

For Those Living with Heart Disease

Learning that you or a loved one has heart disease changes your life. However, educating yourself about this disease is the first step toward feeling better and making choices that can help you live a longer and healthier life.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 11.5 percent of Americans have been diagnosed with heart disease. February is American Heart Month and the National Institutes of Health offer the following suggestions to help navigate treatment if you or a loved one has been diagnosed:

- **Making lifestyle changes.** Not smoking, following a heart healthy eating plan, maintaining a healthier weight and becoming more physically active can go a long way in helping to keep your heart disease from worsening.
- **Taking medication.** Medications are often used to treat high cholesterol, high blood pressure or heart disease itself. Be sure to take your medication exactly as your doctor prescribes. If you have uncomfortable side effects, let your doctor know.
- **Following doctor's orders.** Your doctor may recommend procedures to open an artery and improve blood flow. These are usually done to ease severe chest pain or to clear blockages in blood vessels.

As you know, having a Primary Care Physician (PCP) who can coordinate your care is vital to your good health. If you don't have a PCP, finding one is easy! Just visit your insurance carrier's website, look for the "find a doctor" area and follow the instructions.

When you're being treated for a disease or condition, it may not always be easy to decide where to go for care. For anything that is considered a life-threatening situation (like chest pain, major injuries or sudden and severe pain) it's best to go to the emergency room.

For less severe matters that still require immediate attention, if you can't get in to see your PCP, going to an urgent care facility can save you time and money.