



Be Heart Smart During the Hunt

Hunters encouraged to follow health safety tips

Thousands of North Dakotans will get up before the crack of dawn this hunting season and head for the woods or the fields. Few of them consider the strain it puts on their heart.

Every year reports of hunters suffering heart attacks come into the ND Game and Fish Department. Hunters beware. The excitement of the hunt combined with strenuous hunting activities and heart-disease risk factors may give you an increased risk of experiencing a heart attack or stroke.

Be prepared. Here are some tips that if followed, could save your life or that of a fellow hunter.

Hunters, who have not been to their doctor in the year since the last hunt, should take this opportunity to get a checkup before hunting season begins. Ask your doctor if you should have a stress test.

If possible, start a walking or physical activity program before the hunting season begins. Preparing your heart for the hunt will lead to better overall 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.

Smoking places excess stress on the heart by increasing blood pressure, impairing circulation, robbing the body of oxygen and replacing it with carbon monoxide. One of the best things you can do for your heart is put out the cigarettes.

Other tips include avoiding a heavy high protein high fat breakfast before heading out into the woods. A carbohydrate filled breakfast such as pancakes, cereal, and fruit is more easily digested and efficiently delivers the energy needed for physical exertion.

Avoid hunting alone. Bring a cell phone to reach emergency services if needed and tell friends or family your location and scheduled return. Also, make sensible plans for moving any game taken.

Heavy lifting, hiking and the overall physical activity of hunting can put a strain on any hunter's heart. It is important for everyone to be aware of warning signs of a heart attack and take immediate action to seek medical attention at the first signs.

Warning signs of a heart attack are:

- an uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing,
- pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back again.

- pain that spreads to the shoulders, neck and arms and is often accompanied by lightheadedness, sweating, nausea and shortness of breath.

Stroke signs include:

- a sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg,
- sudden dizziness and loss of coordination
- slurred speech
- severe headache

Both heart attack and stroke are medical emergencies and 911 needs to be accessed immediately. Remember part of your hunter safety includes being heart smart.

For more information on cardiovascular disease visit www.heart.org

Information provided by The American Heart Association