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DOH-OKALOOSA ENCOURAGES COMMITMENT TO A HEART-HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR AMERICAN HEART MONTH



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FORT WALTON BEACH, Fla.—February marks the beginning of American Heart Month, a federally designated month that is a great way to remind Americans to focus on their hearts and commit to a healthy lifestyle. By making lifestyle changes and eliminating their risk factors, Floridians can help fight one of the deadliest diseases in the state and the nation among both men and women—heart disease.

National trends show heart disease death rates are declining more slowly than they have in the past, especially among adults ages 35 to 64. In many communities across the U.S., death rates are increasing among adults in this age group. Risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, tobacco use and high cholesterol. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that roughly half of all Americans have at least one of these three risk factors.

“We must take heart health seriously,” said Dr. Karen Chapman, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. “During American Heart Month, we can prevent heart disease by making changes to the risk factors we can control—smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.”

DOH-Okaloosa reminds Floridians of the five steps they can take to improve their heart health:

- **Quit Smoking:** Cigarette smoking or using tobacco greatly increases your risk for heart disease;
- **Increase your physical activity:** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar levels;
- **Control your blood pressure:** High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, so you need to make sure to have it checked on a regular basis;
- **Know your cholesterol:** Your health care provider should test your blood levels of cholesterol at least once every five years; and
- **Eat heart healthy foods:** Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid heart disease and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods.

Contribute to the prevention of heart attacks and strokes throughout Florida. Visit www.flhealth.gov/Heart to learn more about other resources that can be used to prevent heart disease.

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