

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heart Health Matters

(Coldwater, MI.) The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind you that Friday, February 1st is "**National Wear Red Day[®]**" – a day set aside for everyone to wear red and to show support for women and heart disease awareness. According to Theresa Christner, Health Education/Promotion Director at the Community Health Agency, "Heart disease continues to be the number one killer of women in the tri-county area, as well as throughout Michigan and the United States. It outnumbers all female deaths from cancers combined. Yet many of the risk factors associated with heart disease are preventable or can be controlled." To protect your heart, she suggests you consider adopting the following lifestyle changes:

1. **If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do, quit.** Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. So, if you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit. Or you can contact the **Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-Quit-Now (874-8669)** to receive a personalized tobacco cessation program that can help you quit for life.
2. **Get moving.** Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower cholesterol and blood pressure. At a minimum, "get moving" can mean taking a brisk walk for 30 minutes on most days – even if that 30 minutes occurs in 3-10 minute segments.
3. **Eat a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables.** Not only are fresh fruits and vegetables a good choice because they are low in fat, cholesterol and sodium, and a good source of fiber, they also contain flavonoids. Flavonoids are antioxidant compounds that can help reduce the inflammation associated with clogged arteries.
4. **Reduce at least one source of processed food.** Canned foods tend to be high in sodium. By making a particular food item (i.e., spaghetti sauce, soup, stew, etc.) from scratch you can begin to control the amount of sodium you intake. Overtime, switching

from processed to unprocessed foods will assist you in taking control of your blood pressure.

5. **Know your numbers and know what they mean.** The Michigan Department of Community Health recommends that everyone know their Body Mass Index (BMI), Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Blood Glucose levels.
 - a. **BMI** – BMI is a measure of body fat and is based on your height and weight. A healthy adult BMI falls within a range of 18.5-24.9. Maintaining a healthy BMI reduces your risk of developing diabetes, cancer and heart disease.
 - b. **Blood Pressure** – Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it circulates through your body. A blood pressure reading less than 120mmHg/80mmHg is considered normal. Blood pressure values higher than that put a person at risk for heart disease and stroke.
 - c. **Cholesterol** - Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in your body and in many foods. While your body needs a certain amount of cholesterol, extra cholesterol can build up in your arteries, form plaque and result in blockages. To decrease your risk for cardiovascular disease, total blood cholesterol should be kept below 200mg/dl
 - d. **Blood Glucose** – Blood Glucose (or blood sugar) refers to the sugar that the body makes from the food we eat, which is used to provide energy to all of the body's living cells. The American Diabetes Association recommends a fasting glucose level of 70–130 mg/dl. If the glucose test occurs after a meal is eaten, the level should be below 180 mg/dl.
6. **Don't stop trying.** Research has shown that it can take up to 60 days for a new behavior to become a habit. Remember to be patient with yourself and vow to renew your commitment daily.

To assist you in keeping your commitment, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has posted on its website its **Heart Health Pledge**. Take the pledge and post it in a convenient place to remind you of your new resolve. After all – when it comes to matters of the heart – your heart's health matters! To download the pledge or to learn more about how to become a healthier you, visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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