

# STEP INTO WELLNESS



Diocese of Palm Beach  
2022 Healthiest Employers Award Honoree



## February is American Heart Month

Feb 2023

American Heart Month is observed to raise awareness on the importance of a healthy heart and to encourage healthy habits that help reduce the risk of heart disease.

The warning signs for heart disease have been known to appear when people are as young as 18. Red flags such as high blood pressure should be taken seriously and healthy habits should be adopted.

### FIVE INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT HEART HEALTH

#### Heart attacks can be silent

One in five heart attacks occurs without the person even knowing they had one.

#### Heart attacks affect women differently

Women may experience different symptoms than men. These include pain in the back, arm, neck, or shoulder; nausea; fatigue; shortness of breath; and vomiting.

#### Young women are at higher risk than men

Women under the age of 50 are twice as likely to die of a heart attack as men in the same age group.

#### Another reason to hate Mondays

Heart attacks are more likely to occur on Monday mornings than other days of the week. Scientists attribute this to the disruption in our circadian rhythm over the weekend which leads to increased blood pressure and other changes to the nervous system.

#### Diet soda raises heart attack risk

If you drink one or more diet sodas a day, your chances of having a heart attack are 43% higher than those who drink regular soda or none at all.



### HOW TO OBSERVE AMERICAN HEART MONTH

#### Take up a heart-healthy habit

Staying active, eating healthy, and watching our weight are all important parts of maintaining a healthy cardiovascular system. Pick a new heart-healthy habit like jogging or substituting sodas with water and try to stick to it for a whole month.

#### Educate yourself

Learn about the risk factors for heart disease, the ways you can prevent them, and the lifestyle choices that can help you stay healthy.

#### Get your cholesterol tested

If you're worried you might be at risk for heart disease, ask your doctor to perform a simple cholesterol test to let you know if you're at risk and should make adjustments to your diet.

Heart disease occurs when the arteries leading to the heart become clogged. Although heart disease has been around for thousands of years, we do know that many aspects of modern life exacerbate risk factors and make people more prone to heart disease and heart failure. Today, one in four deaths in the U.S. is attributable to heart disease. Heart disease can affect everyone, but taking stock of your prior health risks, activities and diet can help you reduce your risk.

Although we've learned a lot about how the heart works, there are still many unanswered questions about heart health and the cardiovascular system. As far as we know, the best way to protect your heart is to stay active, eat a healthy and balanced diet, and reduce your daily stress. To celebrate American Heart Month, take some time to learn about heart health risks, find your favorite heart-healthy activities, and cook some healthy meals with your family.

<https://nationaltoday.com/american-heart-month/>

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### National Wear Red Day and More Heart Health Resources!

The first Friday in February is National Wear Red Day! Please send a **photo of your school or parish staff wearing their red** for Heart Health Awareness!! Pick any day in February that works for you and send it to [cwaring@diocesepb.org](mailto:cwaring@diocesepb.org) for inclusion in the next Step Into Wellness Newsletter!

Studies show that regularly sleeping too little ups the risk of high blood pressure. Following a bedtime routine that allows for 7 to 9 hours of sleep is important for heart health.

Show your heart some love by preparing tasty, nutritious, DASH-friendly meals. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension is a flexible and balanced eating plan that helps you eat heart-healthy for life. Find delicious recipes here: <https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/>



## February is Age Related Macular Degeneration Month

Age-related Macular Degeneration is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans aged 50 and over. The macula is located at the back of the retina and controls our central and color vision. Vision impairment from AMD occurs in one of two ways. In dry AMD, protein called Drusin gather under the macula and begin to deteriorate the retinal support system.

Once the structural support system of the retina has been broken down, it moves into wet AMD. The breaking down of that support allows abnormal blood vessels to grow and potentially leak into the retina, causing a loss of central vision.

### Symptoms and Risk Factors of AMD

There are no real symptoms for age-related macular degeneration or low vision until the condition has progressed. Only an examination by your eye doctor can reveal indications before they become a problem. That is why it is so imperative that you get regular eye exams.

After the age of 60, schedule exams for every year or as recommended by your doctor. Once the problem is identified, there are measures to take to slow or repair the damage to your vision.

### Risk factors include but are not limited to:

- Genetics
- History of smoking
- Being female
- UV Light
- Age (50+)
- AMD Treatment Options

The best treatment is always preventative measures. Scheduling regular eye exams will enable your doctor to recognize any issues before they progress. Catching AMD in the early stages leads to treatment by vitamin supplementation. Vitamins C, E, Beta Carotene, Zinc Oxide and Cupric Oxide have been shown to decrease the progression of Macular Degeneration when taken in the early stages.

