February: American Heart Month

February is Heart Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States and is a major cause of disability. About 630,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. every year – that's one in every four deaths. And every year, about 790,000 Americans have a heart attack.

Statistics

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Cardiovascular diseases claimed 630,000 lives in 2016 – 25 percent of all deaths in the U.S.

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women.

- Coronary heart disease is the most common type of heart disease, killing more than 366,000 people annually.

- Heart disease costs the United States about $200 billion each year. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications and lost productivity.

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
- Diet
- Obesity
- Diabetes mellitus
- Physical inactivity
- Alcohol
- Tobacco use

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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