

HEART HEALTH MONTH

According to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death for people of most ethnicities in the United States, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians. It is also the leading cause of death for both men and women. Heart disease affects people of all ages, races, and genders.

February is national Heart Health month. It's the time we try to remind ourselves of the importance of not only caring for ourselves, but specifically for the organ that sustains us every day.

CAUSES OF HEART DISEASE

There are a number of conditions that can lead to developing heart disease, these are called risk factors. The great news is, about 90% of our risk is within our control. The key risk factors are:

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- smoking
- diabetes
- being overweight or obese
- poor diet
- physical inactivity
- excessive alcohol intake



REDUCING THE RISK

We can positively affect our chances at developing heart disease. Here are some ways to reduce risk:

- Walk more. Ten minutes or more of brisk exercise a day can reduce our chances of an event by almost 50%.
- Eat more. Add fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, unsaturated fats, and lean proteins to your diet.
- Aim for Change. A weight loss of 5–10% of your current weight can improve both blood pressure and blood sugar.

- Quit smoking. After a year of being tobacco free, the chance of a heart attack decreases by almost 50%.

WAYS TO GET STARTED

But how do I do it? How do I affect positive change when I'm busy, tired, or just unsure?

Set — Consider your short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Set a reasonable goal you can achieve. When you achieve it, celebrate it with a reward and move forward to your next goal.

Track — You can track your steps, calories, number of cigarettes, weight — anything. It helps us to keep constant focus of our goals and be aware of the decisions we make.

Support — Verbalize your goals to friends and family. Find a support group to work toward a goal or look into an online or community group. Positive feedback and support can help us through the ups and downs of change

Motivate — Define why you want to do something. Whether it is big or small, there are things we do every day because we have a reason to do them. Personal motivation helps us achieve personal goals.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For support from a registered nurse or registered dietitian or to ask questions, please call a Blues On CallSM health coach at **1-888-BLUE-428**.

Log in to the member website listed on the back of your member ID card.

- Click on the **Wellness** tab.
- Click on **Additional Resources** on the left.
- Click on **Health Topics** under **WebMD health information** to search health topics or use the medical encyclopedia to review health issues you want to know more about.

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