February: American Heart Month

Did you know?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. About 660,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. every year — that's one in every four deaths. And every year, about 805,000 Americans have a heart attack.

February has been designated American Heart Month in an effort to raise awareness about heart disease and how to prevent it. Consider the following information:

Risk Factors

Some conditions, as well as some lifestyle factors, can put people at a higher risk for developing heart disease.

All persons can take steps to lower their risk of heart disease and heart attack by addressing the following risk factors:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes mellitus
- Tobacco use
- Diet
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Alcohol

Treatment and Prevention

Fortunately, most people can treat heart disease with proper diet and lifestyle changes:

- **Early prevention:** Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked regularly. Your doctor can provide suggestions to help you manage your health.
- **Regular exercise:** Even mild to moderate physical activity can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Proper diet:** A healthy diet can lower blood pressure and reduce cholesterol levels. Eat a high-fiber, low sodium and low-fat diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts and contains reduced amounts of red meat and eggs.
- **Drink alcohol only in moderation:** Adults should consume no more than one to two alcoholic drinks a day to reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Quit smoking:** Tobacco use has been proven to be a major contributing factor of cardiovascular disease. It is estimated that smokers' risk of heart attacks is more than twice the risk for non-smokers.

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