

February is American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month, a national campaign to raise awareness about heart health and urge Americans to lower their risk for heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. In men, the risk for coronary heart disease (CHD) increases starting around age 45. In women, the risk for CHD increases starting around age 55. Fortunately, heart disease is largely preventable.

High blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol, and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease. Other risk factors include diabetes, being overweight or obese, poor diet, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol use. Both children and adults can develop high blood pressure, especially if they are overweight or have diabetes.

A family history of early heart disease is also a risk factor, especially if a father or brother is diagnosed before age 55, or a mother or sister is diagnosed before age 65. Most adults should have their blood pressure checked at least once a year, and more often if you already have high blood pressure.

Making Healthy Changes

You can make changes to lower your risk of developing heart disease. People who already have heart disease should be especially careful to control risk factors. For example, if you drink alcohol, only drink in moderation. Other ways to lower your risk include the following:

- Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Avoid recreational drug use
- Stay physically active. Engage in aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes, five days a week.
- Eat a healthy diet low in salt, sugar, saturated and trans fats and high in unsaturated fats (fish, avocado, etc.)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress



If you, or someone you know, is interested in addiction recovery services, primary care, or mental health care for children or adults, contact InterCommunity. To receive services at any of our Hartford or East Hartford locations, please call 860-569-5900.

