

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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*“Know Your Heart Health”*

February is American Heart Month, a time to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease (CVD) and encourage everyone to take steps toward better heart health. Cardiovascular disease, also known as heart disease, is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, including right here in Kansas. It accounts for 1 in 3 deaths nationwide. CVD includes a range of conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels, such as stroke, coronary heart disease, heart failure, and peripheral artery disease.

Several factors can increase the risk of heart disease, including smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, lack of physical activity, poor diet, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and a family history of heart disease. Men and women are equally affected, with CVD being the leading cause of death among African American and white women.

Heart attack symptoms may vary but often include:

- Chest pain or shortness of breath
- Stomach pain, nausea, or vomiting
- Pain in the arms, neck, back, or jaw
- Anxiety, sleep disturbances, or extreme fatigue
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Excessive sweating or cold sweats

If you experience these symptoms, don't wait – call 911 immediately.

Healthy lifestyle changes can cut your risk of cardiovascular disease in half. Small, consistent steps like eating nutritious foods, staying active, and managing stress can make a big difference. Set realistic goals for yourself, such as walking more, filling half your plate with leafy greens, and practicing deep breathing to ease stress. Remember, it's never too early or too late to prioritize your heart health.

Information comes from Kansas State University Publications.