

Employee Wellness Counts!

Newsletter February 2021



American Heart Month



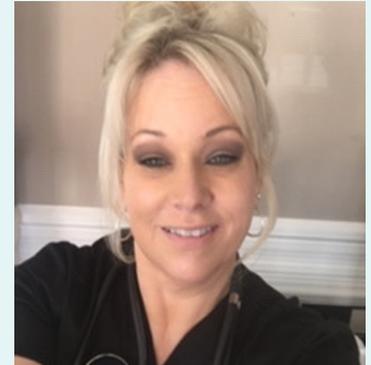
February is American Heart Month. According the Heart Foundation, heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. It is also one of the most preventable. Heart disease is a range of conditions that affect your heart. This includes coronary artery disease, heart rhythm problems, heart defects you are born with, heart valve disease, disease of the heart muscle and heart infection. Your heart needs to be healthy so it can pump oxygen to the body's cells. If you do not get enough oxygen, activities of daily living become difficult. Heart disease can lead to heart failure. Signs of heart failure include shortness of breath, persistent coughing, swelling, fatigue, lack of appetite, nausea, confusion, increased heart rate and palpitations.

What increases your risk of heart disease? High blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, diabetes mellitus and obesity. Genetics affect the risk of heart disease as well.

What behaviors increase the risk of heart disease? A diet high in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol; excessive alcohol use, tobacco use, excessive caffeine or other stimulants found in energy drinks, and lack of physical activity.

What can you do to protect your heart? Be aware of your heart health. Follow with your primary care physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant for your heart health assessments such as blood pressure, pulse, blood glucose, and cholesterol checks. If you are not aware of your heart health data, you may not know you are at risk. Educate yourself on a heart healthy diet and focus on dietary choices low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Add daily exercise to your routine. Stop tobacco use and limit alcohol and caffeine/stimulant consumption. Decreasing chronic stress is also important.

It may not be easy to make lifestyle changes that will decrease your risks but protecting your heart is vital. Heart disease is progressive. Being aware and **acting** on that knowledge can give you time to stop progression and prevent heart disease. The saying "knowledge is power" isn't necessarily true. You can have knowledge of your heart health risks but may still choose not to act. "**ACTION**" is power. Actually putting that knowledge into action gives you the power to protect your heart. Be your own super hero and **empower** yourself to take control of your heart health.



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Knowledge is NOT power.
Knowledge is only POTENTIAL
power. Action is power.

Stress. It affects us all. The COVID-19 pandemic has made our stress levels even higher. Having to worry about protecting ourselves and the people we love can be mentally draining. Remember to take care of yourself. It's so easy to get caught up in our every day lives and we neglect ourselves. Focus on a healthy diet, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, meditate daily, and don't neglect your spiritual health. Find new ways to safely connect with family and friends, get support and share your feelings. The county's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a great way to reach out for confidential support. You are important and your life matters. Take care of YOU.

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