GuidanceResources®

February: American Heart Month

February is Heart Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States and is a major cause of disability. About 630,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. every year – that's one in every four deaths. And every year, about 790,000 Americans have a heart attack.

Risk Factors

Some conditions, as well as some lifestyle factors, can put people at a higher risk for developing heart disease. All persons can take steps to lower their risk of heart disease and heart attack by addressing the following risk factors:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes mellitus
- Tobacco use
- Diet
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Alcohol

Treatment and Prevention

Fortunately, most people can treat heart disease with proper diet and lifestyle changes:

- **Early prevention:** Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly. Your doctor can provide suggestions to help you manage your health.
- **Regular exercise:** Even mild to moderate physical activity can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Proper diet:** A healthy diet can lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol levels. Eat a high-fiber, low-sodium and low-fat diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts and contains reduced amounts of red meat and eggs.
- **Drink alcohol only in moderation:** Adults should consume no more than one to two alcoholic drinks a day to reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Quit smoking:** Tobacco use has been proven to be a major contributing factor of cardiovascular disease. It is estimated that smokers' risk of heart attacks is more than twice the risk for non-smokers.

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