaw, or even in their stomach. People often experience shortness of breath, and they may break out in a cold sweat and feel light-headed. For a stroke, we often think the warning signs relate to the word “sudden,” such as sudden confusion or trouble speaking; sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg; sudden trouble seeing; sudden trouble walking, with dizziness or loss of balance. They may have a very sudden severe headache. The important thing to remember when you experience any of these signs of a heart attack or stroke, call 9-1-1.

[Susan Laird] Dr. George, I’ve often heard that women have different symptoms when they’re having a heart attack. Is that true?

[Dr. George] They may. They may feel more nausea than pain.

[Susan Laird] So, where can listeners get more information about these conditions?

[Dr. George] They can go to www.cdc.gov and search for “heart disease.”

[Susan Laird] Dr. George, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. George] It’s been a pleasure. Thank you very much.

[Susan Laird] That’s it for this week’s show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Susan Laird for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.