

These Life-Threatening Heart Myths Could Put You at Risk

When it comes to taking care of your heart, a lot of information is available on the internet and through social media. Some can be accurate and helpful, but a lot of false and misleading information is also out there that can be dangerous, a top doctor says.

“The problem with internet searches, Facebook and all this social media is that there’s no way to tell the difference between correct articles and information that’s false. It’s all jumbled together, and the result is dangerous,” Dr. Chauncey Crandall tells Newsmax Health.

“I’ve known of people who were having symptoms, believed these myths and ended up having a massive heart attack and dying,” says Crandall, chief of the cardiac transplant program at the world-renowned Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. “When we’ve talked to their families afterwards, they say, ‘Well, he (or she) decided to try this at home because they read it on the internet.’”

One of the prime examples of a heart myth Crandall cites is known generally as “Cough CPR,” and has been falsely attributed to various organizations, including Health Cares, Rochester General Hospital and Mended Hearts.

The idea is that a person who fears he or she is having a heart attack should cough “repeatedly and vigorously” to correct an abnormal heart rhythm and survive, but the notion is a dangerous falsehood.

“The only thing a person a person should do in such a situation is call 911 immediately,” says Dr. Crandall, author of the **Heart Health Report** newsletter. “After that, chew two full-strength aspirins while waiting for the ambulance to

arrive. But don't attempt to drive yourself to the hospital or ask someone to do it because if you need emergency procedures, they can be started in the ambulance while you are on your way.

Here are six other common heart myths:

1. Cayenne pepper can stop a heart attack. There is a myth that taking cayenne pepper dissolved in water or as capsules will stop a heart attack. While cayenne pepper can widen blood vessels and speed metabolism, it should not be used in this way. Calling 911 is the best thing to do in a cardiac emergency.

2. Heart disease is a man's problem. This long-held falsehood still crops up and is a reason why surveys continue to show that women underestimate their risk of heart disease. Heart attack is the No. 1 killer of both men and women.

3. Chest pain heralds a heart attack. Sudden chest pain is considered the hallmark of a heart attack, along with shortness of breath and radiating pain in the neck, back, jaw and arms. But this is not always true, particularly for women. In fact, while some women may experience chest pain, they are more typically likely to experience shortness of breath and weakness, extreme fatigue, a profuse cold sweat and dizziness when having a heart attack.

4. It's normal to have high blood pressure when you're older. While it's true that many people see their blood pressure increase with age, this is not a normal symptom of aging and is usually caused by putting on extra weight. By keeping lean, you can avoid this seemingly invariable rise in such heart disease risks as blood pressure and cholesterol.

5. If you take your blood pressure meds, you'll never have a stroke. Controlling your blood pressure reduces your risk, but it's no guarantee you won't suffer a stroke. If you experience stroke symptoms like face drooping, arm weakness, or

difficulty speaking, call 911 immediately. This is also true if the symptoms disappear; it may mean a stroke is on the way.

6. You can't do anything if heart disease runs in your family. Coronary heart disease has a genetic factor, but isn't strictly hereditary. So if you know there is a tendency for heart disease in your family, what this means is that it is even more important to be scrupulous in living a heart-healthy lifestyle, because this may enable you to avoid such a fate. In this case, heredity is not necessarily destiny.

Eat a healthy diet, exercise daily and take steps to manage stress to reduce your risk. {eoa}

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