

## ***"For Safety's Sake - Do Something"***

### **The Heart of the Matter**

There are many different kinds of heart disease. The most common is atherosclerosis (ath-uh-roh-skluh-roh-sis), the buildup of fatty deposits or plaques in the walls of arteries. As plaque builds up, there is less space for blood to flow normally and deliver oxygen throughout the body, including to the heart. Depending on where the buildup is, it can cause a heart attack, leg pain, or a stroke. Atherosclerosis is not part of normal aging and can be serious.

Problems with a rapid or irregular heartbeat are much more common in older adults than younger people and need to be treated.

See a doctor if you feel a fluttering in your chest or have the feeling that your heart is skipping a beat or beating too hard, especially if you are weaker than usual, dizzy, or tired.

Contact your doctor right away if you feel any chest pain. However, as you get older, chest pain is a less common sign of heart disease, so be aware of other symptoms.

Tell your doctor if you feel:

- Pain in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back
- Shortness of breath when active or at rest  
Chest pain during physical activity that gets better when you rest
- Lightheaded or dizzy
- Confusion
- Headaches
- Cold sweats
- Nausea/vomiting
- Easily tired or fatigued
- Swelling in the ankles, feet, legs, stomach, and/or neck
- Less able to exercise or be physically active
- Problems doing your normal activities

#### **There are choices you can make to prevent or delay heart disease, including:**

- Don't smoke
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Avoid spending hours every day sitting
- Exercise
- Keep diabetes, high blood pressure, and/or high cholesterol under control
- Manage stress
- Don't drink a lot of alcohol



#### **February is American Heart Month**

For more information on how to love your heart, visit the American Heart Association web page.

[www.heart.org/HEARTORG/](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/)