



## Reduce stress, heart attack risk during the holidays

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According to Carolina CPR Associates in Concord, the holiday season raises more than stress levels; it also raises the chance of having a heart attack.

"During the holidays, people overeat, drink more alcohol and exercise less," said Rick Petitt of Carolina CPR Professionals. "When you add in financial pressure, travel, sleep disruptions and family expectations, you end up with much higher stress levels than usual. Since you can't stop the holidays, you can fight the stress."

Lowering stress may not be enough. According to a study done by University of California at San

Diego, deaths from heart disease peak in December and January, with spikes on Christmas and New Year's Day.

The number of cardiac deaths is higher on Dec. 25 than on any other day of the year, second highest on Dec. 26, and third highest on Jan. 1, according to the study.

The American Heart Association (AHA) reports that heart attacks are the leading cause of death in men and women.

Quick response as well as immediate treatment can save a life.

"If you see someone collapse and suspect a heart attack, call 911 immediately," Petitt said. "While a CPR class is the best training for a heart emergency there are still things the layperson can do until emergency

workers arrive."

Hands-only heart compressions can keep the blood circulating until emergency services arrive.

Petitt, a former emergency medical technician (EMT), lists the steps a bystander can take to help a heart attack victim:

- » Place the heels of your hands on the victim's chest — right in the middle — at nipple height;
- » Lock your elbows;
- » Push down hard and fast on the chest, about two inches, and release all the way up (Do not bounce);
- » Find a rhythm of about 100 beats per minute;
- » Keep pushing until the victim wakes up or medical personnel tell

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you to stop.

The AHA recommends calling 911 immediately to transport the victim to the hospital.

CCPR has these recommendations for reducing stress during the holidays:

- » Slow down. Take one minute to breathe deeply, take five and call a friend, take 15 and walk around the block.

» Be aware of your actions. Alternate alcoholic beverages with water, eat a vegetable serving for each dessert you plan to consume, go to bed early the night before a celebration.

» Savor. Remember the holidays will be over soon so embrace the aspects you love and,

- » Avoid your stressors. Let someone else drive, shop online to dodge crowds, make lists so you feel in control.

Carolina CPR Professionals (CCPR) provides first aid and CPR training for medical professionals and laypersons. CCPR uses curricula developed by EMS Safety Services, American Heart Association and American Red Cross.

For more information about CCPR's services, call 704-562-0089 or visit [www.carolinacpr.com](http://www.carolinacpr.com).

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