



the CommonHealth Compass

Know Warning Signs of Stroke, Heart Attack

February is American Heart Month, which since 1963 has stressed the importance of “heart-healthy” living. Among the most important aspects of “heart-healthy” living is knowing when you are at risk of a stroke or heart attack.

The American Heart Association offers these warning signs of heart trouble that could be deadly:

Stroke Warning Signs

- Sudden numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- 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 emergency medical services (EMS) number so an ambulance (ideally with advanced life support) 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 called tissue plasminogen activator (tPA) can reduce long-term disability for the most common type of stroke.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense – the “movie heart attack” where no one doubts what is happening.

But most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often, people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help.

Here are 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 may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

Learn the signs, but remember this: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, have it checked out (tell a doctor about your symptoms). Minutes matter! Fast action can save lives – maybe your own. Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1.



National Wear Red Day

February 6, 2009 was a day when Americans nationwide wore red to show their support for women's heart disease awareness. Many do not realize that heart disease is the nation's leading killer of women. Employees at the Virginia Museum of National History in Martinsville were among the millions of women nationwide who observed the awareness day. For more information, go to <http://www.goredforwomen.org>.



I Have My Health Back

The following is from David L. Smith who works at Juvenile CSU in Harrisonburg/Rockingham County.

“As the Agency Coordinator for CommonHealth for the past decade, I want to share this story after having convinced myself to work hard and to get back in shape. As I approached age 60, I was convinced that I needed to reduce my health risk factors and to become a better role model for other employees in my district, as I prepare for retirement in several years.

For more than 20 years I had tried to stop using smokeless tobacco on many occasions. I used the CommonHealth quit patches kits the first two attempts, over several years, with initial success and then I relapsed. The third time was at my own expense and I was more determined than ever to quit and to remain tobacco free. I have not used tobacco since the last day of March, 2008, thanks to lots of determination and hundreds of sticks of sugarless gum, and I no longer have cravings. Since then I am proud to say I am tobacco free.

Also, more than three months ago I quit drinking alcohol. I have lost 25 lbs and continue losing weight. I try to walk 3-5 miles four days each week, do other exercises, and I am eating very little red meat and lots of fruits and vegetables.

I feel better than I have felt in 20 years and I feel years younger both physically and mentally. Even our Regional Coordinator, Sharon Buckner, continues to support and compliment me.

For anyone struggling with your own willpower – CommonHealth is there to help and the rewards are priceless!”



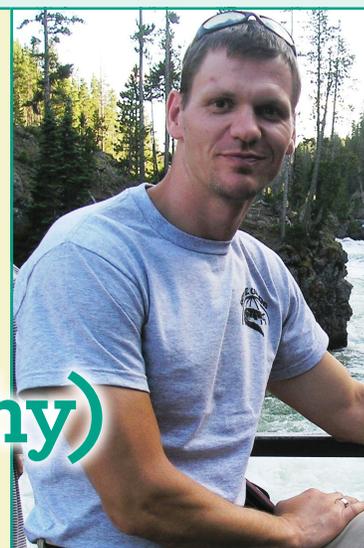
David L. Smith



BEFORE (not so)

and

AFTER (healthy)



Eric J Smith, of VDOT in Northern Virginia, writes that “last year when the Commonwealth offered the Weight Watchers program, I joined. I lost a total of 65 pounds. I have been at my current weight of 190 pounds now for five months. I am still on the program and will remain on it. I just want to thank whoever offered this program.”

CommonHealth loves success stories! Please send your success stories, big or small, to Wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov. We'd love to hear about your success.!

