

KEEPING THE BEAT

INFORMATION ABOUT HEART DISEASE AND CHOLESTEROL

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Why should I think about heart health?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, contributing to over 27% of all deaths. High blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and tobacco use all put you at risk for heart disease.

What is cholesterol anyway?

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance made by your body and found in all of your cells. It is carried through your blood by two types of proteins you might remember from your last cholesterol screening: LDL and HDL. You do not want LDL levels to be too high, because those proteins carry cholesterol in the bloodstream and lead to a build up of cholesterol in your arteries. HDLs carry cholesterol out of the bloodstream and into your liver, so they do not clog arteries. If you have too much cholesterol from your diet, you will have more cholesterol in your blood and a higher LDL count.

What does that have to do with heart health?

If too much cholesterol builds up in your arteries, one can become blocked. A blocked artery may lead to a heart attack.

What are the symptoms of a heart attack?

Most heart attacks are not like the movies. Rather than sudden heart clutching events, they often start slowly. Be aware of these warning signs so that you seek help quickly:

- Discomfort in the chest that does not go away, or leaves and comes back.
- Discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath, cold sweat, nausea or light headedness.

If you believe that someone is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately.



What can I do to lower my risk of heart disease?

- Eat more fruits and vegetables. Eat less saturated fat (animal products) and sodium
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid smoking
- Limit alcohol
- Talk to your doctor about heart disease

Thanks to Dani O'Rourke-Suchoff, AmeriCorps Member, for article development.

For more information go to:

Center for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/about.htm>

American Heart Association <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000>

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Richmond Area Health Center – Richmond
Rangeley Family Medicine – Rangeley
Strong Area Health & Dental Center – Strong
Sheepscot Valley Health Center – Coopers Mills
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