



[OPH Home](#)

[OPH Data
and Statistics](#)

[OPH Programs](#)

[OPH News
Releases](#)

[OPH Media
Campaigns](#)

[OPH Services
and Fees](#)

[OPH A to Z
Health Topics](#)

[OPH Contacts](#)

[OPH
Health Links](#)

[Current RFP's](#)

[OPH Career
Opportunities](#)



STATE OF LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOSPITALS
Bureau of Communications & Inquiry Services

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News Release

Louisiana Officials Highlight Importance of Heart Health

In 1999, cardiovascular disease (including heart attacks and strokes) accounted for 15,522 deaths in the state.

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NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Bob Johannessen; 225-342-1532

Baton Rouge - State health officials warn that heart disease and strokes ranked as the number one and number three killers of Louisianians respectively. In 1999, cardiovascular disease (including heart attacks and strokes) accounted for 15,522 deaths in the state. The OPH Cardiovascular Program reports the following information about Louisianians: 23.6% of adults are obese. 36.5% of adults are overweight. Only 16% of adults consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. 85% of adults are inactive (not engaging in physical activity 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week). According to statistics from the Department of Health and Hospitals Office of Public Health, the death rates for cardiovascular diseases are as follows: heart disease - 11,944 deaths; stroke - 2,662 deaths; other heart conditions - 916 deaths. "Too many lives are ending early due to heart disease. That equals approximately 43 deaths each day. But the good news is that by adopting a healthy diet, exercising regularly and not smoking, our citizens can greatly reduce the rate of heart disease in Louisiana," said DHH Secretary David W. Hood. According to Madeline McAndrew, DHH's assistant secretary for the Office of Public Health, research shows that the primary causes for the development of heart disease are lifestyle choices that can be changed. "Besides being aware of the warning signs of heart disease and responding immediately when they occur, people can reduce their chances of disease through lifestyle changes such as being physically active, eating a diet low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables and stopping or never starting smoking," said McAndrew. Heart attacks and strokes are life and death emergencies - every second counts. If you see or have any of the following symptoms, you are urged to call 9-1-1 immediately. Not all the signs occur in every heart attack or stroke. If some occur, get help fast. Heart Attack Warning Signs and Facts Chest discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain. Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach. Shortness of breath. Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort. Other symptoms. May include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or light-headedness. Heart attacks can result from coronary heart disease - disease of the blood vessels that feed the heart muscle. A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to part of the heart muscle is severely reduced or stopped. If the blood supply is cut off for more than a few minutes, muscle cells suffer permanent injury and die. This can result in death or disability, depending on how much heart muscle is damaged. High blood pressure increases the heart's workload, causing the heart to enlarge and weaken.

When high blood pressure exists with obesity, smoking, high cholesterol or diabetes, the risk of heart attack or stroke increases several times. Obesity increases the chances of development of heart disease and stroke, even if the person has no other risk factors. Loss of 10 to 20 pounds can greatly decrease the risk of a heart attack or stroke. Smoking cigarettes has been proven to increase a person's risk of heart disease by almost 50 percent, and smokers are more likely to die from a heart attack than non-smokers. Patients with diabetes are also at higher risk for developing heart disease. Nearly two-thirds of people with diabetes die of some type of cardiovascular disease. It is important for these patients to work with their health care professional to regulate their condition. For more information on Cardiovascular Disease, you can access the OPH website at: <http://oph.dhh.state.la.us/> or the American Heart Association's website: <http://americanheart.org/>

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[OPH Home](#) [Top](#)