

Public Health, Epidemiology and Prevention

PEP Talk

Pinellas County Health Department • February 2009

Know your risk factors for heart disease and stroke February is American Heart Month

There are many types of cardiovascular disease (diseases of the heart and blood vessels). Each year about 870,000 people die from them. That's 36 percent of all deaths in the United States.

Heart Attack

Someone dies from heart and blood vessel diseases – *America's #1 killer* – every 36 seconds. Most of these deaths are from heart attacks, so it's important to learn all you can. You should know the warning signs of a heart attack so you can get help right away, either for yourself or someone close to you. Acting quickly can save lives!

Some heart attacks are sudden and strong. But most 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** with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs** such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or dizziness.

If you or someone you're with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the

other signs, don't wait more than five minutes before you call for help.

Call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.

Avoiding a Heart Attack

Even if you have heart disease, there's a lot you can do to improve your heart's health.



- Ask your doctor or nurse for help. Together, you can set goals to reduce the things that raise your risk of heart attack.
- Keep your weight in the normal range.
- Don't smoke, and avoid other people's tobacco smoke (secondhand smoke).
- Eat a healthy diet that's low in fat and salt.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week.
- See your doctor for regular check-ups.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- Treat high blood pressure, if you have it.

To Learn More...

- Talk to your doctor, nurse and other health-care professionals.
- Do research on the Internet or at the public library.
- If you have heart disease, your family also may be at risk. It's important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.



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February is National Children's Dental Health Month You Can Help Keep Your Kids' Teeth Healthy

When to Start Caring for Your Child's Teeth

Proper dental care begins even before your baby's first tooth appears. Remember: Just because you can't see the teeth, it doesn't mean they aren't there.

A baby's teeth actually begin to form in the second trimester of pregnancy. At birth, your baby already has twenty primary teeth, some of which are fully developed in the jaw, they just don't show yet.

You can prevent a build-up of harmful bacteria by running a soft damp washcloth over your baby's gums after feedings. Once your child has a few teeth showing, you can brush them with a soft child's toothbrush or rub them with gauze at the end of the day.

Even babies can have problems with tooth



decay if you do not follow good feeding habits at home. It may seem convenient to use a bottle when putting your baby to sleep, for example, but it can harm your

baby's teeth. That's because when the sugar from juice or milk stays on a baby's teeth for hours, it may eat away at the tooth, creating a condition known as bottle mouth. Pocked, pitted, or discolored front teeth are signs of bottle mouth. Severe cases of bottle mouth result in cavities and the need to remove (pull) all the front teeth until the permanent teeth grow in.

Parents and day care providers should help young children develop set times for drinking during the day, since sucking on a bottle throughout the day can be equally harmful to young teeth.

Preventing Cavities

The American Dental Association recommends that a child's first visit to the dentist



should take place by the first birthday. At this visit, your dentist will tell you about proper brushing and flossing (you need to floss your baby's teeth once your baby has two teeth that touch each other). The dentist will also do a modified dental exam while your baby sits on your lap.

These visits can help find potential problems early. They also help children get used to visiting the dentist so they won't be afraid of going to dentist as they grow older.

Brushing at least twice a day and routine flossing will help maintain a healthy mouth. Children as young as age two or three can begin to use toothpaste when they brush their teeth, as long as they are supervised. Kids should not swallow large amounts of toothpaste. A pea-sized amount for toddlers is just right. You should always make sure your child spits out the toothpaste instead of swallowing it.



As your child's permanent teeth grow in, your dentist can help seal out decay by applying a thin wash of resin to the back teeth, where most chewing occurs. This protective coating, known as a sealant, keeps bacteria from settling in the hard-to-reach crevices of the molars.

A dentist's care is only part of keeping your child's teeth healthy. Follow-up at home is just as important. For example, sealants on the teeth do not mean that your child can eat sweets all the time or slack off on daily brushing and flossing. You must work with your kids to teach them good oral health habits.



With a good start from you, your children are sure to have a lifetime of healthy smiles!