



# Employee Benefits Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2009

## February is Heart Health Awareness Month

Coronary heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. Stroke is the number three cause of death and a leading cause of serious disability. That is why it is so important to reduce your risk factors, know the warning signs and know how to respond quickly and properly if warning signs occur.



Heart attack and stroke are life and death emergencies and every second counts. Today heart attack and stroke victims can benefit from new medications and treatments.

### Stroke Warning Signs

The American Heart Association says these are the warning signs of a stroke:

- ♥ Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- ♥ Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.
- ♥ Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- ♥ Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- ♥ Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

For more information on Cardiovascular Disease treatment and prevention visit the American Heart Association website

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

### Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, and there's no doubt it's happening. But most heart attacks start slow, with mild pain or discomfort. People are often not sure what's wrong and wait too long for medical attention.

- ♥ **Chest discomfort**- most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for a few minutes or comes and goes. It feels like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing fullness or pain.
- ♥ **Upper body** - symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- ♥ **Shortness of breath** - with or without chest discomfort.
- ♥ **Other signs** - breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

## Prevention: It's as simple as ABC

**A**void Tobacco, **B**e More Active, **C**hoose Good Nutrition

Smokers have a tougher time recovering from a heart attack or stroke and living with chronic heart disease.

Research shows that 30 minutes of physical activity on 5 or more days of the week can help lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol and keep your weight at a healthy level.

A healthy diet is one of the best weapons you have to fight cardiovascular disease. The food you eat (and the amount) can affect other controllable risk factors: cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes and overweight.

Your lifestyle is not only your best defense against heart disease and stroke, it is also your responsibility.

