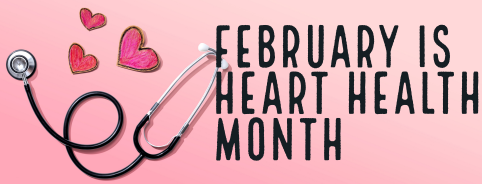


***Health Nugget February 2022***

By Emily Harmeyer



The Heart Foundation has 5 major tips on how to keep your heart healthy:

1. **Creating and keeping a heart healthy diet:** Your diet should be a pattern of choosing healthy foods over time. Not just once or twice a day or week, but consistently over days, weeks and months. Your diet should include eating a variety of fruits and vegetables and eating them more frequently. Fruits and vegetables have been linked to having a healthier heart and lowers the risk of heart disease. Choose whole grains in foods such as breads, rice and cereal. Whole grains have dietary fiber, vitamin E, and B vitamins. Make healthier fat choices, the best fats to choose are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats or Omega 3 and Omega 6 fats. You can find these in foods such as avocados, nuts and sunflower seeds. Try to use herbs and spices more and use salt less to season your food. The sodium in salt can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure which leads to heart disease.

2. **Increase your physical activity:** Regular physical activity decreases your risk for having a heart attack or developing heart disease. Staying active helps control common heart disease factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and being overweight. Physical activity strengthens bones and muscles and it can help you feel more energetic, happier, and relaxed. Even moving a little each day is better than not moving at all. Walking is one of the easiest and best ways to get your physical activity in for the day. The Heart Foundation recommends 30-60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, 4-6 days out of the week. But set reasonable and attainable goals for yourself, start small if you need to and work your way up. Once you get in a routine of physical activity it becomes easier and your body will start reminding you that it's time to work out! Choose activities that you enjoy or that you think you will enjoy. You're more likely to keep physical activity in your daily routine if it's something you enjoy doing. You can also make it a social event by inviting family or friends or even your dog to join in on your activity. Sitting less can help keep your heart healthy and decrease your risk of developing heart disease.

3. **Smoking:** Smoking is a major risk factor in cardiac arrest. It damages blood vessels that lead to your heart, brain and other areas of your body. Smoking makes you 4 times more likely to die of heart attack or stroke. When you quit smoking, your risks of heart attack and stroke decrease almost immediately.

4. **Control your cholesterol levels:** Your body makes cholesterol naturally, it is found in foods we eat and is necessary for some functions within the body. There are 2 types of cholesterol, High-Density Lipoprotein, HDL or "good" cholesterol and Low-Density Lipoprotein, LDL or "bad" cholesterol. "Bad" cholesterol can stick to the walls of arteries, which can cause build up, also known as plaque. This plaque can lead to blockages which can cause heart attacks and strokes. Eating too much saturated and trans fats can increase levels of "bad" cholesterol in your blood. Foods like pizza, cakes, pastries and deep fried foods all contain saturated or trans fats so you want to try and avoid these foods. A good variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy proteins like legumes and nuts are the best choices to avoid "bad" cholesterol. Knowing where your cholesterol levels are is very important and will help you make better decisions in your diet, see your doctor and ask for a heart health check

5. **Understanding and controlling your blood pressure:** Blood pressure is the pressure of your blood on the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps it around your body. It plays a very important role in how your heart and circulation work. High blood pressure over time is one of the main factors in heart disease. A few ways to control blood pressure and keeping it low are staying active, minimizing salt intake, and knowing what your numbers are.

(<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/heart-health-education/keeping-your-heart-healthy>)

These are very important ways to help keep your physical heart healthy but there is another aspect of our heart that we need to keep healthy, and that is our emotional heart health. The best way to keep our emotional heart healthy is to give it to the Original Heart Surgeon, Our Lord and Savior. God says in Ezekiel 36:26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." In giving our hearts to Jesus, He is able to change them and in turn we are able to give and receive love more fully. When we have the love of God in our hearts, our lives are transformed and we receive a "peace that surpasses all understanding." Philippians 4:7 Having this peace takes away stress, anxiety and depression, which will keep our physical and emotional heart healthy.