

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



February 2012



Your Heart This February

Did you know that coronary heart disease is the **number one** cause of death among American men and women? Coronary heart disease affects millions of Americans today. That is why the month of February is National American Heart Month. Taking care of one's heart health has quickly become a top priority.



What is Heart Disease?

Coronary Heart Disease is a restriction of the small blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to the heart. The narrowing of blood vessels is caused by the hardening or build-up of plaque in the vessels around the heart. The result is the slowing or stopping of blood flow to the heart. Although you can't change your age (heart disease risk increases with age), and you can't change your genetic make-up (heart disease is hereditary), you can take some steps today to decrease your risk for heart disease.

Nutrition/Diet

One of the most important steps to a healthy heart is following a lifestyle that includes a well-balanced diet. Try to consume at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. The more "color" on your plate, the better. A diet consisting of fiber-rich whole

grains is also very important. Try whole grain bread and whole wheat pasta. Choose heart-healthy proteins like chicken, pork, nuts, beans and legumes over fatty steaks and burgers. Implement Meatless Monday – or one meal per week sans meat. Substituting beans or legumes instead of meat can be healthy, tasty and affordable. One quick and easy meatless meal is a baked potato with beans. (Quick tip: If you don't have time to bake a potato in the oven, just poke several holes in the potato and place it on a plate in the microwave for 3 to 5 minutes on each side.) Slice the potato down the middle and top with beans and low-fat cheese. Sprinkle with green onions, or get creative and experiment with other toppings.

Upgrade Your Fast Food Choices

More and more fast food restaurants now feature nutritious options on their menus. If fast, convenient food

on the go is your only option, opt for a grilled chicken sandwich (hold the mayo), or salad with fresh veggies, grilled meat toppings and a low-calorie dressing. Ask if a wheat or multi-grain bun is available instead of standard white. And don't fall into the supersized trap. A supersized meal can pack over 1,000 calories so choose a smaller portion and ask to substitute a salad for fries. Skip the soda and go for water. A 32-ounce Big Gulp with regular cola has 425 calories. Add lemon to your water if you want more flavor or try unsweetened tea.

Good Fats

To most people, the word "fat" does not bring to mind a healthy heart or clean arteries. In fact, in a survey conducted by the American Heart Association, fewer than 50% of Americans know that the consumption of "good" fats can actually lower the risk of heart disease. Healthy fats are

(Over)

Heart Your Heart This February (Continued)

monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Examples are fish, nuts, seeds and vegetable oils (olive, canola and soybean). Oily fish like salmon, rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, is a great heart helpful protein option. More affordable omega-3 options are navy beans, soybeans, kidney beans and tuna. Consumption of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats will result in increased energy levels, healthy cell development and brain function. Remember that fats are double the calories of other foods - about 9 calories per gram - so be mindful to moderate your intake.

While knowing about healthy fats is essential, you should also be aware of the bad fats in order to avoid them. Saturated and trans fats are unhealthy heart harmers that will lead to clogged arteries. Trans fats contain partially hydrogenated oils found in fried foods. Saturated fats are found in thick steaks, hamburgers, cheese-cake, and anything loaded with butter. Both of these harmful fats are known culprits for clogging arteries, raising

bad cholesterol (LDL) and causing heart disease.

Exercise and Physical Activity

Stress can often manifest itself physically (sore muscles, headaches) and/or emotionally (depression, feelings of helplessness, anxiety). According to the American Heart Association, there are several key components to reducing stress. One is positive self-talk. Remove self-defeating, negative words from your thoughts and statements (“I can’t do this”) and replace with powerful, positive words (“I will do the best I can”, “I can get help if I need it”). Also, try taking 3 to 5 deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly, when you feel stressed. You may also want to try slowly counting to 10 before reacting to a stressful situation. Do something you enjoy for at least 15 minutes a day, whether it’s taking a nature walk, reading your favorite book or magazine, or having coffee with a friend. And last, try a form of relaxation such as yoga, tai chi or meditation. You will be on your way to Zen status in no time!

Stop Smoking

Did you know that smokers carry a much higher risk of coronary heart disease than non-smokers? In addition to being the #1 cause of premature death in America, smoking also causes atherosclerosis which is an accumulation of fatty substances in the arteries. There are many resources available for quitting smoking. The County Health Pool does offer a smoking cessation benefit to its members. Please call your benefits administrator at CTSI or speak to your local office contact for more information.

Recap: A Healthy Heart Means...

Leading a heart-healthy lifestyle includes a proper diet focused on fiber-rich fruits, vegetables, whole grains and consumption of good fats. When eating fast food, make nutritious choices whenever possible. Physical exercise and stress management are also important factors in reducing your risk for heart disease.

Sources: www.heart.org, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth.

Benefits Corner

Reminder

Walgreen Update-No longer part of network

Anthem’s PBM, Express Scripts, did not come to an agreement with Walgreens. As a reminder, to locate a pharmacy, go to the Anthem website at (www.anthem.com) and use the “Find a Doctor” feature to find a network drug store near you. Or call the 866-698-0087 customer service number on the back of your ID card and a customer service representative will provide in-network pharmacies close to you. You may also contact your CTSI Benefits Administrator who can help assist in locating an in-network pharmacy or placing a pharmacy in-network.

If you do need to make the switch from Walgreens to an in-network pharmacy, it is very simple, you may either;

1. Take your medicine bottle to your new pharmacy; they will call the old one and transfer it for you, **OR**
2. Call the new pharmacy and ask them to call the old one, **OR**
3. Ask your doctor to call your new pharmacy with prescription details.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact CHP staff at 303-861-0507.