



News Release

National Safety Council · 1121 Spring Lake Drive · Itasca, IL 60143 · media@nsc.org

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Contact: Kathy Lane
Communications Director
Phone: (630) 775-2307

February is American Heart Month

First aid techniques can save thousands of lives

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), heart disease is the top cause of death. Sudden cardiac arrest affects about 1,000 people each day in the U.S.—occurring outside of hospitals with only a 10 percent survival rate.

The number of survivors can increase to about 40 percent if bystanders would provide CPR and use an automated external defibrillator (AED) before EMS arrives. The National Safety Council offers [first aid and CPR skills training](#) to help you be prepared to save a life in the event of an emergency.

In observance of American Heart Month, here are some quick tips regarding heart health and the appropriate action to take in an emergency until professional help arrives.

What is the difference between heart attack and sudden cardiac arrest? With a heart attack, the person is awake and the heart is beating. With sudden cardiac arrest, the person is unresponsive (not awake) and the heart is not beating.

It is important to know the signs of a heart attack, so you will be ready to react in the proper manner. Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but more start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. To determine if you, or someone you know, is suffering from a heart attack, look for the following evidence:

- **Chest discomfort:** Pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain in the chest that lasts for a few minutes or comes and goes.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body:** Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, shoulders, back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath:** Often accompanies chest discomfort.
- **Other signs:** May include lightheadedness, fainting, sweating or nausea.
- **Women should be aware** that they also may experience atypical symptoms such as fatigue, nausea or headache.

First aid for heart attack:

- Call 911 immediately
- Have the person rest in a position for easy breathing
- Have the person chew an uncoated adult aspirin or two “baby” aspirin if the person is not allergic to it and has no contraindications to aspirin (evidence of a stroke or internal bleeding)

First aid for sudden cardiac arrest is to call 911, provide CPR (at least hard, fast chest compressions) and use an AED.

About the National Safety Council

Founded in 1913 and chartered by Congress, the National Safety Council, nsc.org, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads through leadership, research, education and advocacy. NSC advances this mission by partnering with businesses, government agencies, elected officials and the public in areas where we can make the most impact – distracted driving, teen driving, workplace safety, prescription drug overdoses and Safe Communities. [Safety+Health](#) magazine, the Council's flagship publication, is a leading source of occupational safety and health information.

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