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CAH recognizes National Heart Month during February

The month of February is “National Heart Month,” which provides us an opportunity to think about our hearts and educate people on preventing heart disease as well as knowing the symptoms and treating the condition.

Carlinville Area Hospital’s employees participated in National Wear Red Day on Friday, February 3, 2012. This event is coordinated by the American Heart Association to raise awareness of heart disease in women. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is still the number one killer of women, causing 1 in 3 deaths each year. Heart disease is also the leading cause of death for men in the United States.

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense but most start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. Often people aren’t sure what’s wrong and wait too long before seeking treatment. Common signs of a heart attack are chest discomfort, pain in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach, and shortness of breath. Other signs of a heart attack could include cold sweats, nausea, unusual fatigue or dizziness.

The most common symptom of a heart attack is chest pain, but women are more likely to experience some of the other symptoms such as shortness of breath, cold sweats, dizziness, and/or unusual fatigue.

The best prevention of a heart attack is to live a heart healthy life. If you smoke, quit. Cigarette smoking adds approximately 10 years of aging to the blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease. Change your diet to healthy eating habits and incorporate regular exercise. The American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 times per week. Obesity rates have doubled among adults with approximately 60 million of the adult population being obese. Lower your blood pressure. Those with high blood pressure have a higher risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke. If you suffer from diabetes, it’s important to follow your physician’s recommendations to control your blood sugars because individuals with diabetes are also at an increased risk for developing heart disease.

More than half of those who die from heart disease didn’t even know they had a problem. The time is now to reduce your risk. Talk with your physician if you have concerns or need help with a plan to get you on track for a heart healthy lifestyle. Make February your month for heart healthy changes.

Information brought to you by the Cardiac Rehabilitation Department at Carlinville Area Hospital.

