February is American Heart Month

http://healthfinder.gov

Take steps today to lower your risk of heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. To help prevent heart disease, you can:

- Eat healthy
- Get active
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure
- If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation
- Manage stress

Am I at risk for heart disease?
You are at higher risk for heart disease if you:

- Have high cholesterol or high blood pressure
- Smoke
- Are overweight or obese
- Don’t get enough physical activity
- Don’t eat a healthy diet

Your age and family history also affect your risk for heart disease. Your risk is higher if:

- You are a woman over age 55
- You are a man over age 45

- Your father or brother had heart disease before age 55
- Your mother or sister had heart disease before age 65

But the good news is there’s a lot you can do to prevent heart disease.

What is heart disease?
When people talk about heart disease, they are usually talking about coronary heart disease (CHD). It’s also called coronary artery disease (CAD). This is the most common type of heart disease.

When someone has CHD, the coronary arteries (tubes) that take blood to the heart are narrow or blocked. This happens when cholesterol and fatty material, called plaque, build up inside the arteries.

Plaque is caused by:

- Too much fat and cholesterol in the blood
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Too much sugar in the blood

When plaque blocks an artery, it is hard for blood to flow to the heart. A blocked artery can cause chest pain or a heart attack.
What is a heart attack?
A heart attack happens when blood flow to the heart is suddenly blocked. Part of the heart may die if the person doesn’t get help quickly. Some common signs of a heart attack include:
• Pain or discomfort in the center or left side of the chest – or a feeling of pressure, squeezing, or fullness
• Pain or discomfort in the upper body – like the arms, back, shoulders, neck, jaw, or upper stomach
• Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
• Feeling sick to your stomach or throwing up
• Stomach ache or feeling like you have heartburn
• Feeling dizzy, light-headed, or unusually tired
• Breaking out in a cold sweat
Not everyone who has a heart attack will have all the signs.
Don’t ignore changes in how you feel.
Signs of a heart attack often come on suddenly. But sometimes, they develop slowly – hours, days, or even weeks before a heart attack happens. Talk to your doctor if you feel unusually tired for several days, or if you develop any new health problems. It’s also important to talk to your doctor if existing health issues are bothering you more than usual. If you’ve had a heart attack in the past, it’s important to know that symptoms of a new heart attack might be different from your last one – so talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about how you feel.

Call 911 right away, if you or someone else has signs of a heart attack.
Don’t ignore any signs or feel embarrassed to call for help. Acting fast can save a life. Call 911 even if you aren’t sure it’s a heart attack.

An ambulance is the best and safest way to get to the hospital. In an ambulance, emergency medical technicians can keep track of how you are doing and start life-saving treatments right away.

Take steps today to lower your risk for heart disease.
Get your cholesterol checked. All men age 35 and older need to get their cholesterol checked. You also need to get your cholesterol checked if you have heart disease or risk factors for heart disease and you are a man ages 20 to 35 or a woman age 20 or older.

Get your blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure has no signs or symptoms.

Know your family’s health history. Your family history affects your risk for heart disease.
If you are age 50 to 59, taking aspirin every day can lower your risk of heart attack and stroke – but it’s not recommended for everyone. Talk with your doctor to find out if taking aspirin is the right choice for you.

Eating healthy can help lower your risk of heart disease. A heart-healthy diet includes foods that are low in saturated and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium. Heart-healthy items include high-fiber foods and certain fats (like the fats in olive oil and fish).

If you choose to drink alcohol, drink only in moderation. This means limiting your drinking to no more than one drink a day for woman and no more than two drinks a day for men. Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of heart disease.

Getting active can help prevent heart disease. Adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity each week. This includes walking fast, dancing, and biking.

If you are just getting started, try walking for 10 minutes a day, a few days each week.

People who are overweight or obese are at an increased risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes. If you are overweight or obese, losing just 10 pounds can lower your risk of heart disease.

Quitting smoking helps lower your risk of heart disease and heart attack. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) for free support. Avoiding secondhand smoke is important, too – so keep your home smoke-free.

Managing stress can help prevent serious health problems like heart disease, depression, and high blood pressure. Deep breathing and meditation are good ways to relax and manage stress.
The Million Hearts Initiative

In September, 2011 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), along with several key partners, launched Million Hearts, an initiative that aimed to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes over the next five years. The Million Hearts goal is to help improve Americans’ health and reduce the $444 billion spent each year in medical costs and lost productivity due to cardiovascular disease.

