

HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING



1300 S. GRAND AVENUE • BUILDING B, 2ND FLOOR • SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA • 92705 PHONE: (714) 567-7500 • FAX: (714) 567-5021 • TDD: (714) 550-9472

February 2008

Would you know if you had a heart attack?

Erin Ulibarri, MPH

Many people would associate a heart attack with sudden and intense pain in the chest which spreads to the left arm. However it doesn't usually happen that way. And men and women often experience different heart attack signs.

February is *American Heart Month*; a good time to evaluate how well you treat your heart. Heart disease is the number one killer in the United States—for both men and women.

Most heart attacks start **slowly** with mild pain and discomfort, which may come and go. The general symptoms of a heart attack are:

- Chest pain or discomfort; it may feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, or fullness
- Discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness

On average, women tend to be about 10 years older than men when they experience a heart attack. They are also more likely to have symptoms other than chest pain—the shortness of breath, nausea and vomiting, and jaw and back pain. In addition, women who have heart attacks usually have other conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and congestive heart failure when compared to men.

What is important to remember is that if you experience any of these heart symptoms, call **911 immediately**. Every minute counts when a heart attack strikes.

There are steps a person can take to lower the chances of having a heart attack:

- Quit smoking
- Reduce blood pressure and lower cholesterol level
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Be physically active on most days
- If you have diabetes, keep it managed

The County of Orange Office on Aging has resources to help you take the next step toward a healthy heart. Call the Information and Assistance line at **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** and speak to the friendly and knowledgeable Information Specialists to find out what community resources are available.

<u>Sources</u>: American Heart Association <u>www.americanheart.org</u>
National Heart Lung and Blood Institute <u>www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/haws/women.htm</u>

