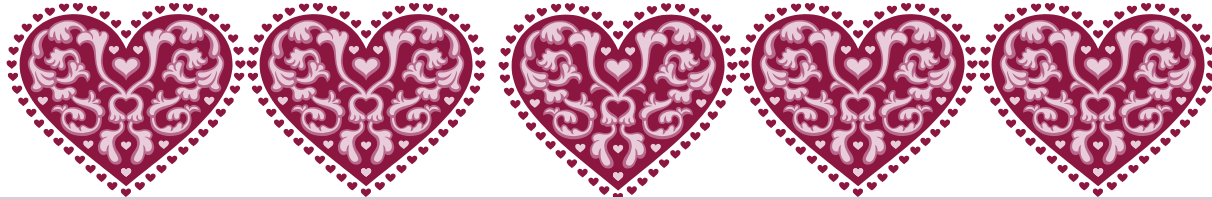




Hawkins County Schools Staff Wellness Newsletter



February 2011



How healthy is your heart?

February is Heart Health Month. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the number one killer of women and men. Check out the list below to find out how to lower your risk for heart disease:

1. Get Active: Regular physical activity helps to lower blood pressure, increase HDL “good” cholesterol in your blood, control blood sugar by improving how your body uses insulin, reduce feelings of stress, control body weight and make you feel good about yourself.
2. Control Cholesterol: Cholesterol is a soft, fat-like, waxy substance found in the bloodstream and in all your body's cells. When too much of it circulates in the blood, it can clog arteries, increasing your risk of heart attack and stroke. LDL cholesterol is produced naturally by the body, but many people inherit genes that cause them to make too much. Eating saturated fat, trans fats and dietary cholesterol also increases how much you have. The good news is, you can lower your cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.
3. Eat Better. A healthy diet and lifestyle are your best weapons to fight cardiovascular disease. To get the nutrients you need, choose foods like vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and fat-free or low-fat dairy products most often. The American Heart Association recommends that you eat a wide variety of nutritious foods daily from each of the basic food groups.
4. Manage Blood Pressure: Hypertension is the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can injure or kill you. By keeping your blood pressure in the healthy range, you are reducing your risk of your vascular walls becoming overstretched and injured, reducing your risk of your heart having to pump harder to compensate for blockages, and protecting your entire body so that your tissue receives regular supplies of blood that is rich in the oxygen it needs.
5. Lose Weight. Among Americans age 20 and older, 145 million are overweight or obese (BMI of 25.0 kg/m² and higher). This is of great concern especially since obesity is now recognized as a major, independent risk factor for heart disease. If you have too much fat — especially if a lot of it is at your waist — you're at higher risk for such health problems as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol and diabetes. If you're overweight or obese, you can reduce your risk for heart disease by successfully losing weight and keeping it off.
6. Reduce Blood Sugar. The American Heart Association considers diabetes one of the six major controllable risk factors for cardiovascular disease. In fact, adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have heart disease or a stroke than adults without diabetes. Pre-diabetes and subsequent type 2 diabetes usually results from insulin resistance. When insulin resistance or diabetes occur with other CVD risk factors (such as obesity, high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol and high triglycerides), the risk of heart disease and stroke rises even more. Controlling glucose can slow the progression of long-term complications.
7. Stop Smoking. Smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Smokers have a higher risk of developing many chronic disorders, including atherosclerosis — the buildup of fatty substances in the arteries — which can lead to coronary heart disease, heart attack (myocardial infarction) and stroke. Controlling or reversing atherosclerosis is an important part of preventing future heart attack or stroke.