SIHF Healthcare Brings Awareness To Heart Health

by Lori Sasse
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As February is American Heart Month, SIHF Healthcare wants to remind the public about the importance of their heart health and what steps they can take to help prevent heart disease. About 655,000 Americans die of heart disease each year - that’s an average of 1 in every 4 deaths. It is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

While the statistics on heart disease can be devastating, the good news is that it’s preventable in most cases with healthy choices, which include maintaining a healthy

weight, choosing a healthy eating plan, being physically active, managing stress, not smoking, getting quality sleep and regular checkups.

“No matter what your age, everyone can benefit from incorporating healthy choices into their lifestyle, says Malissa Weber, FNP-C at SIHF Healthcare in Millstadt.”

Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight puts more strain on your heart and its job to pump blood throughout your body. Achieving even a small amount of weight loss can boost your heart health and allow your body to circulate the blood more efficiently, thus reducing your risk of developing diabetes, heart disease and other health related issues.

Choose a healthy eating plan. Eating a variety of nutritious foods rich in vitamins and minerals helps with your weight, cholesterol, and blood pressure. Choose foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium. As a part of a healthy diet, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, fiber-rich whole grains, fish, nuts, legumes, and seeds. Select lower fat dairy products and poultry. Limit sugar-sweetened beverages, alcohol, and red meat.

Be physically active. It’s recommended that you get at least 2½ hours (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (e.g., brisk walking) every week or 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity (e.g., jogging, running) or a combination of both every week.

Manage stress. Stress can contribute to high blood pressure and other heart related risk factors. Effective ways to reduce stress would be talking with someone (counselor, family, friends) about your stress inducers, practicing meditation and relaxation techniques, being physically active or participating in a stress management program.

Quit smoking. Quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke can help reverse heart and blood vessel damage and reduce various heart disease risks. Talk with your medical provider to see what strategies, programs, and medicines are available for you.

Get enough sleep. Over time, not getting enough quality sleep, called sleep deficiency, can raise your risk of heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. So, by getting the required amount for your body, you’re able to help heal and repair your heart and blood vessels.

Get regular checkups. Two of the major risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. If either of these numbers is high, work with your medical provider to get it to a healthy range and get regular checkups to stay in the know with your heart health. Also, knowing your family health history is helpful when assessing your own health and can potentially help prevent future conditions if caught and treated early.

“Taking a little time each day to care for yourself can go a long way toward protecting your heart health, notes Weber.”