



Heart Health Equals Whole Health

February is American Heart Month

Cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, are our nation’s #1 killer. More Americans die from heart disease each year than from any other cause.

In an effort to urge Americans to join the battle against heart diseases, every February since 1963 has been proclaimed to be “American Heart Month.”

The term “heart disease” refers to several types of heart conditions. The most common type in the United States is coronary artery disease. This condition can cause heart attack, angina, heart failure, and arrhythmias.

Coronary artery disease occurs when a substance called plaque builds up in the arteries that supply blood to the heart. Plaque is made up of cholesterol deposits, which can accumulate in your arteries. When this happens, your arteries can narrow over time. This process is called atherosclerosis.

Narrowed arteries make it difficult for blood to flow to your heart, which can cause your heart to work harder and, over time, weaken the heart muscle.

When a coronary artery becomes so narrow that



blood cannot pass or when a plaque deposit breaks off and clots the artery, a heart attack will occur. Similarly, should such a narrowing or blockage occur in a blood vessel leading to the brain, a stroke will occur.

It is important for all people to understand their personal risk for heart disease.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Improving heart health will improve your overall health*
- ♦ *Getting regular physical activity and eating a healthy diet are key steps in the fight against heart disease*
- ♦ *Knowing the warning signs for heart attack and stroke will speed your ability to react*

February 5 is National Wear Red Day

Although heart disease is sometimes thought of as a “man’s disease,” about the same number of women and men die each year of heart disease in the U.S.

As a result, the first Friday of every February

is designated as National Wear Red Day. This is a day when Americans nationwide take women’s health to heart by wearing red to show their support for women’s heart disease awareness. Men and women alike are encouraged to wear a red

shirt, dress, or tie to recognize this day and the ongoing fight to prevent heart disease.

All of us must remember: Heart disease doesn’t care what you wear—It’s the number one killer of women!

Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Nearly one out of every 10 heart disease patients have at least one risk factor. Several medical conditions and lifestyle choices can put people at a higher risk for heart disease, including:

- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Overweight and obesity
- Cigarette smoking
- High blood pressure



Understanding the risk factors for heart disease is important to reducing your risk.

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Alcohol use
- Heredity

All individuals can take steps to lower their risk of heart disease by addressing these factors. Control of risk factors is especially needed by people who already have heart disease.

A family or personal history of heart disease can impact your risk for future heart disease, even though it is beyond your control to change. As a result, it is important to take steps to impact the risk factors that you can control.

This includes receiving proper treatment for medical conditions you currently have. Remember that failing to manage your diabetes, take prescribed medications, or regularly visit your doctor can all impact your heart health.

Prevention: What You Can Do

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best way to prevent the onset of heart disease, as well as many other health conditions. This includes focusing on several important behaviors:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid heart disease and its complications.

Heart disease prevention means changing your behaviors to support an overall healthy lifestyle.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for heart disease.

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure.
- **Don't smoke or quit.** Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. Quitting will lower your risk.
- **Limit alcohol use.** Drinking too much alcohol causes high blood pressure.

Nutrition & Heart Health

A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons in the fight against heart disease. Certain food choice guidelines are recommended for optimal heart health.

For example, vegetables and fruits are high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber—and they're low in calories. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables may help you control

your weight and your blood pressure.

Unrefined whole-grain foods contain fiber that can help lower your blood cholesterol and help you feel full, which may help you manage your weight.



Healthy eating is essential in the fight against heart disease.

Certain food items should be avoided as much as possible, such as those with high levels of saturated fat, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, cholesterol, and sodium. These substances contribute to poor heart health. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol and 1500 mg of sodium each day.

Physical Activity & Heart Health

Finding time in our overscheduled lives for exercise is a challenge for busy Americans. However, the benefits far outweigh the sacrifices it takes to carve out that time.



Regular physical activity can reduce your risk of developing heart

Not only does regular physical activity contribute to good heart health, but it also gives you more energy to complete your daily activities.

The facts are clear: By exercising for as little as 30 minutes each day you can reduce your risk of heart disease. Without regular physical activity, the body slowly loses its strength and ability to function well.

Regular physical activity has been show to help:

- Lower blood pressure
- Control body weight
- Reduce stress

- Increase HDL “good” cholesterol in your body
- Control blood sugar by improving how your body uses insulin
- Make you feel good about yourself

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes per week of vigorous exercise for optimal heart health.

Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most start slowly, with only mild pain or discomfort. This makes it extremely important that you are aware of the signs that a heart attack is occurring:

- **Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back.
- **Discomfort in other areas of the body.** Symptoms include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of breath.** This may occur with or without chest discomfort.
- **Other signs.** Additional heart attack signs include cold sweat, nausea, and lightheadedness.

During a heart attack, minutes matter! Don't wait more than five minutes to call 9-1-1 if you suspect a heart attack.

Learn these signs, but remember this: Even if you're not sure it is a heart attack, have it checked out immediately. Fast action can save lives—maybe your own!

Stroke Warning Signs

If you or someone with you has any of these stroke signs, don't delay!

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance, or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache

Immediately call 9-1-1 if you notice any of these symptoms. Also, check the time so you'll know



Because of its similarity to a heart attack, stroke is often referred to as a “brain attack.”

when the first symptoms appeared. This is information that may impact treatment.

Stroke is an emergency. Quick action can be the difference between life and death, and between future functionality or permanent impairment.

**Beaufort County
Physical Activity and
Nutrition Coalition**



The Beaufort County Physical Activity & Nutrition is a collaborative effort of county citizens and county agencies working together to improve the physical health of our community.



Meetings Take Place At:

Beaufort County Health
Department
1436 Highland Dr.
Washington, NC
(252) 946-1902
www.bchd.net

Heart Healthy Recipe: *Grab-and-Go Snack Mix*

Serves 10; 1/2 cup per serving

Pumpkin seeds and pie spices make this snack mix different from the norm. It's full of crunchy goodness from nuts and grains.

Ingredients

Cooking spray

1 teaspoon canola or corn oil

1/4 cup honey

1/4 cup chopped walnuts

1/4 cup chopped pecans

1/4 cup shelled unsalted pumpkin seeds

3/4 to 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice or apple pie spice

2 cups multigrain or whole-wheat cereal squares with maple syrup and brown sugar

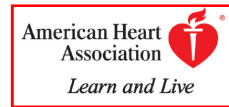
1/2 cup sweetened dried cranberries or sweetened dried cherries

Directions

Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly spray with cooking spray.

In a large nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom. Cook the honey for 2 minutes, or until it just comes to a boil. Stir in the walnuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, and pie spice. Cook for 3 minutes, or until the mixture begins to turn golden, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat.

Immediately stir in the cereal and dried fruit until well coated, about 30 seconds. Pour onto the baking sheet, using the back of a spoon to quickly spread in a smooth, thin layer. Sprinkle with the salt. Let cool completely, about 45 minutes. Break into 1-inch pieces. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.



Heart Health Facts & Statistics

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States
- Heart disease is responsible for more than 25% of all deaths in the U.S. each year
- 10% of people in Eastern NC have a history of heart disease
- Individuals aged 45-74 make up more than half of the cases of cardiovascular disease in Eastern NC
- Cigarette smoking doubles a person's risk for stroke
- Cigarette smokers are two to four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than nonsmokers.
- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States.
- Every year about 785,000 Americans have a first heart attack.
- About 47% of sudden cardiac deaths occur outside a hospital. This suggests that many people with heart disease do not act on early warning signs.
- Cardiovascular disease disproportionately impacts African Americans when compared to other racial/ethnic groups



Taking steps to improve your heart health will also improve your overall health!