



HEART HEALTH

Hollywood Heart Attack: A Potentially Deadly Myth

(NAPSA)—It is often said that a very important matter is “serious as a heart attack.” This is rather ironic, since many Americans don’t take heart attacks seriously enough—by knowing the warning signs or how to respond.

About 1.2 million Americans a year suffer a heart attack and more than 40 percent of them die. Nearly half of all heart attack deaths occur before the person reaches the hospital. Many lives could be saved if victims received clot-dissolving drugs and other artery-opening treatments within one hour of symptom onset.

Shockingly, most heart attack victims wait two or more hours after symptom onset before seeking medical help because they don’t recognize the true warning signs—expecting a heart attack to be sudden and intense, like a so-called Hollywood Heart Attack, where a person clutches his or her chest and falls over as often seen in the movies and television—and don’t realize the importance of calling 911.

Here’s why every second counts: The heart is a muscular organ that works 24 hours a day, pumping blood with oxygen and other nutrients to the body. Blood is supplied to the heart through coronary arteries. A heart attack occurs when the supply of blood to an area of the heart muscle is blocked, usually by a clot in the coronary artery. The longer an artery is blocked and the blood supply is cut off, the more heart muscle will die and be replaced by scar tissue. Depending on the extent of heart muscle damage, a heart attack can be deadly or disabling.

Treatment

Treatments for a heart attack work to open the blocked artery to restore blood flow as quickly as possible to prevent or limit heart muscle damage and to lessen the chance of a repeat attack. To be most effective, heart attack treatments should be given as soon as possible—within one hour of symptom onset.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

- **Chest discomfort:** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body:** Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath:** Often accompanies chest discomfort, but can also occur before chest discomfort.
- **Other symptoms:** May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness.



Medications include:

- **Fibrinolytic**, or “clot-dissolving,” therapy: prevents or limits heart muscle damage by dissolving artery-blocking clots.
- **Aspirin:** acts to thin the blood and lessen the size of the blood clot during a heart attack.
- **Nitrates** (including nitroglycerin): relax blood vessels and stop chest pain.
- **Beta blockers:** reduce nerve impulses to the heart and blood vessels, making the heart beat more slowly and with less force.

Doctors may also perform a special procedure—either during a heart attack or afterwards—to improve blood flow to the heart muscle when coronary arteries are narrowed or blocked. These procedures include coronary angioplasty and coronary artery bypass surgery.

Act in Time to Heart Attack Signs, a public education campaign of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, is being revitalized this year through the sponsorship of PDL BioPharma, Inc. The goals of the campaign are to educate Americans about the warning signs of a heart attack and to urge them to call 911 immediately. To learn more, or to obtain a brochure or wallet card, visit www.actintime2006.com.