

# Matters of the Heart



Take Heart Alaska's Quarterly Newsletter

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## May is Stroke Awareness Month

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States<sup>1</sup>. It is also a leading cause of serious long-term disability. Although most strokes occur in people aged 65 years or older, strokes can occur at any age.

Knowing the symptoms of stroke and calling 9-1-1 immediately if someone appears to be having a stroke are crucial steps in getting prompt emergency medical care for a stroke. New treatments are available that can reduce the damage caused by a stroke for some victims, but these treatments need to be given soon after the symptoms start.

National Stroke Awareness Month has been taking place every year since 1989 in an effort to raise public awareness and minimize the impacts of stroke. The National Stroke Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention promote awareness of these five major signs of stroke:

- Numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance and coordination.
- Severe headache with no known cause.

**If you think someone is having a stroke, call 9-1-1 or emergency medical services immediately. Receiving immediate treatment is critical in lowering the risk of disability and even death.**

**Take Heart  
Alaska**

Alaska's Cardiovascular  
Health Coalition

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### Committee Minutes

Click to link to documents....

[Steering Committee](#)

[Healthy Lifestyles Committee](#)

[Alaskans Promoting Physical Activity \(APPA\) Subcommittee](#)

[Eat Smart Alaska Subcommittee](#)

[Public Education Committee](#)

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Here are some of the signs that can mean a heart attack is happening.

**Chest discomfort**—Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

**Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**—Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

**Shortness of breath**—This may occur with or without chest discomfort.

**Other signs**—These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

*If you or someone you're with has any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately. Don't wait longer than five minutes before calling for help. You need to get to a hospital right away. Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment!*

## May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month and this year's theme highlights the threat of uncontrolled hypertension. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) urges Americans: "If Your Blood Pressure Is Not Lower Than 140/90, Ask Your Doctor Why."

High blood pressure affects about 50 million--or one in four--American adults. Of those with hypertension, about 68 percent are aware of their condition--but only 27 percent have it under control. The reasons for this include not taking drugs as prescribed and/or not taking a medication that sufficiently lowers blood pressure.

Hypertension can lead to stroke, heart failure, or kidney damage. To help prevent that, blood pressure must be lowered to less than 140/90 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury). Normal blood pressure is less than 130/less than 85 mm Hg.

The lifestyle changes to control high blood pressure are: lose weight, if overweight; become physically active; choose foods lower in salt and sodium; and limit alcohol intake.

To help spread the word about the dangers of uncontrolled hypertension--and what can be done about it--the NHLBI and the NHBPEP have set up a special web site, which can be accessed through the NHLBI home page at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>.

They also are offering a variety of materials to help Americans learn more about hypertension. The materials are:

**Facts About the DASH Diet**\*. DASH is an eating plan rich in fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods and lower in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol. It has been shown to reduce high blood pressure. The fact sheet gives an overview of the plan and a week of DASH menus.

**Heart healthy recipes**\* from the NHLBI Stay Young At Heart Program, as well as special **Latino** and **African American** recipe books.

**(Facts About) How to Prevent High Blood Pressure**\*. This fact sheet

### Stroke Warning Signs

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg—especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding;
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes;
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination;
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

If you or someone with you has one or more of these signs, don't delay! Immediately call 9-1-1 or the EMS number in your area so an ambulance can be sent for you. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's 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 for the most common type of stroke.

### Sodium Reduction

The National Salt Reduction Initiative (NSRI) is a public-private partnership that has developed targets for salt reduction in 62 categories of packaged food and 25 categories of restaurant food. The NSRI includes voluntary two- and four-year targets for average salt levels in each category of food. Some popular products already meet these targets – a clear indication that they are achievable. When a company signs onto the initiative, it pledges that its overall sales in a given category – canned soup, for example – will meet the relevant target for salt content, even if some individual products don't.

The NSRI is modeled on a program in the United Kingdom, where food makers have reduced salt levels by 40% or more in some products. Canada, Australia, Finland, France, Ireland, and New Zealand have also launched initiatives to help reduce the salt in food.

