



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Heart Check

World Heart Day — September 29, 2015

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death worldwide, and in the U.S., it's related to one in four deaths.

Jacquie Dozier is with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today by phone to discuss the importance of maintaining a healthy heart. Welcome to the show, Jacquie.

[Jacquie Dozier] Thank you, Bob. Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jacquie, what are the leading risk factors for heart disease?

[Jacquie Dozier] Most people develop heart disease because of lifestyle choices and behaviors, such as smoking, lack of exercise, and eating a poor diet. Health conditions like obesity, hypertension (or high blood pressure), and high cholesterol can lead to heart disease.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any groups at higher risk for cardiovascular disease?

[Jacquie Dozier] African American men and people living in the southeastern U.S. are the highest risk for developing heart disease. More than 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for heart disease, and less than half of those have it under control.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the most common symptoms of cardiovascular disease?

[Jacquie Dozier] The scary thing is that heart disease doesn't always have symptoms and often times, the first symptom is sudden death. But when there are symptoms, they can include pain or discomfort in the chest which can sometimes be mistaken for indigestion or heart burn. You can also have pain in the jaw and other parts of the body, shortness of breath, dizziness, and light headedness.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jacquie, what are some ways to prevent heart disease?

[Jacquie Dozier] That's a great question, Bob. You *can* reduce your risk for heart disease. First, if you smoke, quit. If you don't smoke, don't start. Exercise regularly, eat heart healthy foods that are low fat, low sodium and eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. It's also important to know your numbers; know your blood pressure. Controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol

levels can help prevent heart disease. Recently, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a call to action on walking to help address heart disease. This “Step It Up” initiative promotes walking as a way to increase the amount of exercise that we all get in our lives.

[Dr. Gaynes] How often should a person have their heart checked?

[Jacquie Dozier] Well, it’s a good idea to have regular checkups. It’s important to keep an eye on blood pressure and cholesterol levels. We recommend getting a checkup at least once a year. And even if you’re healthy, a doctor or a nurse or any healthcare professional can check for conditions that can put you at risk for heart disease—conditions like high blood pressure and diabetes because these conditions can go unnoticed or without symptoms for a long time.

[Dr. Gaynes] Jacquie, where can listeners get more information about heart health?

[Jacquie Dozier] More information is available at cdc.gov/heartdisease which is one word.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Jacquie. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Jacquie Dozier about the importance of preventing heart disease.

Remember, simple changes can help maintain a healthy heart. If you smoke, quit. If you don’t smoke, don’t start. Exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables and foods low in saturated fats and sodium. Cardiovascular disease often occurs without warning signs, so regular checkups are important to detect problems before they become life-threatening.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.