

Hospital Contact

Lindsey Meyers
(605) 977-7022
lindsey.meyers@medcath.com

Start! preparing your heart for the hunt

Hunters encouraged to follow some health safety tips

(Sioux Falls, SD) - It's that time of the year again. Thousands of people get up at the crack of dawn during firearm deer season to hunt down that big buck. And every year, media reports include stories of hunters suffering heart attacks while in the woods. If you're not prepared, haven't had a physical and haven't exercised much in the year since the last hunt, you may be putting yourself at a risk of a heart attack.

"Hunters rarely consider that their sport is actually an athletic event and that the excitement and exertion take a toll on their bodies," says Dr. John Jerstad, an emergency room physician for the Avera Heart Hospital. "Hunters should start training and conditioning months before they 'perform', but most don't and their heart and circulatory system sometimes suffers the consequences."

Hunters, who have not been to their doctor in the year since the last hunt, should take this opportunity to get a checkup.

"People should take a look at their major risk factors for heart disease regularly," says Jerstad. "Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol levels and make sure that strenuous exercise is recommended."

Smoking is another major risk factor for heart attack and heart disease. Other tips include avoiding a heavy breakfast before heading out into the woods and avoiding hunting alone. Bring a cell phone to reach emergency services if needed and tell friends or family your location and scheduled return.

Preparing early will not only help with physical fitness come deer season, but also with overall general health. Studies show that being physically fit lowers heart disease risk even in people who have other risk factors like high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol.

-MORE-

Warning signs of a heart attack are an uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back again. Also, the pain spreads to the shoulders, neck and arms and is often accompanied by lightheadedness, sweating, nausea and shortness of breath. Heart attacks are medical emergencies and 911 needs to be accessed immediately.

The American Heart Association has a new series of online tools that can encourage conditioning. The Start! program is a new initiative for the American Heart Association in which tools are provided to businesses and individuals to get America walking for health. The focus of Start! is simple – Walk more. Eat well. Live Longer. Studies have shown that walking is good medicine for the heart. In fact it's great medicine. For every hour of regular, vigorous exercise, like brisk walking, one can expect two hours will be added to their life expectancy. There are Web tools available at www.americanheart.org/start. Or, for more information on Start! you may also call (800) AHA-USA1.

#