Taking care of our Hearts

February is American Heart Month, a nationwide observance that spotlights cardiovascular disease. Heart disease is largely preventable, yet many of us will likely develop coronary heart disease, the most common form of it. Together, we can change that. Make heart disease prevention a priority!

Americans have high rates of certain risk factors for heart disease, such as physical inactivity, being overweight or having obesity, smoking, and having uncontrolled high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Knowing your risk factors is key to understanding how to prevent heart disease and build a strong and healthy heart.

Here are some steps you can take to improve your heart health:

- **Stay Active - Aim for 150 minutes of moderate physical activity weekly.**

- **Eating a Heart-Healthy Diet - Fill your plate with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.**

- **Control your Cholesterol - Have your cholesterol checked by a healthcare provider.**

- **Manage your Diabetes - Having diabetes raises the risk of heart disease.**

- **High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease - Have your blood pressure checked at each healthcare provider visit and track your numbers.**

- **Take steps to Stop Smoking - Make a list of reasons to quit, select a quit date, and write a contract that outlines your plan for quitting. Ask your healthcare provider for help.**

- **Too much alcohol can raise the risk of having high blood pressure and other health problems. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation.**

- **Learning how to de-stress will make you happier and your heart healthier.**
    - **Find ways to relax like watching a movie or practicing yoga to reduce your stress levels.**
    - **Be sure to get enough good quality sleep.**

Choose to learn Hands-Only CPR. It has been shown to be as effective as conventional CPR for cardiac arrest at home, at work or in public.