

February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. Heart disease conditions include coronary heart disease, heart attack, and congestive heart failure. It is estimated that every 25 seconds, an individual will have a coronary event, and roughly one every minute will die from one.



It is important to take steps to help prevent and/or reduce your risk of heart disease. Even if you have had a heart attack or stroke, these steps can also help you reduce your risk of having another one in the future.

1. Know the Signs and Symptoms.

If you suspect that you are having a heart attack or stroke, call for emergency medical help.

	Signs & Symptoms
Heart Attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest discomfort that lasts for more than a few minutes or that comes and goes. May feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain. • Discomfort or pain in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach. • Shortness of breath may occur with or without chest discomfort. • Other signs can include cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.
Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden numbness or weakness of the arm, leg or face - especially one side of the body • Sudden confusion, trouble speaking, or understanding. • Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes • Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance/coordination. • Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

2. Diet & Nutrition

A healthy diet is one of the best ways to prevent and /or control heart disease.

- Choose lean meats and poultry without the skin.
- Select low-fat or reduced fat dairy products.
- Include healthy fats into your diet - nuts, olive oil, fatty fish, & avocados.
- Reduce foods in your diet that contain hydrogenated oils (trans fats).
- Eat no more than 300 mg of dietary cholesterol per day. Dietary cholesterol comes from animal products such as beef, organ meats, full-fat dairy products (milk, butter, cheese) and eggs.
- Select foods rich in soluble fiber - oats, barley, dried beans & peas, fruit and vegetables.
- Choose foods that are lower in sodium.
- Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.



3. Exercise

Daily exercise is essential to heart health. Recommendations for individuals 65 years and older include at least:

- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week
 - 10 minutes at a time is fine!
- Muscle-strengthening activities that work all major muscle groups (legs, hip, back, abdomen, chest, arms, & shoulders) 2 days or more each week.

4. Stop smoking.

Individuals who smoke are 2-4 times more likely to have heart disease and their risk for having a stroke doubles. Exposure to secondhand smoke increases a person's risk of heart disease by 25%-30% and lung cancer by 20%-30%.

Healthy Snack Idea: Apple and Peanut Butter

- 1 small apple
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter

Cut apple into four slices. Remove core and spread peanut butter on or dip. Enjoy!

