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Cornerstone of Health

Dr. Sheila Pinette, Director of Maine CDC



Dr. Sheila Pinette

Heart attacks may not be like what you see in the movies- sudden and intense. Many heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain and discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what is wrong and wait too long before getting help.

In Maine during 2009, there were more than 500 deaths and 4,000 hospitalizations due to heart attack. Only 15.1% of Maine adults could correctly identify all the symptoms of a heart attack and knew to call 9-1-1 for help.

Heart attack warning signs include:

- Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back
- Feeling weak, lightheaded or faint
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in arms or shoulders
- Shortness of breath
- Women often report symptoms of discomfort rather than pain.

If you think you or someone you know is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately!



February is American Heart Month

Heart Disease is the 2nd leading cause of death in Maine (2,652 deaths in 2009). It describes a variety of conditions that affect your heart and/or blood vessels including: coronary artery disease, heart attack, and congestive heart failure.

People are at greater risk for heart disease if they have high blood pressure, smoke, are overweight, eat foods high in salt/sodium, do not exercise regularly, drink alcohol regularly.

Positive, healthy lifestyle choices can greatly reduce your risk for heart disease.

For employers, the costs related to heart disease are significant, with four of the top ten most costly health conditions being high blood pressure, heart attacks, diabetes, and chest pain. Employees at high risk for heart disease have significantly high medical expenses (228% higher*) than employees not at risk for these conditions. Employers can play a key role in helping individuals improve their heart health by creating worksites that support blood pressure control, cholesterol management, tobacco control, good nutrition and physical activity.

Examples of what employers can do to promote a healthier workplace include:

- Provide health insurance coverage with no or low out-of-pocket costs for medications that help to control high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Encourage employees to Know Their Numbers (blood pressure, cholesterol, blood glucose) and if high encourage them to monitor/keep under control
- Raise awareness of heart attack symptoms and the need to call 911
- Have a written policy banning tobacco use at your workplace
- Increase availability of lower sodium, healthy foods
- Provide organized individual or group physical activity programs or employees (walking or stretching programs, group exercise, weight training)

Million Hearts Initiative

Million Hearts® is a national initiative to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. Million Hearts® brings together communities, health systems, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, and private-sector partners from across the country to fight heart disease and stroke. To learn more about the initiative or to make the commitment visit: www.millionhearts.hhs.gov.

For more information:

[Maine Cardiovascular Health Program](#)
[CDC Cardiovascular Health Program](#)

*[Reducing the Risk of Heart Disease & Stroke:](#)
[A Six-Step Guide for Employers](#)



Paul R. LePage, Governor

Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention
An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

Mary C. Mayhew, Commissioner

Oral Health and Overall Health

Oral health is an important part of your overall health. Visiting your dental provider for preventive care such as dental exams and cleanings can have a positive impact on your health. Over 100 medical conditions, some life threatening, can be detected in your mouth. Swollen or bleeding gums, chronic mouth sores, having a metallic taste in your mouth, lingering bad breath, and/or dry mouth, can be signs of serious chronic conditions in your body. Some medical conditions that have been linked to poor oral health are cardiovascular disease (heart disease), diabetes, cancer and difficulties in pregnancy.

Did you know that over 40 million work hours are lost each year due to oral health problems?

What employers can do?

Promote oral health initiatives in your workplace. Offering dental insurance plans to your employees may cut health care costs and absenteeism from work. Some dental insurance plans can be cost-effective so that the employer and the employees can afford them. A bit of research can have a great pay-off for everyone.

At the workplace, establish a healthy snack vending machine policy so there are healthier snack items for employees.



Promote good oral health practices – what can you do?

Regular dental check-ups and dental cleanings are important to remove bacteria, plaque and tartar from the teeth. They are important to detect other conditions such as dental cavities, broken fillings and infected teeth and gums. Having a good home care schedule can help you maintain good overall health. Here are some other dental tips:

- Brush your teeth two to three times a day with fluoridated toothpaste for two minutes. Make sure to brush along your gumline.
- Floss daily to remove the bacteria-between your teeth; where your toothbrush cannot reach.
- Eat a healthy diet. Avoid sugary drinks like soda and energy drinks; they have a lot of sugar and acid that can be harmful to tooth enamel and cause tooth sensitivity and cavities.
- Be careful of mouthwash that has alcohol in it; alcohol can cause drying of your oral tissue.
- Drink fluoridated tap water.
- Avoid all tobacco products including chew tobacco. All of these can affect your oral health.
- When you visit your dental provider, it's important to update them on any medical conditions and medications (even over-the-counter) you are taking; this has an impact on your oral health too.
- Treat dental infections right away!

For more information:

[Maine Center for Disease Control– Oral Health Program](#)

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February Health Observances

- ◆ [American Heart Month](#)
- ◆ [National Wear Red Day](#) (February 1)
- ◆ [National Children's Dental Health Month](#)
- ◆ [National Donor Day](#) (February 14)
- ◆ [Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week](#) (7-14)
- ◆ [International Prenatal Infection Prevention Month](#)

March Health Observances

- ◆ [National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month](#)
- ◆ [National Endometriosis Awareness Month](#)
- ◆ [National Kidney Month](#)
- ◆ [National Nutrition Month](#)
- ◆ [Workplace Eye Wellness Month](#)
- ◆ [National Sleep Awareness Week](#) (3-10)
- ◆ [Brain Awareness Week](#) (11-17)
- ◆ [World Kidney Day](#) (March 14)
- ◆ [National Poison Prevention Week](#) (17-23)
- ◆ [World Tuberculosis Day](#) (March 24)
- ◆ [American Diabetes Alert Day](#) (March 26)

Health Resources

