

## Live Healthier and Lower Your Risk for Heart Disease

Did you know that according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States?

February is American Heart Month and OAOHN would like to encourage you to care for yourself, and your loved ones, by reminding you of the importance of preventive care.

According to the National Health Information Center, in the United States, the most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease (CAD). The great news is that you can greatly reduce your risk for CAD through lifestyle changes and preventive care, including embracing a health spirit.

To keep your heart healthy, the American Heart Association recommends the following:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke
- Control your cholesterol levels and blood pressure
- Drink alcohol only in moderation
- Get regular exercise and eat healthier
- Ask your doctor about taking aspirin every day (if you are a man over the age of 45, or a woman past menopause)
- Manage stress

While controlling physical risk factors is obviously a great way to help prevent any condition, so is maintaining a healthy spirit. For example:

- **Remaining optimistic.** Research shows that happiness and a positive attitude are associated with lower rates of disease.
- **Controlling stress.** Stress relievers like deep breathing and muscle relaxation exercises and keeping a journal, can be helpful in controlling the impact stress has on your body.
- **Doing everything in moderation.** Don't try to do too much at one time – make sure to have time for proper nutrition, sleep, work and play.
- **Creating a network.** Maintaining a close circle of family and friends can provide you with emotional support when you need it.

Lastly, getting annual physicals and tests from your doctor is key in sustaining your health and preventing heart disease. Having a Primary Care Physician (PCP) who can coordinate your care is vital to your good health. A PCP typically specializes in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine or General Practice.

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.

If you have any changes in your health and you've got questions, call the nurse line offered by your medical plan.