



Heart Attacks at Work

Heart attacks continue to be one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Heart attacks can and do happen on the job. **If a co-worker has a heart attack, call 911 and get professional help immediately.** Here are three things to think about regarding heart attacks.

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 1. **Know the risk factors and take care of your heart.** Many risk factors contribute to poor heart health. Some risk factors are uncontrollable—including old age, a family history of heart disease, and race—but many risk factors are controllable. Talk to your doctor for more information. Your choices can control the following risk factors:
 - Smoking
 - High LDL, or “bad” cholesterol and low HDL, or “good” cholesterol
 - High blood pressure
 - Physical inactivity
 - Obesity
 - Diabetes
 - High C-reactive protein levels (detected with a blood test)
 - Stress levels
 2. **Know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack.** Sometimes heart attacks are dramatic. More often, however, they begin slowly, with mild pain and discomfort. Be alert if you or a co-worker experience the following symptoms:
 - Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that feels like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. These sensations last more than a few minutes, or they may go away and come back.
 - 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.
 - Other signs. These may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.
 3. **Become certified in CPR and AED use.** Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) provides artificial circulation and breathing to a person whose heart and lungs have stopped functioning. When you perform CPR, you alternate externally



compressing the heart with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. The goal is to either get the heart going again or to stabilize the person until paramedics arrive. An AED (automated external defibrillator) can treat sudden cardiac arrest through defibrillation—the application of electrical therapy which helps the heart to reestablish an effective rhythm. AEDs are common in malls, airports, and offices. You can learn how to use an AED and how to administer CPR through your local Red Cross chapter or fire department.

SAFETY REMINDER

If the heart attack is work related, then any fatalities or inpatient hospitalizations caused by the heart attack must be reported to OSHA.