If you are a smoker and show signs of AMD, the first step is to quit smoking. Then use caution when treating with vitamins since too much beta carotene in smokers has proven to increase the risk for lung cancer.

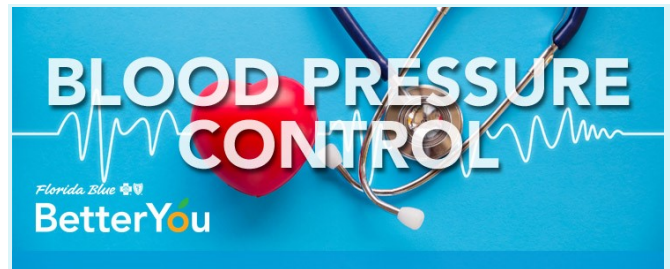
A healthy diet full of leafy green vegetables is also recommended for treatment.

The treatment for advanced stages of AMD is rapidly developing. There are various treatments that can be recommended by your doctor that focus on slowing the growth of blood vessels. These efforts can put a halt on any additional vision loss.

<https://www.iabhp.com/age-related-macular-degeneration/>

## February Happenings Calendar

Feb 1 - 28	American Heart Month 
Feb 1 - 28	Age Related Macular Degeneration Month
<b>Feb 3</b>	<b>National Wear Red Day</b>
Feb 14	Valentine's Day
Feb 20	President's Day 



### **Session 1: Wednesday, February 8 at 2 pm**

Presented by Dr. Deborah Stewart who will talk about the cardiovascular system, getting to know your numbers, learning the health risks of high blood pressure, and learning to measure your blood pressure.

**Here is the short link for session 1 - [bit.ly/3iQ2d3z](http://bit.ly/3iQ2d3z)**

### **Session 2: Wednesday, February 15 at 2 pm**

*Presented by pharmacist, Tracey Schosow, to help us understand the role medications, supplements, over the counter medications and herbs have in blood pressure management.*

### **Session 3: Wednesday, February 22 at 2 pm**

*Presented by Karen Donnell, RN, this session will focus on the benefits of healthy habits and talk about lifestyle changes you can make for your heart health.*

Have an idea, suggestion or comment? Contact your Wellness Coordinator, Carol Waring at [cwaring@diocesepb.org](mailto:cwaring@diocesepb.org) or 561-775-9572. Have a benefits question? Contact your Benefits Assistant, Sandy Maulden at [smaulden@diocesepb.org](mailto:smaulden@diocesepb.org) or 561-775-9574. Be sure to visit the wellness web page at [www.diocesepb.org/wellness](http://www.diocesepb.org/wellness) for helpful links and information.

## Know Your Health and Wellness Benefits! Pharmacy News!

Effective **February 1, 2023**, The Diocese of Palm Beach will be enhancing benefits regarding the pharmacy network that you can utilize to fill 90-day maintenance medications. Currently, you can fill a 90-day prescription of maintenance medications **only at CVS pharmacies** or through the Elixir Mail-Order system.

**Beginning February 1, 2023**, the plan will allow you to fill the maintenance drugs you take on a regular basis in a 90-day supply **at other retail pharmacies, in addition to CVS pharmacies**. Patients can fill their maintenance medications at Walgreens, CVS, Publix, or any retail pharmacy included on the pharmacy listing. The listing is on an Excel spreadsheet that you can easily sort to suit your needs. The attachment was sent to each entity and is sorted by the city location.

The 90-day supply costs are different from the 30-day cost, in that for the 90-day you pay 2.5 times the 30-day supply cost instead of three times the amount. You realize savings in co-pays. The 90-day supply also provides a more convenient way to fill your prescriptions by not having to drive to the pharmacy every month. The current 30-day and 90-day prescription drug costs are listed by medical plan below:

<b>Standard PPO Plan</b>	<b>Retail co-pay 30-day supply</b>	<b>Retail copay 90-day supply</b>	<b>Mail Order Copay 90-day supply</b>
Tier 1: Generic	\$5.00	\$12.50	\$12.50
Tier 2: Preferred brand	\$35.00	\$87.50	\$87.50
Tier 3: Non-preferred brand	\$50.00	\$125.00	\$125.00
<b>Premium PPO Plan</b>	<b>Retail co-pay 30-day supply</b>	<b>Retail copay 90-day supply</b>	<b>Mail Order Copay 90-day supply</b>
Tier 1: Generic	\$5.00	\$12.50	\$12.50
Tier 2: Preferred brand	\$30.00	\$75.00	\$75.00
Tier 3: Non-preferred brand	\$45.00	\$112.50	\$112.50

If your doctor has written a prescription for 30 days, you can continue to receive a 30-day fill as you currently do. However, if you wish to receive a 90-day fill, you will need to ask your doctor to write a new 90-day prescription for any maintenance drugs you use on a regular basis. Then, decide if you would like to fill your new prescription at a retail location or by mail order. Below is additional information regarding registering on the Elixir website .


