

Alarming Health Trend: More Younger Men Experiencing Heart Attacks

More younger Americans—especially men—are having heart attacks, says one of the nation's top cardiologists.

“These heart attacks are what I call the sneaky, silent killer of young men—and no one is talking about them,” Chauncey Crandall, M.D., tells *Newsmax Health*. “But I see them all the time in my emergency room.”

The average age for a man in the U.S. who has a heart attack is 65 (and women slightly later at about 70) and their risk climbs as they age. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women in the U.S.

But younger men are increasingly vulnerable and suffering heart attacks in middle age, says Dr. Crandall, author of the ***Heart Health Report*** newsletter.

Stroke, also once thought to be a disease of the elderly, has been charting a similar, frightening climb in young and midlife adults.

The rate of ischemic stroke, which accounts for 90 percent of cases, jumped by 47 percent for men ages 35 to 44 and 36 percent for women in the same age group between 1994 and 2007, a recent study found.

For men in their early 20s, stroke-related hospitalizations rose 50 percent, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

In many cases, the cause for heart attacks and stroke are the same—atherosclerosis, which results in the buildup of fatty deposits on artery walls. When those areas become inflamed, it

can cause a heart attack. When such buildups cause blood vessels to rupture, the result can be a stroke.

Heart attacks in younger people are particularly frightening and deadly because they often strike without prior symptoms.

But such an increase in coronary disease is not surprising, since it correlates with the near-epidemic rates of blood pressure, diabetes and obesity in the U.S., which all contribute to cardiovascular disease, says Dr. Crandall.

He adds that heart attacks are particularly frightening because they strike suddenly, without warning, in young men who are apparently healthy, with no history of heart disease. And they are often deadly, occurring in the heart's left descending ventricle, the body's major cardiac vessel.

Such heart attacks are aptly termed "widow makers."

"We used to think that these massive heart attacks were mostly caused by a big buildup of plaque in the coronary arteries, the kind that took decades to develop," explains Dr. Crandall. "But we realize now that it is the smaller new blockages, the type that occur in men not yet diagnosed with heart disease, that pose the real danger."

Because these blockages are smaller, they do not hamper blood flow, so they don't result in angina, which often causes the typical chest pain that sends sufferers to a doctor for help.

But the best news, says Dr. Crandall, is that there is something that young men can do. "I advise all men from the age of 40 up to get a PLAC test," he said.

The PLAC test is a simple blood screening that can provide information on whether a man is suffering from chronic bodily inflammation, an invisible condition that can cause coronary plaque to rupture, which results in the heart attack.

Says Dr. Crandall: "All men between 40 and 60 need to have

this test done.”

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