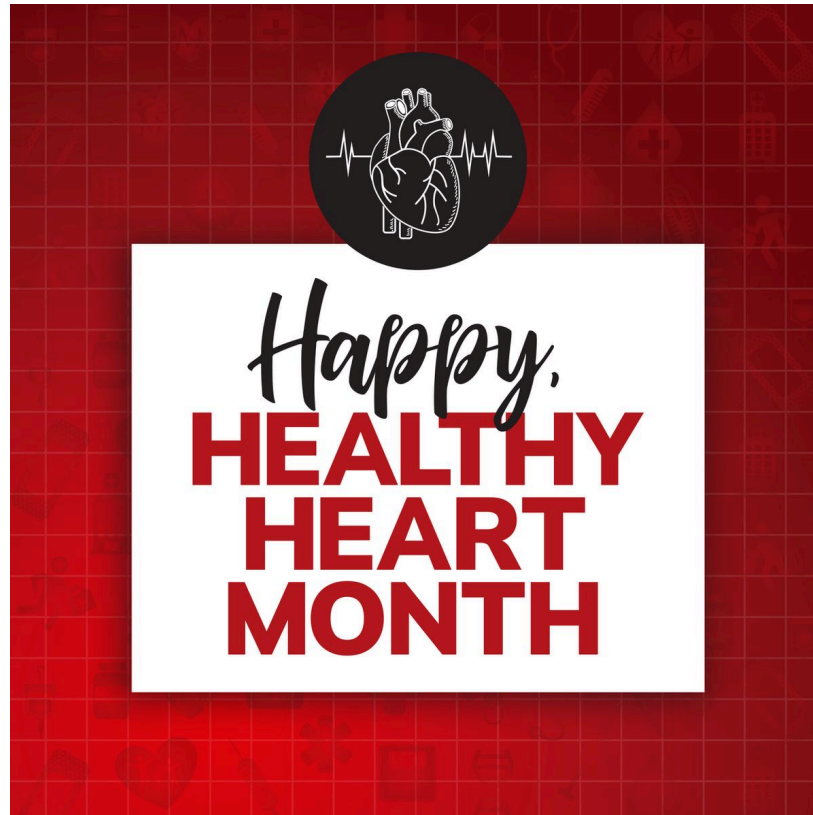


Small Changes During Heart Health Awareness Month for Seniors

February 21, 2024



February is Heart Health Awareness month, a great time to start on the path to better heart health and wellbeing and to understand the risk factors that can contribute to heart problems. Late last year, the America's Health Rankings (AHR) report highlighted a startling fact: heart disease is one of eight chronic conditions that has reached record highs since the report began tracking health and wellbeing in the United States.

Despite a decline in deaths tied to heart disease, it remains the leading cause of death among men and women. Heart disease costs the U.S. health system \$216 billion per year, according to the CDC, not including an additional \$147 billion in lost wages and productivity.

Risk factors for heart disease include conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity as well as unhealthy behaviors such as physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol abuse.

In California, 25.4 percent of adults over age 65 qualified as physically inactive while more than 23.9 percent are obese and just over 7 percent smoke, according to the America's Health Rankings 2023 Senior report.

What's more, the report shows strong disparities exist across geographic, racial, and economic groups, putting certain people at greater risk of developing heart problems. The prevalence of heart disease, like overall health and wellbeing, is influenced by the "social determinants of health" such as lack of access to transportation, healthy foods, and safe housing. Talk to your health plan and your health care provider about resources that may be available to you to help improve your health and wellbeing.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), there are immediate steps you can take to help you live a longer, healthier life and help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

First, eat a healthier diet. Center your eating plan around vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and fish. Limit sweetened drinks, added sugars, processed meats, sodium and saturated fats.

Second, be physically active and keep any eye on your weight. Adults should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week.

Lastly, live tobacco free. If you don't think you can quit for good on your own, ask for help and talk to your healthcare provider.

For more helpful health and wellness information, visit [UHCMedicareNewsroom.com](https://uhcmedicarenewsroom.com).