



NEWS RELEASE – Photo Op / Demonstration

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(Heartburn or Heart Attack? What to Know This Thanksgiving Holiday)

Note: TVF&R will have a Paramedic available to discuss cardiac incidents and demonstrate equipment on Wednesday, from 10 am – noon, at Fire Station 62 (3608 SW 209th Avenue, Aloha 97007).

For many people the Thanksgiving dinner and heartburn go hand-in-hand. But how do you know that your chest pain is heartburn and not a heart attack? Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue responds to hundreds of heart-related calls each year. Many of these incidents involve patients who believed they were simply suffering severe heartburn.

Being uncertain if you or a loved one is experiencing a heart attack is normal, but a delay can be deadly or result in permanent heart damage. Unlike a cardiac arrest—which strikes suddenly and includes a loss of consciousness—a heart attack can develop so slowly that you are unaware of what’s happening. Symptoms typically include:

- Chest discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes or goes away and returns. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Upper body discomfort, such as pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath before, during, or after other discomforts.
- Other signs, including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.
- Women are more likely to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

When a heart attack is occurring, time is of the essence. The heart deteriorates with each passing minute from the onset of a heart attack to definitive hospital care. If you are experiencing one or more symptoms:

- **Don’t ignore your symptoms. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**
- **Call 9-1-1.** Having paramedics assess your situation will help expedite life-saving treatment.

With its 22 stations and paramedics on every unit, TVF&R provides the highest level of cardiac care. Every TVF&R unit carries specialized drugs and advanced cardiac monitors with 12-lead EKG capability. These monitors enable paramedics to diagnose if the heart is failing and begin immediate treatment. If a patient must be transported, information gathered by paramedics is relayed to the local hospital, enabling physicians and staff to activate special heart teams and prepare for the patient *before* their arrival. This cooperative EMS system is already proving to be an asset in the race against time for heart attack patients. The national standard for field to cath lab is approximately 90 minutes. Data from local incidents show TVF&R/Providence St. Vincent Hospital patients making it from the field to the cath lab in as little as 49 minutes - and in one case, 26 minutes. Additionally, **in 2008, Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue’s cardiac arrest survival rates were among the top in the nation at 22.9%** (national average is only about 5%).

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