



AMERICAN HEART MONTH

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Heart Healthy Tips

- Don't smoke or use tobacco.
- Exercise for 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Eat a heart healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Know your HDL or "good" cholesterol, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, weight, and body mass index (BMI) numbers.
- Reduce your blood pressure by reducing your salt.
- Sleep at least seven hours every night.
- Schedule a check up with your family doctor yearly.

The month of February is dedicated to raising awareness about heart disease and increasing knowledge about prevention. The various diseases that fall under the umbrella of heart disease include diseases of your blood vessels, such as coronary artery disease; heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias); and heart defects you're born with (congenital heart defects).

Coronary Heart Disease is a condition that commonly leads to heart attack. Coronary artery disease is the end result of a complex process commonly called "hardening of the arteries".

This causes blockage of arteries and prevents oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart. A full-blown

heart attack occurs when blood flow to the myocardium is blocked and tissue death occurs from loss of oxygen, severely damaging the heart.

Common causes of abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias), or conditions that can lead to arrhythmias include:

- Heart defects you're born with (congenital heart defects)
- Coronary artery disease
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol or caffeine
- Drug abuse
- Stress
- Some over-the-counter

medications, prescription medications, dietary supplements and herbal remedies

- Valvular heart disease

Certain types of heart disease, such as heart defects, can't be prevented. However, you can help prevent many other types of heart disease by making lifestyle changes. These include: not smoking; controlling blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes; exercising; eating healthy and maintaining a healthy weight; reducing stress and practicing good hygiene.

If you think you may have heart disease, or are worried about your heart disease risk because of a strong family history, make an appointment with your family doctor. Early treatment may be easier and more effective.

Broken Heart Syndrome

In a study by a John Hopkins research team, it was found that some people may respond to sudden, overwhelming emotional stress by releasing large amounts of adrenalin and noradrenalin into the blood stream along with their breakdown products and small proteins pro-

duced by an excited nervous system. These chemicals can be temporarily toxic to the heart, effectively stunning the muscle and producing symptoms similar to a typical heart attack, including chest pain, fluid in the lungs, shortness of breath and heart failure. It is unknown how the stress

hormones act to stun the heart's unique contraction pattern. In broken heart syndrome, a part of your heart temporarily enlarges.

Most of the cases involve middle aged or elderly women. Broken heart syndrome is treatable, and usually requires about a week to recover.