



MONMOUTH COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING

Senior NewsLines

Jointly funded by the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey Division of Aging and Community Services, Department of Health & Senior Services

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*February is American Heart Health Month
Heart Attack Warning Signs*



Statistics

Coronary heart disease is America's No. 1 killer. That's why it's so important to reduce your risk factors, know the warning signs, and know how to respond quickly and properly if warning signs occur.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense — the "movie heart attack," where no one doubts what's 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.** May occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** These 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.

If you or someone you're with has chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs, don't wait longer than a few minutes (no more than 5) before calling for help. Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital right away.

Calling 9-1-1 is almost always the fastest way to get lifesaving treatment. Emergency medical services staff can begin treatment when they arrive -- up to an hour sooner than if someone gets to the hospital by car. The staff are also trained to revive someone whose heart has stopped. Patients with chest pain who arrive by ambulance usually receive faster treatment at the hospital, too.

If you can't access the emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital right away. If you're the one having symptoms, don't drive yourself, unless you have absolutely no other option.

This article provided by the American Heart Association

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USEFUL TIPS ON GETTING EXTRA HELP WITH PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

By Everett M. Lo

Social Security Administration's Regional Public Affairs Office in New York

Will you be applying this year for the extra assistance available to help pay premiums, deductibles and co-pays under the Medicare Prescription Drug Program? If you are a Medicare beneficiary with limited income and resources, you should consider it – you may be able to get extra help paying for prescription drugs.

If your annual income is below \$14,700 for an individual (\$19,800 for a married couple living together), and your resources are limited to \$11,710 for an individual (\$23,410 for a married couple living together), you may qualify for extra help with your monthly premiums and deductibles. Keep in mind that a slightly higher income limit will be determined in early 2007.

If you plan to apply for the extra help, the easiest and most convenient way is to go online. Just visit <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/prescriptionhelp/> and select the “Apply for help” link. You also can apply over the phone by calling us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). Or, if you prefer to complete the paper application yourself, you can call the same number to request one to be mailed to you, or stop by your local Social Security office to pick one up. If you already received an application in the mail more than a few months ago, you should request a new form.

It is important to make sure you correctly complete the application. If there are any mistakes in the application it could cause delays while we contact you to get an answer.

The handy “tips” below can help make sure that you complete the application correctly and get a response as quickly as possible.

You must include your Social Security number or Railroad Retirement Board number on the application. And please be sure that you have written these numbers correctly.

Many questions on the application ask you to mark an “X” in a Yes or No box. Please remember that you cannot mark both Yes and No.

Because computers will scan your application when you send it back to Social Security, it is important to use a pen with black ink, or a #2 pencil. Pens with blue or red ink, or pencils with lead other than #2, will not be read by the computer.

Remember to send the entire application package back to us – not just the page that you signed.

Do not send us anything except your application. We do not need to see doctor bills, prescription lists, IRS forms or other documents.

You can find more information about the extra help online at www.socialsecurity.gov, and more information about the Medicare Prescription Drug Program at www.medicare.gov. If you do not have access to the Internet you can call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 and ask for more information.

Don't Let Back Pain Get You Down

Learn How to Minimize Your Risk

Before you reach for that snow shovel this winter, think first about protecting your back. When you do battle with Old Man Winter, or tackle any other kind of heavy lifting at home or on the job, do everything you can to reduce the chance of injury.

About 80% of the population develops back problems at some time in their lives. Back pain can range from a dull, constant ache to a sudden, sharp pain that makes it hard to move. It can start quickly if you fall or lift something too heavy, or it can get worse slowly. Discs that sit between the vertebrae of the spine can rupture or break down. Muscles can strain or tear.

A wide variety of factors can increase your risk of back problems: getting older; being out of shape or overweight; having a job that requires lifting, pushing or pulling while twisting your spine; having poor posture; smoking; and having a disease or condition that causes back pain. Race can also be a risk factor. For example, African American women are 2-3 times more likely than white women to

have part of the lower spine slip out of place.

You can help prevent back pain by standing up straight and minimizing the amount of heavy lifting you do. When the snow drifts beckon, or you must lift something else that's heavy, bend your legs and keep your back straight.

Exercising and keeping your back muscles strong are among the best

ways to minimize your risk of back pain. Maintain a healthy weight or shed some pounds if you weigh too much. And maintain strong bones by making sure to get enough calcium and vitamin D every day.

If you do experience back pain, treatment depends on what kind of pain it is. Acute pain, which starts quickly and lasts less than 6 weeks, usually gets better without any treatment. Pain relievers can help ease the pain until it goes away.

Chronic pain, which lasts for more than 3 months, is much less common. Hot or cold packs may bring temporary relief but don't fix the cause. Behavioral changes, such as learning to lift properly and exercising more, can help in the long term, as can getting more sleep, improving your diet and quitting smoking.



Your doctor might recommend medications or suggest you try complementary and alternative medical treatments, such as manipulation of the spine, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (mild electrical pulses), acupuncture (thin needles used for pain relief) and acupressure (pressure applied to certain places in the body).

Most people with back pain don't need surgery, even if the pain is chronic. Surgery is reserved for situations in which other treatments don't work.

Back pain can also be a sign of many other medical conditions, including arthritis, pregnancy, kidney stones, infections, tumors and stress. That's why it's a good idea to see a doctor if your pain is particularly bad or lasts for more than a few days. ■



Wise Choices Signs to See a Doctor for Back Pain

- Numbness or tingling
- Severe pain that doesn't improve with rest
- Pain after a fall or an injury
- Pain plus any of these problems:
 - trouble urinating
 - weakness
 - numbness in your legs
 - fever
- Weight loss when you're not on a diet

*The above article has been provided by the National Institutes of Health Department of Health and Human Services
newsinhealth.nih.gov*



SAVE THE DATE

MAINTAINING HEALTH OVER 50...KNOWLEDGE BUILDS HOPE

an American Cancer Society program

Thursday, March 1, 2007
6:00pm - 8:00pm
Ranney School, Tinton Falls, NJ

The program will include speakers, food, door prizes, and gifts.

NO CHARGE to attend

Sponsored by AIG American General, Sovereign Bank and Vonage

for more information, to to our website www.cancer.org or call us at 1-800 ACS-2345

The event is for every person 50 and over who wants to learn more about the steps they can take to maintain their health.

In addition to community resources, expert speakers will talk about the role nutrition, exercise, regular check-ups and screenings play in good health.

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