

The DPH Bulletin

From the Delaware Division of Public Health

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Take good care of your heart

February is American Heart Month, an appropriate time to think about your heart's health. Heart disease – including coronary artery disease, heart failure, and stroke – is the leading cause of death globally.



Many cases of heart disease can be prevented by adopting healthy behaviors such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity, not smoking, and managing stress. While there is no cure, heart disease can be treated and managed through lifestyle changes, medications, and by self-monitoring blood pressure.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) advises taking these steps to prevent heart disease:

- Get regular check-ups and cardiovascular screenings to identify issues early.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in salt, saturated and trans fats, and added sugars.
- Get regular physical activity. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity per week.
- Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight or obese, work to lose weight through diet and physical activity.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Limit your alcohol intake.
- Get enough sleep.
- Manage stress.

People with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing heart disease and other cardiovascular conditions. High blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels and nerves that supply the heart, leading to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke. It is also common for people with diabetes to have high blood pressure, high levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol and low levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, and to be obese – all which increase the risk of heart disease.

If you are at risk for heart disease or have high blood pressure, learn about the Healthy Heart Ambassador-Blood Pressure Self Monitoring Program by calling 302-208-9097 or visiting healthydelaware.org.

Learn how to recognize a stroke

Stroke is a time-sensitive disease that can cause long-lasting movement, speech, and thinking issues. Some stroke victims need to re-learn how to walk or hold a spoon. Others are unable to work and require long-term care.

A stroke can also be fatal. Cerebrovascular Disease, which includes stroke, is the fourth leading cause of death in the state, according to the 2019 Delaware Vital Statistics Annual Report. Treatments for strokes are time dependent. Some therapies must be started within two to four hours of the onset of symptoms. Missing this window can have a significant effect on the patient's outcome. Call 911 immediately if you notice stroke symptoms. Act FAST!

- F:** Face Drooping
- A:** Arm Weakness
- S:** Speech Difficulty
- T:** Time to call 911.



Calling 911 for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is the quickest and safest way to get the patient to a Stroke Center. EMS can initiate care and make sure that the patient is transported urgently to the appropriate level Stroke Center. All Delaware hospitals are Joint Commission and Delaware designated Stroke Centers. EMS calls ahead so the hospital's Stroke Team can prepare equipment and medications. None of these time-sensitive interventions can occur if the patient is taken to the hospital in a private vehicle.

In 2021, Delaware's EMS agencies responded to 2,944 possible stroke patients. According to Delaware's Stroke Registry Data (American Heart Association's Get With the Guidelines®) for 2021, Delaware Stroke Centers treated 3,225 confirmed strokes. Among those patients, the three highest risk factors were hypertension (71 percent), high cholesterol (52 percent), and diabetes (32 percent).

To learn more about preventing and responding to stroke, visit the American Stroke Association at www.stroke.org.



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Division of Public Health



Delaware's four Systems of Care provide quality and equal care

A System of Care provides timely access to optimal, equitable, and accessible care, beginning when a patient enters the system throughout their treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery.

Delaware has four Systems of Care to reduce morbidity and mortality and to preserve lives and livelihoods. The Trauma System of Care was legislatively mandated in 1996, becoming the state's first. State legislators established the Delaware Pediatric System of Care in 1997, the Delaware Stroke System of Care in 2016, and the Delaware Overdose System of Care in 2018. Wherever an injury, stroke, or overdose occurs, patients enter a System of Care that follows the same guidelines, regulations, and standards statewide.

The Division of Public Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) oversees and manages the Systems of Care through agreements with hospitals and other facilities, EMS, first responders, rehabilitation services, and state agencies. Oversight committees review policies, data, and health outcomes.

"We direct the right patient to the facility with the right resources for their condition, at the right time," said OEMS Systems of Care Coordinator Paul Westlake.

Systems of Care continuously resolve any differences in patient care and outcomes. For example, the Delaware Stroke System of Care addresses disparate mortality rates. According to the 2019 Delaware Vital Statistics Annual Report, in 2015-2019, the non-Hispanic Black stroke mortality rate of 55.9 deaths per 100,000 population was 39 percent higher than the non-Hispanic White rate of 40.3 deaths.

For more information about Systems of Care, visit <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/ems/ems.html> or call 302-223-2700.

COVID-19 Call Center closes

Due to a low volume of calls, the Division of Public Health (DPH) closed its COVID-19 Call Center on January 31.

For COVID-19 information, visit de.gov/coronavirus. General questions can be submitted via a contact form at coronavirus.delaware.gov/contact or by emailing DPHCall@delaware.gov. Send vaccine-specific questions to Vaccine@delaware.gov. Individuals can also call 2-1-1 and those who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP Code to 898-211, or email delaware211@uwde.org Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

DPH launched the COVID-19 Call Center on March 4, 2020, to handle the tremendous number of calls about the novel coronavirus. At the time, Delaware had no reported cases. The call center provided critical information to schools, medical providers, state agencies and community organizations.

DELPH program selects DPH's Mathew

Michelle Mathew of the Division of Public Health (DPH) was selected to participate in the Diverse Executives Leading in Public Health (DELPH) program. DELPH is a joint venture between the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the Satcher Health Leadership Institute at the Morehouse School of Medicine.

The 10-month program, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provides opportunities to explore individual leadership identity and actions to positively influence the work and culture of organizations through communication, leadership, and goal setting.

Mathew attended an in-person kick-off in Atlanta and engages in live-virtual webinars, collaborates with public health leaders on projects and assignments, and reads related literature recommended by leaders from all over the country.

Mathew, a Public Health Administrator I, oversees the Bureau of Adolescent and Reproductive Health within the Family Health Systems Section. She began working at DPH as a Health Program Coordinator in 2003.



Michelle Mathew