



## McHenry County Department of Health

“Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety  
for all people of McHenry County since 1966”

---

### Heart Disease and Prevention

Kristen Dahm, Health Educator

---

Cardiovascular disease, also known as heart disease, is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. Many heart diseases are related to atherosclerosis, which is when the substance plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries. When there is a buildup of plaque it makes it difficult for blood to flow correctly due to narrowing of the arteries. A heart attack occurs when an artery becomes blocked and prevents oxygen and nutrients from getting to the heart. The five major symptoms of a heart attack are pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back, feeling weak or faint, chest pain or discomfort, shortness of breath, and pain or discomfort in arms or shoulder. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 64% of women report having no previous symptoms while 50% of men report no previous symptoms. You may still be at risk for having heart disease even if you are not experiencing any symptoms or are having atypical symptoms. When an individual is experiencing symptoms of a heart attack 9-1-1 should be called immediately. Sometimes a heart attack may result in cardiac arrest which is when a person loses consciousness and has no heartbeat or breathing. In those cases cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) should be started immediately and if available use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) as soon as possible.

Prevention is extremely important in reducing the risk of heart disease. Adopting a healthy lifestyle will aid in prevention such as quitting smoking, exercising regularly, eating a heart-healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and participating in regular health screenings. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends having your cholesterol checked once every 5 years and blood pressure monitored on a regular basis. A regular screening of blood pressure, cholesterol levels and blood glucose will assist you in determining if you have an issue that may put you at risk. Start taking action today to keep your heart healthy by talking with your doctor and living a healthy lifestyle.

**Make Healthy Living a Part of Your Life**

[www.mcdh.info](http://www.mcdh.info)

**815-334-4510**

