

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

February 15, 2015

Rebecca Burns, Health Officer, BHSJ CHA

517-279-9561, ext. 0148#

Theresa Christner, Health Ed./Prom. Director

517-279-9561, ext. 0144#

Be Young at Heart!

Your heart may be older than you are – and that's not good. According to a new CDC report, 3 out of 4 U.S. adults have a predicted heart age that is older than their actual age. This means they are at higher risk for heart attacks and stroke. "Heart age" is the calculated age of a person's cardiovascular system based on his or her risk factor profile. The risks include high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, diabetes status, and body mass index as an indicator for obesity. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants you to be young at heart and recommends the following tips to improve your heart age:

- 1. Maintain a healthy diet** - Research shows that healthy eating contributes greatly to overall health. Few adults achieve the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables. The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that adults eat between 1.5 and 2.5 cups of fruit and 2.5 and 4 cups of vegetables daily, depending on age, gender, and amount of regular physical activity.
- 2. Engage in regular exercise** - Regular physical activity is one of the most important contributors to health and helps to achieve and maintain a healthy weight while contributing to the health of bones, joints, and muscles. It can also reduce feelings of anxiety and depression. Less than half of adults in Michigan engage in recommended physical activity regularly – at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity physical activity a week, such as brisk walking, biking or swimming. Children and adolescents should get 60 minutes of physical activity per day.
- 3. Get an annual physical examination** - Receiving an annual physical is a good way to be proactive about health and wellness. There are many benefits to having an annual physical exam, including earlier diagnosis and treatment of existing health issues and prevention of future problems. Regular physical exams also provide a variety of screenings dependent on age, health and family history and lifestyle choices. By getting the right health services, screenings, and treatments, Michiganders increase their chances for living longer and healthier lives.

4. Avoid all tobacco use and exposure - Tobacco use is the leading cause of premature and preventable death in the United States. Avoiding all tobacco use, including cigarettes, cigars, smokeless tobacco, pipes and hookahs, and also eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke, can greatly reduce the risk of developing heart disease, cancers, pulmonary disease, periodontal disease, asthma and other diseases. While Michigan has decreased smoking in the population over the last 50 years from 46 percent to 21.2 percent, we still experience more than 16,000 deaths annually related to smoking. If you currently are an adult tobacco user, be sure to call the 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) any time during the month of February to receive 8 weeks of free Nicotine Replacement Therapy.

According to Theresa Christner, Health Education/Promotion Director for the tri-county health department, "While these practices sound simple, in reality, only 4.6% of all Michigan residents engage in all four healthy behaviors." She adds, "Along with these four behaviors, we recommend that you know four health measures, which include your cholesterol, diabetes, blood pressure levels and your body mass index or BMI. These four measures are linked to chronic disease development. So the lower the number, the better your chances are for not developing heart disease, diabetes or some other chronic disease."

To begin improving your overall health, work with your healthcare provider to identify one particular area that you would like to change. In that area, set a short-term, realistic and achievable goal. Monitor your efforts towards reaching that goal. Learn what cues, either emotionally or environmentally, interfere with your goal attainment and plan for them. Learn how to identify the cues and how to keep them from derailing you. Finally, be sure to reward your successes and to be kind to yourself. Once you complete the first goal, set the next one. Remember, success breeds success!

Be sure to visit our website at www.bhsj.org to find more healthful tips that will keep your heart and your whole body young and in the best shape it can be for years to come!

Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561,
ext. 0104#

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395
ext. 0104#

St. Joseph County
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161
ext. 0104#

#