February is Heart Month

Heart disease accounts for one in four deaths in the U.S., making it the leading cause of death nationwide. It also affects more men than women—in fact, more than half of deaths due to heart disease in 2009 were men, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Learn whether you are at risk and what steps you can take to prevent heart disease from developing.

RISK FACTORS

Family history, sex and age all play a part in your risk of developing heart disease, as well as medical conditions and lifestyle choices, including:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Poor diet
- Physical inactivity
- Excessive alcohol use

PRACTICING PREVENTION

Changing your habits can go a long way toward reducing your risk of developing heart disease. Depending on your personal risk factors, consider making the following changes to your lifestyle:

- **Quit tobacco:** Your risk of heart disease drops by about half after a year of not smoking. For resources to help you quit tobacco, visit **BeTobaccoFree.gov**.
- **Get active:** Try to fit in 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, five times a week. Strength train two times a week. Remember, you don't have to exercise hard to see benefits—even five minutes of moving can help.
- **Cook heart healthy meals:** The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan and Mediterranean diet can both help you transition to a heart healthy diet. In general, focus on whole fruits and vegetables, beans, whole grains, fish and healthy fats, such as olive oil.
- **Rest up:** Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep a night. To get a good night's sleep, turn off all electronics an hour before bed time, and aim to go to sleep at the same time each night.
- **Manage stress:** Even five minutes of meditation a day can help keep stress levels down.

Sources: www.mayoclinic.org, www.cdc.gov, www.heart.org
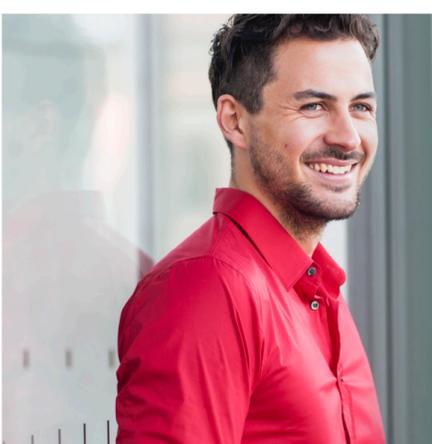
GO RED!

To raise awareness of the impact heart disease has on men and women, we encourage you to wear red for National Wear Red Day on February 7.