

# HEALTHY TIP OF THE MONTH

February 2011

## 2011 Monthly Health Observances

**January**  
Cervical Health Awareness Month

**February**  
American Heart Month

**March**  
National Nutrition Month

**April**  
Alcohol Awareness Month

**May**  
National High Blood Pressure Education Month

**June**  
Men's Health Month

**July**  
UV Safety Month

**August**  
Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

**September**  
Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

**October**  
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

**November**  
American Diabetes Month

**December**  
Safe Toys and Gifts Month

## February is American Heart Month Heart Disease Prevention



Learn and Live™

*Benjamin Franklin told us, "An ounce of prevention of is worth a pound of cure."*

Over 80,000,000 adults (one in three) in the United States have one or more forms of heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Illinois and in the United States overall, leading to one quarter of all deaths. The risk of suffering from heart disease goes up as people age.

Your chances of getting heart disease are affected both by factors that you cannot control and those that you can control.

- Factors that you cannot control include family history of heart disease, race, and age. *Being a man or a woman does not affect your heart disease risk – heart disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women.*
- The factors that you can change to lower your chances of getting heart disease are behaviors like unhealthy eating habits, lack of physical activity, and smoking. These behaviors are just as important as the factors that you cannot control.

There are several things you can do to lower your risk for heart disease:

- **Don't smoke, and if you do, quit.** Those who smoke are two to six times more likely to suffer a heart attack than those who do not smoke. Smoking also boosts the risk of stroke and cancer. For help quitting, contact the Illinois Quitline at [www.quityes.org](http://www.quityes.org) or 1-866-QUIT-YES (1-866-784-8937).
- **Aim for a healthy weight.** A healthy weight can be achieved through eating right and getting physical activity. Being at a healthy weight is important for a long, vigorous life. Overweight and obesity are a cause of many preventable diseases and deaths.
- **Get moving.** Make a commitment to be more physically active. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
- **Eat for heart health.** Choose plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
- **Visit your health care provider.** Ask your health care provider, "What are my chances of getting heart disease?" Ask your provider to check your blood pressure, cholesterol (total, HDL, LDL, triglycerides), and blood glucose. Work with your provider to improve any numbers that are not normal.
- **If you have high blood pressure, keep it under control.** High blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke, and congestive heart failure. Blood pressure is expressed as two numbers, such as 120/80 (or "120 over 80") mmHg (millimeters of mercury). Blood pressure is considered "high" when it is 140/90 or above. But even pre-hypertension (120-139 over 80-89) raises your risk of heart disease. Make sure to follow your health care provider's instructions for controlling your blood pressure.
- **If you have high cholesterol, keep your cholesterol under control.** There are two types of cholesterol in your blood.
  - ◆ Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is often called "bad" cholesterol because too much LDL in your blood can lead to blockages in the arteries—and a possible heart attack. The higher your LDL number, the higher your risk of heart disease. (An LDL level of 160\* or above is high; less than 100 is optimal.)
  - ◆ The other type of cholesterol is high-density lipoprotein (HDL), also known as "good" cholesterol because HDL helps remove cholesterol from your blood. (An HDL level of less than 40 increases your risk for heart disease; 60 or higher is protective.)
  - ◆ Another key number is your total cholesterol, which should be less than 200.
  - ◆ Make sure to follow your health care provider's instructions for controlling your cholesterol.
- **If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar under control.** Diabetes is a major risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and other diseases. "Type 2" or "adult onset diabetes" is the type of diabetes that adults are most likely to develop. You are more likely to develop this disease if you are overweight, physically inactive, or have a family history of diabetes. Make sure to follow your health care provider's instructions for controlling your diabetes.

