HEALTH CHAT

HEART ATTACK PREVENTION

The American Heart Association estimates that more than one million Americans suffer a heart attack every year. Fortunately, there are ways to control your risk. Dr. Robert Kastner, inpatient cardiology specialist for Sampson Regional Medical Center wants to help you prevent this most serious of medical conditions.

What exactly is a heart attack?
A heart attack occurs when one of the coronary arteries becomes blocked, usually by a blood clot. When the heart muscle does not receive the oxygen-rich blood that it needs, it begins to die. The severity of a heart attack depends on how much of the heart muscle is injured or dies.

What signs should I be looking for?
If you are having any symptoms that could be a heart attack, seek medical attention immediately. The warning signs may include:

- Chest pain or indigestion which is unrelieved by rest or a change in position, moves to the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw or back, produces pressure or squeezing sensation
- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Weak and/or fast pulse
- Light-headedness, dizziness, fainting, or nausea
- Gray facial color

What should I do if I think I’m having a heart attack?
Surviving a heart attack depends on the treatment given within the first hour. Immediate treatment should always include professional emergency medical intervention, including 911. While waiting for help or on the way to the hospital, it is recommended that the patient take aspirin, which can decrease the risk of death by 25 percent.

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