If you have any questions, contact Sandy Maulden at [SMaulden@diocesepb.org](mailto:SMaulden@diocesepb.org) or 561-775-9574.


To activate your online account:

- Go to [elixirsolutions.com](http://elixirsolutions.com) and select 'Register'
- Enter 800004 for the Rx Bin and, when directed to the portal login page, select "Sign Up Now" on the right side.



 **800-771-4648**  
**913-262-8939** (KC Metro Area)  
 Help Desk hours:  
 6 a.m. – 9 p.m. (CST) M-F  
 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (CST) Saturday

 [answers@elixirsolutions.com](mailto:answers@elixirsolutions.com)

 [elixirsolutions.com](http://elixirsolutions.com)

# Strategies to Prevent Heart Disease

Heart disease is a leading cause of death, but it's not inevitable. While you can't change some risk factors — such as family history, sex or age — there are plenty of ways you can reduce your risk of heart disease.

Get started with these seven tips for boosting your heart health:

## 1. Don't smoke or use tobacco

One of the best things you can do for your heart is to stop smoking or using smokeless tobacco. Even if you're not a smoker, be sure to avoid secondhand smoke.

Chemicals in tobacco can damage the heart and blood vessels. Cigarette smoke reduces the oxygen in the blood, which increases blood pressure and heart rate because the heart has to work harder to supply enough oxygen to the body and brain.

There's good news though. The risk of heart disease starts to drop in as little as a day after quitting. After a year without cigarettes, the risk of heart disease drops to about half that of a smoker. No matter how long or how much you smoked, you'll start reaping rewards as soon as you quit.

## 2. Get moving: Aim for at least 30 to 60 minutes of activity daily

Regular, daily physical activity can lower the risk of heart disease. Physical activity helps control your weight. It also reduces the chances of developing other conditions that may put a strain on the heart, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.

If you haven't been active for a while, you may need to slowly work your way up to these goals, but in general, you should do aim for at least:

150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic exercise, such as walking at a brisk pace

75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, such as running

Two or more strength training sessions a week.

Even shorter bouts of activity offer heart benefits, so if you can't meet those guidelines, don't give up. Just five minutes of moving can help, and activities such as gardening, housekeeping, taking the stairs and walking the dog all count toward your total. You don't have to exercise strenuously to achieve benefits, but you can see bigger benefits by increasing the intensity, duration and frequency of your workouts.

## 3. Eat a heart-healthy diet

A healthy diet can help protect the heart, improve blood pressure and cholesterol, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. A heart-healthy eating plan includes:

Vegetables and fruits

Beans or other legumes

Lean meats and fish

Low-fat or fat-free dairy foods

Whole grains

Healthy fats, such as olive oil

Two examples of heart-healthy food plans include the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan and the Mediterranean diet.

Limit intake of the following

Salt

Sugar

Processed carbohydrates

Alcohol

Saturated fat (found in red meat and full-fat dairy products) and trans fat (found in fried fast food, chips, baked goods)

## 4. Maintain a healthy weight

Being overweight — especially around the middle of the body — increases the risk of heart disease. Excess weight can lead to conditions that increase the chances of developing heart disease — including high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.

The body mass index (BMI) uses height and weight to determine whether a person is overweight or obese. A BMI of 25 or higher is considered overweight and is generally associated with higher cholesterol, higher blood pressure, and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

Waist circumference also can be a useful tool to measure how much belly fat you have. The risk of heart disease is higher if the waist measurement is greater than:

40 inches (101.6 centimeters, or cm) for men

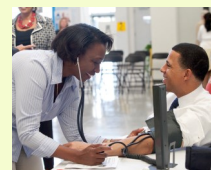
35 inches (88.9 cm) for women

Even a small weight loss can be beneficial. Reducing weight by just 3% to 5% can help decrease certain fats in the blood (triglycerides), lower blood sugar (glucose) and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. Losing even more helps lower blood pressure and blood cholesterol level.

5. Get good quality sleep. Most adults need at least seven hours of sleep each night. Make sleep a priority in your life.

6. Manage stress

7. Get Regular Health Screenings



<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/in-depth/heart-disease-prevention/art-20046502>