



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

Department of Community Health and the Environment

Gil Copley, Director

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Hope Woodson, Director - Public Health Division

636-949-7407

Doug Bolnick, Public Information Officer

636-949-7408

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2011

FILL YOUR HEART WITH LOVE, CARE THIS MONTH

American Heart Month Draws Attention to our #1 Cause of Death

St. Charles County, Missouri – With Valentine’s Day soon upon us, be sure to focus on the hearts you care about the most — the ones inside you and the ones you love. Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in the United States, with statistics showing that an American dies from a coronary event every minute of the year. Since 1964, February has been declared American Heart Month to draw attention to this alarming statistic and to seek ways to prevent heart disease.

Coronary artery disease, which presents as a heart attack, is the most common heart ailment in the United States. Caused by an obstruction in the blood vessels supplying the heart, the classic heart attack symptoms are chest discomfort (a strong pressure or squeezing sensation); pain in the arms, abdomen or neck; shortness of breath; cold sweats; nausea; and light-headedness. Those experiencing one or more of these symptoms should call 911 within five minutes, as immediate medical attention greatly increases the chances for surviving a heart attack. It’s interesting to note that women are more likely to experience a burning sensation in the chest and nausea, which is why they often mistake a heart attack for indigestion and miss early warning signs that could lead to more effective treatment.

Another deadly cardiovascular system ailment is stroke. A stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is cut off, and brain tissue dies as a result of the limited oxygen. Common stroke symptoms are sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm, or leg on one side of the body; sudden loss of vision; sudden confusion or inability to speak; severe headaches; and unexplained dizziness. As with a possible heart attack, those suffering any of these symptoms should seek immediate medical attention.

There are many ways to improve heart health, and most involve simple behavioral changes. A first change is to LOSE — losing weight (dropping just 10 pounds can have a dramatic effect), reducing alcohol and sodium intake, stopping smoking, and decreasing stress. A second change involves INCREASING good behaviors — improving your diet, following a regular exercise program of at least 30 minutes a day, and getting a regular checkup. By changing behaviors and following your doctor’s recommendations, you’re well on your way to improving your heart health.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the Department assists our community, please visit www.scchealth.org or call 636-949-7400.

###