



For Immediate Release

February 17, 2023

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PRESS RELEASE

**When Chest Pain Occurs, Dial, Don't Drive
*Dialing 911 saves critical treatment time in the
emergency room when minutes matter***

HIGHLAND – Do you know what to do if you or someone else is having a heart attack?

Hopefully you automatically answered, "Call 911."

According to the American Heart Association, there are more than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCA) annually in the U.S., with nearly 90% of them being fatal. Some of these could be prevented if crucial emergency medical treatment wasn't delayed. On average, many Americans wait two hours or more before seeking medical attention for heart attack symptoms, and far too many heart attack patients drive themselves or have a family member drive them to the hospital.

During American Heart Month, Prairie Heart Institute at HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland is working to reduce this statistic by reminding the public: "Dial, Don't Drive."

Prairie Heart Institute cardiologist Dr. John Patrick Scally explained, "When experiencing signs of a heart attack, time is critical. Depending on the severity of the situation, every second you save can mean the difference between irreversible damage to your heart or a treatable condition, or between life or death. Do not hesitate – call 911 first so that emergency responders can begin treatments as soon as they arrive."

That's important because minutes matter with a heart attack. Here's why: A heart attack happens when blood flow to a section of heart muscle is abruptly blocked. If blood flow isn't rapidly restored, the affected muscle begins to die. Acting quickly can prevent or limit damage to the muscle—and save your life.

By calling 911 to get EMS professionals, they and other first responders can:

- Assess your situation immediately.
- Administer treatment in the ambulance.

- Communicate with the hospital while en route, ensuring hospital emergency and cardiac teams will be waiting and ready for your arrival.
- Effectively speed the time from heart attack symptom to treatment.

Calling 911 is crucial to helping start processes at the hospital emergency room to get you live-saving treatment faster. HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital Highland is part of the Stat Heart Program, coordinated by Prairie Cardiovascular, which streamlines emergency care to meet and even exceed the goal of providing angioplasty (a non-surgical procedure to treat diseased arteries) within 120 minutes from a patient's arrival at their community hospital. By utilizing best practices, St. Joseph's emergency department's staff are able to identify, treat, and transfer heart attack patients quickly to HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital in O'Fallon. This allows patients to receive emergent heart intervention by a Prairie Heart cardiologist as quickly as possible, saving heart muscle and increasing a patient's chance for full recovery.

Every heart attack is different, but common symptoms include:

- Pressure in the chest or arms. It can feel like an uncomfortable pressure, fullness, pain or squeezing.
- Other upper body discomfort. It can affect one or both arms or the back, neck, jaw, shoulder or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This may occur on its own or with chest discomfort.
- Breaking out in a cold sweat or feeling nauseated or light-headed.

When you experience these or other symptoms, or feel you may be having a heart attack, time is critical. Even if you're not quite sure you're having a heart attack, call 911 and get yourself checked out. In the case of a possible heart attack, this old cliché is always true: It's better to be safe than sorry.

To learn more about the warning signs of a heart attack, visit heart.org/heartattack.

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About Prairie Heart Institute of Illinois

The Prairie Heart Institute of Illinois (PHII) is a community-based network of hospitals that offers cardiovascular programs staffed by the nationally recognized Prairie Cardiovascular, the largest group of cardiologists in the tri-state region. Because of the Prairie Education and Research Consortium (PERC), network hospitals of PHII also have access to drugs and treatments not widely available. The network hospitals of PHII offer the highest level of cardiovascular care possible in their communities. When more specialized care is needed, it is available in Springfield, O'Fallon or Carbondale.