

NEWS RELEASE

February 27, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Heart Health vs Heart Disease

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is working with healthcare providers and other partners to reduce the rates of heart disease in southwest Nebraska. Data collected since 2005 shows heart disease and cancer have been the top two causes of death in the nine-county health district every year.

Heart disease, also called coronary artery disease (CAD) is when less blood can flow through the arteries in the heart. It is caused by a buildup of sticky cholesterol and other substances inside the artery walls. This buildup is called plaque. It hardens and narrows the arteries so that less blood can flow through them.

“We strongly encourage our residents to know their risk for heart disease,” states Lori Rowley RN, Public Health Nurse at SWNPHD. “Get health screenings regularly and talk to your doctor about your blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and other factors that could damage your blood vessels.”

Being overweight, physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, and smoking tobacco are risk factors for CAD. A family history of heart disease also increases the risk for CAD, especially a family history of having heart disease at an early age (50 or younger).

Tips for Heart Health

- 1. Eat a heart-healthy diet** like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, fish, nuts, and olive oil.
- 2. Get more active** and aim for 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity exercise like brisk walking, gardening, water aerobics, riding a bike, or dancing.
- 3. Lose weight** - your doctor can refer you to a nutritionist or dietitian, or a phone app to keep you motivated.
- 4. Stop smoking** If you smoke cigarettes, you can lower your risk of getting a heart attack by quitting.
- 5. Lower your blood pressure** by asking your doctor what your numbers should be based on your age and health. If you're out of range, work with your doctor to come up with a plan to lower your blood pressure.
- 6. Limit alcohol** and drink in moderation — one drink a day for women, and one to two a day for men.
- 7. Keep blood sugar under control** because uncontrolled high blood sugar damages arteries. In time, this damage can lead to heart disease.
- 8. Reduce stress** by choosing a relaxation technique that suits you and do it often. You can meditate, practice yoga, breathe deeply, or listen to music while you walk.

Source: American Heart Association www.heart.org

“There are many steps you can take to protect yourself,” continues Rowley. “This can be lifestyle changes like diet and exercise or talking to your doctor about ways to lower your blood pressure or cholesterol and prevent blood clots.”

Through a grant with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, SWNPHD works with women through a program called Health Hub. Health Coaches help women to improve their heart health, provide cholesterol and glucose health screenings, and monitor their progress toward healthy living. These cholesterol screenings are also available for employee wellness programs through SWNPHD's Target Your Health program.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. The website www.swhealth.ne.gov contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Instagram. SWNPHD can be reached by calling 308-345-4223, one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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