What Are Heart Emergencies? Lesson Idea

Objectives

- Identify the early warning signs of heart attack and stroke.
- List appropriate emergency cardiac care steps taken to help a victim of heart attack, stroke, or choking.
- In response to an actual emergency, access the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system in the community.

Prepare

- Download and print, "It's an Emergency!"
- Have students read, "It's an Emergency!"
- Download and print, Emergency I.Q. Activity Sheet

Materials

- Poster board or drawing paper, chart paper and markers, Emergency I.Q. Activity Sheet, "It's an Emergency!"

Explore

1. Review with students the controllable risk factors—smoking, high blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, obesity and diabetes—that can contribute to heart attack and stroke before discussing how to identify and handle such emergencies.

   Suppose you are at your friend Paula’s house. Her grandfather has been shooting baskets with you when suddenly he clutches his chest. He sits down and says he feels faint and that the pain in his chest is spreading to his shoulders and arms. He tells you not to worry; it is not serious. What do you do? Encourage discussion. Students should recognize that Paula’s grandfather may be having a heart attack. If other adults are home, students should find them immediately. If no other adults are available, they should dial 9-1-1 or the local EMS number, and describe the grandfather’s symptoms to the emergency personnel.

   Suppose Paula’s grandfather suddenly becomes dizzy. He says his head hurts and his right arm feels numb. You can barely understand what he is saying. What should you do? Students should recognize that Paula’s grandfather may have had a stroke. They should proceed as they did for the heart attack scenario, acting quickly and stressing the need for immediate care.

   Suppose you are eating lunch in the school cafeteria. Your friend Tom suddenly stops talking and clutches his neck. He can’t seem to breathe. What do you do? Encourage discussion. Students should recognize that Tom is probably choking on food and that the Heimlich Maneuver should be performed by an adult or a classmate who has been trained to do it. Ask a student who has been taught to perform the Heimlich Maneuver to explain how it is done. Point out that the maneuver should never be demonstrated on a person who is not choking because it can cause injury.

   Explain that identifying these situations as emergencies is the first step in helping a person stricken by one of them. On a sheet of chart paper, write the main heading "Early Warning Signs" and the column headings "Heart Attack," "Stroke," and "Choking." Write the warning signs of each as students name them.

2. What emergency workers must often deal with people who are having heart attacks, strokes, or choking emergencies? (Paramedics, emergency room doctors and nurses and 9-1-1 dispatchers) Have students choose one of these workers and write a list of questions they would like to ask the worker. For example, “What is the first treatment given to a person who is having a heart attack?”
Have students who chose the same workers form small groups to read, discuss and consolidate their questions. If possible, arrange for one or more of the emergency workers to visit the class and answer students’ questions. Also, if your school has the computer technology, students might be able to interview emergency workers online. Otherwise, encourage students to find answers to their questions through library research.

3. Divide students into small groups. Have some groups create posters publicizing the 9-1-1 emergency number. Some groups can make posters urging people to take CPR training, and other groups, encouraging people to learn the Heimlich Maneuver. Suggest that each group first discuss the important information to put on the poster and then think of an inviting way of presenting that information. Display the Heimlich Maneuver posters in the school lunchroom and the other posters in the main hallways.

4. Have students complete “Emergency I.Q.” Activity Sheet. Tell them that they are to provide information in the form of dialogue that would be appropriate for each emergency situation.