If you would like to learn more about how to participate in the NSRI, please email [salt@health.nyc.gov](mailto:salt@health.nyc.gov). For more information: [NSRI Corporate Commitments and Comments](#) (PDF)

### Million Hearts

The [Million Hearts](#) Initiative is a national effort to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes over the next five years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are the co-leaders of Million Hearts within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, working alongside other federal agencies including the National Institutes of Health, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Food and Drug Administration. Key private-sector partners include the American Heart Association, and YMCA, among others.

#### Million Hearts Social Media

<http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/about-mh-socialmedia.shtml>

#### Million Hearts Buttons and Badges

<http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/buttons-badges.shtml>

**Stroke Awareness Month**

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Each year, almost 800,000 strokes occur in the United States<sup>1</sup>. Strokes often lead to serious, life-changing complications that include:

- Paralysis or weakness on one side of the body.
- Problems with thinking, awareness, attention, learning, judgment, and memory.
- Problems understanding or forming speech.
- Difficulty controlling or expressing emotions.
- Numbness or strange sensations.
- Pain in the hands and feet.
- Depression.

Demographic factors such as family history, age, sex, and race/ethnicity can all play a role in an individual's stroke risk. Regardless of your background, however, there are several things you can do to lower your chances of having a stroke.

For example, cigarette smoking contributes to one in every five strokes in the United States. Smoking—and even exposure to second-hand smoke—can thicken the blood and make it more likely to clot. Thicker blood flow can lead to increased plaque buildup in your arteries and damage to the blood vessels leading to the brain, which can cause or worsen a stroke.

<sup>1</sup>American Heart Association website. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - 2011.

**Stroke Month Resources**

[American Stroke Association](#)

[National Stroke Association](#)

[Stroke Awareness Resource Center](#) — Promotional Tools, Presentations, Media, Discussion Guides, and Events

[Faces of Stroke](#)

[Stroke 101 Fact Sheet](#)

[Explaining Stroke - An Interactive Guide](#)

[Stroke Care Near You—Find Your Nearest Stroke Certified Hospital](#)



# Heart Disease & Stroke Resources

## National Resources

**National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP)**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

For more information, go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/stroke/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/salt/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/WISEWOMAN/>

<http://millionhearts.hhs.gov/>

### Mission

The mission of the NCCDPHP is to lead efforts that promote health and well-being through prevention and control of chronic diseases.

NCCDPHP supports a variety of activities that improve the nation's health by preventing chronic diseases and their risk factors. Program activities include one or more of our major functions: supporting states' implementation of public health programs; public health surveillance; translation research; and developing tools and resources for stakeholders at the national, state and community levels.

## **National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD)**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

[www.chronicdisease.org](http://www.chronicdisease.org)

NACDD is a national public health association founded in 1988 to link the chronic disease program directors of each U.S. state and U.S. territory to provide a national forum for chronic disease prevention and control efforts. Since its founding, NACDD has made impressive strides in mobilizing national efforts to reduce chronic diseases and associated risk factors.

## State of Alaska Chronic Disease Prevention Programs and Program Resources

### **Alaska Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program**

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/default.htm>

The goal of Alaska's Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program is to maintain and build the state's capacity to improve the cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health of all Alaskans.

### **Alaska Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Section**

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/default.htm>

The Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion seeks to improve the health and well being of all Alaskans.

### **Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)**

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/hsl/brfss/default.htm>

The Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) working with the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), gathers information about the health related lifestyle choices of Alaskan adults. Each year, results are analyzed to improve the understanding of health habits and measure progress towards health objectives at the state and national level.

### **Alaska Diabetes Prevention and Control Program**

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/diabetes/default.htm>

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program's efforts to reduce the burden of diabetes in Alaska are consistent with national strategies and place special emphasis on communities and populations at risk for diabetes.

### **Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program**

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/default.htm>

The Obesity Prevention and Control Program's mission is to prevent and reduce obesity among Alaskans through the promotion of physical activity and good nutrition.

### **Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program**

[www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/tobacco/default.htm](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/tobacco/default.htm)

The mission of the Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program is to provide leadership, coordinate resources, and promote efforts that support Alaskans in living healthy and tobacco-free lives.