

FEBRUARY IS THE MONTH OF THE HEART

February is the Month of the Heart. This month is all about raising awareness about heart disease prevention. Cardiovascular disease, also known as heart disease, doesn't just affect older adults, current data shows that younger people are increasingly affected by heart and cardiovascular disease.

Your heart pumps blood through vessels to every part of your body including your brain. Damage to blood vessels can lead to serious health conditions. What is heart (cardiovascular) disease? Cardiovascular disease includes a class of diseases involving the heart or blood vessels, such as: stroke, heart failure, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, congenital heart disease, heart valves, peripheral artery disease, and more. Heart disease remains the number 1 cause of death in the United States. (CDC 2020)

What are the risk factors for heart disease? The starred (*) factors are the key risks for heart disease. The remainder represent other medical conditions or lifestyle choices that also put people at higher risk for heart disease.

1. High blood pressure*
2. High cholesterol*
3. Smoking*
4. Diabetes
5. Overweight and obesity
6. Unhealthy diet
7. Lack of physical activity
8. Excessive alcohol consumption

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Heart disease, stroke, vascular diseases are preventable. Here are steps you can take to reduce your risk or decrease the impact of current cardiovascular disease.

1. Control your blood pressure. High blood pressure is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke. If your blood pressure is high, work with your health care team to manage it.
2. Eat healthy foods and limit alcohol. Eat plenty of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and low-fat dairy. Limit foods with added sugars and saturated fats, and lower your salt intake.
3. Get diabetes under control. Diabetes causes high blood sugar, which can damage blood vessels and nerves. The damage raises the risk for the heart disease, stroke and dementia.
4. Don't smoke. Smoking damages blood vessels and makes blood more likely to clot, which can lead to heart disease and stroke. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, learn how to quit. Oklahoma has the Tobacco Helpline and can be reached for free help at 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669).
5. Stay active. Lack of physical activity can lead to high blood pressure and obesity.

Learn more about how to get enough physical activity. Contact the Oklahoma City/County Health Department My Heart Program for more information by calling (405) 419-4049 or visit www.occhd.org/myheart

