



February Health Message from Pam Wheeler, MCBDD Health Services Coordinator

The month of February is associated with Valentine's Day. It's a month where many of us turn our thoughts to hearts and love. We shower our significant other with heart-shaped candies, cards and more. While boxes of decadent chocolates, celebratory champagne and romantic, high-calorie dinners are enjoyable, we should also remember that February is **American Heart Month**. And what better way to celebrate those that we love than to raise awareness about a healthy heart.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women.

In Ohio, about 681,000 people in Ohio have coronary heart disease. This is the most common form of heart disease and can often be prevented. Our hearts are healthier when we move more, eat healthier, get enough sleep, reduce stress, and quit smoking!

Some things you can do to protect your heart and stay healthy are living a heart-healthy life which involves understanding your risk, making healthy choices, and taking steps to reduce your chances of getting heart disease, including coronary heart disease. By taking preventive measures, you can help to lower your risk of developing heart disease that could lead to a heart attack. You can also improve your overall health and well-being.

The first step toward heart health is understanding your risk of heart disease. Your risk depends on many factors, some of which are changeable and others that are not. Risk factors are conditions or habits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. These risk factors may be different for each person.

Listed below are risk factors for heart disease. Bolded risks cannot be changed.

- High Blood Pressure
- High Blood Cholesterol
- Overweight or Obesity
- Prediabetes or Diabetes
- Smoking
- Sedentary Lifestyle
- History of Preeclampsia during pregnancy
- Unhealthy Eating Behaviors
- **Have a family history of early heart disease**
(ex. if your father or brother was diagnosed before age 55, or your mother or sister was diagnosed before age 65)
- **Are age 55 or older for women or age 45 or older for men**
- **Being Female**

Each risk factor increases your chance of developing heart disease. The more risks you have, the higher your overall risks!

Learn about the steps you can take to live a heart-healthy lifestyle by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/heart-healthy-living/risks>