

# 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.

## Take Heart Alaska

Alaska's Cardiovascular  
Health Coalition

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### Committee Minutes

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[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.

Of the 67 million American adults who have high blood pressure, around 16 million know about the condition and are getting treatment, but their blood pressure still remains high. If you have high blood pressure, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends "making control the goal." To get your blood pressure under control follow these tips:

Ask your doctor what your blood pressure should be and set a goal for reaching that number;

Take your blood pressure medication as directed;

Quit smoking;

Reduce sodium - most Americans consume too much and it raises your risk for high blood pressure.

[\(Facts About\) How to Prevent High Blood Pressure\\*](#). This fact sheet gives an overview of hypertension.

### 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 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 for the most common type of stroke.

### Bike to Work Day

Friday, May 17 2013 was National Bike to Work Day. This event, initiated in 1956 by the League of American Bicyclists has been growing in Alaska each year with the number of registered teams quadrupling since 2007 and over 3,800 cyclists participating in the 2012 Anchorage event.

Early results from head counts in the Anchorage area show a decrease in participation this year - most likely due to the 3 inches of snowfall the city received that day!

However, Bike to Work day had risen in nearly each consecutive year prior, with 2012 bringing out nearly 4000 Anchorage residents biking to work - more than double from 2007.



### Bike to School

May 8, 2013 was National Bike to School Day. Following last years inaugural event that featured over 1000 local events in 49 states, children were encouraged again this year to ride their bicycle to school. Bike to School Day builds on the popularity of Walk to School Day which is celebrated across the country - and the world - each October.

Walk to School Day was created by the Partnership for a Walkable America in 1997 to build awareness for the need for walkable communities. In 2000 Canada joined the effort and International Walk to School Day was born - and October was designated as Walk to School Month.

Although Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day each have their own focus, both days welcome and encourage all forms of safe, active transportation to and from school.

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

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

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.