

## **FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT WESTERN BERKS AMBULANCE**

### **KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF A HEART ATTACK!!**

You're attending a summer picnic with your family and friends, enjoying your favorite summertime foods, when you begin to notice an odd sensation in your arm that seems to travel up to your neck and into your chest. You dismiss the sensation as a muscle strain after having played volleyball. On your walk to the car, you notice that you are having trouble catching your breath. You wait a few hours and decide that you should get checked by a doctor. You ask your friend or family member to drive you to the hospital and arrive at the emergency room in extreme pain and having a very hard time breathing. You are taken into the emergency room and to have an echocardiogram (EKG) performed. You then hear the words, "you are having a heart attack".

This above scenario is one that occurs all too often, and in many cases does not end very well because of the delay of treatment. Heart disease is responsible for approximately 25% of all deaths in the United States with many of the symptoms going unrecognized or ignored. If you ignore the symptoms, you run the risk of suffering sudden cardiac death. About 50% of sudden cardiac deaths occur outside of the hospital, leading us to believe that many people do not act on early warning signs.

Western Berks Ambulance, as well as other local ambulance services, in collaboration with Reading Hospital and St. Joseph's Medical Center, have developed a comprehensive process for identifying and caring for heart attack patients. We will perform an EKG in your home or in the ambulance and immediately transmit it to the hospital. This allows the hospital to activate a team of physicians and nurses long before the patient arrives at the hospital and shortens the amount of time to stop the heart attack.

We encourage everyone to follow the directions below when experiencing chest pain.

### **WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL 911**

It is much easier to have an ambulance come out and examine you than it is to suffer life-altering damage to your heart. If you are not sure that you are having a heart attack, try answering these questions:

1. Are you having discomfort in the middle of your chest?
2. Are you having any of the following chest discomfort symptoms: Within the chest are you feeling fullness, burning, aching, tightness or similar type symptom?
3. Do these chest discomfort symptoms come and go?
4. Are these chest discomfort symptoms worse with activity and disappear when you rest?
5. Are you reluctant to tell someone of these symptoms?
6. Are you reluctant to call 911 because you think your symptoms do not warrant doing so?
7. Do you have any of these other associated symptoms: Discomfort that goes from the chest to your left arm or to your jaw, clammy perspiration, and shortness of breath, nausea or dizziness?
8. If you carry nitroglycerin, does using it seem to take away the discomfort within 5 minutes?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, you owe it to yourself to get these symptoms checked out immediately by calling 911 so your local ambulance can begin the assessment. Every second counts!