

February is American Heart Month

Since February is American Heart Month it is a great time for employers to give their employees some good information and suggestions on how to improve their heart health.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and is a major cause of disability. The most common heart disease is coronary heart disease, which often appears as a heart attack. In 2008, an estimated 770,000 Americans will have a new coronary attack, and about 430,00 will have a recurrent attack.

The chance of developing coronary heart disease can be reduced by taking steps to prevent and control factors that put people at greater risk. Additionally, knowing the signs and symptoms of heart attack are crucial to the most positive outcomes after having a heart attack.

Some the key factors in reducing your risk for heart disease are:

Prevent and control high blood cholesterol. You can do this by eating a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol and high in fiber, keeping a healthy weight, and getting regular exercise. If your cholesterol is high, your doctor may prescribe medicines to help lower it.

Prevent and control high blood pressure. Lifestyle actions such as healthy diet, regular physical activity, not smoking, and healthy weight will help you to keep normal blood pressure levels. If your blood pressure is high, you can work with your doctor to treat it and bring it down to a normal range.

Prevent and control diabetes. People with diabetes have an increased risk of heart disease but can reduce their risk through weight loss and regular physical activity.

No tobacco. Smoking increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. Never smoking is one of the best things a person can do to lower their risk. And, quitting smoking will also help lower a person's risk of heart disease.

Moderate alcohol use. Excessive alcohol use increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke.

Maintain a healthy weight. Healthy weight status in adults is usually assessed by using weight and height to compute a number called the "body mass index". Normal weight is a BMI of 18 to 24.9.

Regular physical activity. Adults should engage in moderate level physical activities for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.

Diet and nutrition. A healthy diet includes eating lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, lowering or cutting out added salt or sodium, and eating less saturated fat and cholesterol to lower these risks.

Know your signs and symptoms. Some heart attacks are sudden and intense; however, most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Often people affected aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Here are signs that can mean a heart attack is happening:

- 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 upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. May occur with or without chest discomfort. Other signs may include cold sweats, nausea, or lightheadedness. (AHA)

Healthy Eating: You Control It!

The new year is the perfect time to start a heart friendly diet. The good news is that diet is one of the things you can control to improve your heart health and lower your risk for heart disease. Making relatively simple changes in your daily eating habits will pay off quickly - not only will you feel better, your overall health will improve as well!

We all know that too much fat and salt are not good for us. But, it can be hard to change your diet, particularly when you are busy and often don't have time for three healthy, home-cooked meals a day. While the thought of changing your diet might be daunting, there are diets out there to help you!

Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider first, before starting any type of eating plan. You might also want to enlist the help of a family member or friend, to give you support and help you stay on track.

Here are some general guidelines to follow:

Choose foods low in saturated fats. It's found the most in animal foods like fatty cuts of meat, poultry with the skin, whole-milk dairy products, and in tropical oils. Most other vegetable oils are low in saturated fats. Foods low in saturated fat include fruits, vegetables, whole grain foods, and low fat or nonfat dairy products.

Chose a diet moderate in total fat. A diet moderate in fat will give you enough calories to satisfy your hunger, which can help you eat fewer calories. You should keep your total fats at less than 30% with no more than 10% saturated fats of your total calories.

Choose food low in cholesterol. To reduce dietary cholesterol, eat fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low fat or nonfat dairy products, and moderate amounts of lean meats, skinless poultry and fish. Keep your dietary cholesterol less than 300mg daily.

Cut down on sodium. Even if you don't have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, try to have no more than 2,400 mg of sodium a day. To flavor food, reach for herbs and spices rather than high sodium table salt. Be sure to read labels and choose low sodium products. (Source: USDHHS)

Communicating With you

HealthFirst Medical Group introduced a new computer and information system to our business in February 2007. In December 2007 HealthFirst went live with our Electronic Medical Records. This means that all the patient records for injuries are now kept on our computer system. Each company has the capability to access a patient's work status and the first report of injury via E-Galen on the internet. If your company does not already have a **Login and Password** to access **E-Galen**, you can call your marketing department and request one. This system is very easy to use and our clients that currently use it are very pleased.

HealthFirst built their business on the personal communication between the provider and the company. Now with our new information system we need to know from you, our clients, if you still what the provider to call you after the patient's initial visit or if you would rather receive the information via fax, email or on the internet. You are all very busy people and we don't want to interrupt your day with unwanted phone calls. Please let us know your preference for communication and we will do your best to get the information to you. You may contact our marketing department at **(562) 926-3440 X313** or email your marketing representative.

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Our goal at HealthFirst Medical is to tailor our services to meet the needs of our clients. We can only do this, if you, our clients give us the information we need to better serve you.

Changes In Company Information?

Contact: _____

Insurance Carrier: _____

Email: _____