You can learn more about your risk for and ways to prevent cardiovascular disease on their website: www.millionhearts.hhs.gov. The website also features a free Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Resource Center. Visit the site today and use the Health Resume to learn about your family health history.

7 Secrets to Keeping Your Resolutions

Each January, roughly one in three Americans resolve to better themselves in some way. While about 75% of people stick to their goals for at least a week, less than half (46%) are still on target six months later, a 2002 study found. Other research shows that only 8% of people actually achieve their goals. It’s hard to keep the enthusiasm months after you’ve swept up the confetti, but it’s not impossible. How can you become one of those elite few, who actually achieve what they set out to do? Here are seven keys to achieving your goals.

1) Make your goals “SMART” – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Instead of saying, “I’m going to get in shape this year,” set a measurable goal as in a certain weight you want to reach or a number of miles you want to run without rest.
2) Measure progress. Checking in will be a source of motivation as you reflect on where you started and where you are. You can adjust your efforts accordingly.

3) Be patient. You may start slowly, but have sudden breakthroughs later on. Making lasting change takes time.
4) Share your goals with family and friends. Social support is critical. One of the most effective things you can do is to get an “accountability partner,” someone who checks in with you regularly. It’s easy to break a promise to yourself, but far harder to admit it to a friend.
5) Schedule it. Nobody FINDS time, we choose to spend our time the way we do. Make your new goals a priority and actually schedule them into your calendar.
6) Something is better than nothing. The difference between doing something rather than nothing is huge. If you don’t have time for a full one-hour gym session, make it the best 20 minutes you can.
7) Get up, when you slip up. Don’t turn temporary failures into total meltdowns or excuses for giving up. Legendary coach Vince Lombardi said, “It isn’t whether you get knocked down, it’s whether you get back up.”

Source: www.forbes.com
Home Health Corner: Heart Failure

by Michelle Ritchie

Heart failure is caused by disease that damages the heart. Most commonly, it is caused from high blood pressure, disease of the arteries or valves in the heart, or disease of the heart muscle itself, called cardiomyopathy. Heart failure doesn’t actually mean your heart fails or stops. It means that your heart has to work harder because it can’t pump as well or is stiff and can’t fill with enough blood. There are many stages of Heart Failure (HF) and treating conditions at an early stage can prevent or slow the progression of the disease.

If your doctor has told you that you have Heart Failure, there are ways to manage it. HF is generally treatable, but will not go away completely. A home health nurse can help teach you ways to manage your symptoms and prevent hospitalizations. The nurse will provide written material that will help you and your loved ones understand what this means for you. They will often discuss dietary changes, exercise and the importance of keeping your medications regularly scheduled.

Keep these key symptoms in mind when managing your Heart Failure and ask your physician if a home health nurse can help you learn more about living your best life possible.

Michelle Ritchie serves in System Business Development at CHRISTUS Care at Home.

michelle.ritchie@christushealth.org

True or False?

• Heart Failure affects more than 5 million people in the U.S.
• Each year over 550,000 new cases are diagnosed.
• Patients with Heart Failure are more likely to have another disease such as COPD, hypertension, kidney failure, or diabetes.
• Having heart failure is the most frequent reason patients are re-hospitalized.

These are TRUE!
Hour-Long Nap May Boost Brain Function in Older Adults

From: HealthDay News -- Napping for an hour in the afternoon may provide a mental boost for older adults, a new study suggests. This extra daytime sleep was linked to improved memory and ability to think clearly among the Chinese study participants, the researchers said.

The study included information from nearly 3,000 adults aged 65 and older. The investigators looked at the participants’ nighttime sleep habits and whether or not they took a nap in the afternoon to determine if this extra rest during the day had any effects on their brain function.

Nearly 60 percent of the people regularly napped after lunch. The duration of these naps ranged from about 30 minutes to more than 90 minutes. Most of the participants slept for about an hour, the study found.

The researchers -- led by Junxin Li of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia -- asked the participants to undergo several mental status tests, such as answering simple questions and completing basic math problems. Study volunteers also tried to memorize and recall words, and copy drawings of simple geometric objects.

The people who napped for an hour after lunch performed better on the brain function tests than those who didn’t nap at all. Those who slept for an hour also outperformed the people who slept for less than an hour or more than an hour, the findings showed.

The study participants, who didn’t nap, took short naps or very long naps had declines in their mental abilities that were up to six times greater than those who slept for an hour in the afternoon. However, while the study found an association between an hour-long nap in the afternoon and sharper mental abilities, it wasn’t able to prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

The study was published online recently in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.