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Women and Heart Disease: Know Your Risk Factors
February is American Heart Month

By Véronique Desautels, CHES

High cholesterol, high blood pressure and overweight/obesity: What do all these have in common? They are risk factors for heart disease.

Cigarette smoking is another risk factor that dramatically increases your risk of developing cardiovascular (heart) disease. In fact, it is the most common risk factor associated with heart disease. It is the worst to participate in, and the easiest to avoid.



Believe it or not, heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 and No. 3 killers of women over the age of 25. And the truth is that women don't take their risk of heart disease seriously – or personally.

Moreover, people once believed that heart disease happened mostly in men. This is not true. Of the total number of U.S. deaths in 2001 from heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular disease, women represented 53.6% of deaths. Men represented 46.4% of deaths. Clearly, women must become more aware of the risk factors associated with heart disease and learn ways to prevent heart disease.

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, risk factors not only act independently, they also act together worsening each other's effects. For example, being overweight or obese may cause high cholesterol, which then increases your risk of high blood pressure and puts you at a higher risk for heart attack or stroke. Cigarette smoking increases your blood pressure, which causes artery damage – and that affects your heart.



Obesity has risen at an epidemic rate in the United States over the last 20 years. At least 31% of the U.S. population is obese. So important is this issue that one of the national health objectives for the year 2010 is to reduce obesity among adults to less than 15%.

Unfortunately, the situation is worsening rather than improving. An individual's weight is the result of genes, metabolism, behavior, environment, culture, and socioeconomic status. However, being overweight or obese is usually a direct result of an energy imbalance. This means eating too many calories and not getting enough physical activity.

Here is something important for everyone – both women and men – to know: When it comes to heart disease, it is never too late to take steps to protect your heart health. Here are a few tips to keep your heart safe from heart attack and stroke:



- ◆ Don't smoke.
- ◆ Eat a "heart healthy" diet (low fat, low cholesterol).
- ◆ Be physically active.
- ◆ Keep a healthy weight.

The Pinellas County Health Department's **Strong Heart Program** can help you make healthy behaviors an integral part of your life, not just an afterthought.

For more information, contact us at (727) 820-4113 or visit www.PinellasWellness.com.

Other sources of information include the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov), the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (www.nhlbi.nih.gov) or the American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org).

Our Vision
**Healthier
People in a
Healthier
Environment**

Pinellas County Health Department

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL ACCESS DAY: Pinellas County Dentists Give Kids Something to Smile About

Give Kids a Smile Day

On Friday, February 4, 2005 an estimated 200 children from local low-income families in Pinellas County will receive free dental services as part of national Give Kids a Smile Day.

Give Kids a Smile Day is a collaboration between the Pinellas County Dental Association, local dental education institutions, and the Pinellas County Health Department. Children will be seen at locations throughout the county.

Financially eligible children who do not have access to dental care will receive a dental screening, teeth cleaning, fluoride treatment, sealants and – while they last – home health care kits. Parents/guardians must provide transportation and must have completed all eligibility and consent forms in advance. Follow-up care, if needed, will take place on February 11.

"It's heartbreaking to see a child's smile destroyed by tooth decay," said Haychell Saraydar, D.D.S., Director of the Dental Division of the Pinellas County Health Department. "Imagine not being able to eat, sleep, or pay attention in school because you have a toothache. Children need good dental care, and this is a way to start. Our participation in this event is an important part of our commitment to promote healthy behavior," Saraydar said.



For more information about Give Kids a Smile Day, call 219-6077.

For more information about children's dental care, contact our Dental Division at (727) 824-6900 or visit www.aapd.org.



Dental Care For Kids

There is nothing more beautiful than a child's smile. Good oral health is not difficult, but it takes both child and parent to make it happen. Good oral health should begin in infancy.

Reducing sugar in the diet, careful brushing, and regular dental care can greatly reduce the risk of cavities. **Tooth decay is the major cause of tooth loss in children.**

Parents need to instruct, monitor, and motivate the child on good oral hygiene.

These tips can help with your child's dental care:

- ◆ Schedule your child's first trip to the dentist by the time he or she is one year old.
- ◆ Use a child size toothbrush with soft bristles. Replace the toothbrush every three months.
 - ◆ Select a fluoride toothpaste and use a pea-sized amount on the toothbrush after every meal and before bed. If the child swallows the toothpaste, this small amount should not hurt him/her.
 - ◆ Once all primary teeth are in, begin flossing your child's teeth. When the child is ready, teach him or her to floss before brushing.
 - ◆ Offer a variety of foods from the five major food groups.
- ◆ Teach your child to avoid sugary foods.
- ◆ Take your child in for dental visits twice a year.
- ◆ Ask your dentist if your child may benefit from sealants which protect teeth from decay.

By age seven your child should be able to brush his or her teeth alone, with your supervision. By age eight, children should be able to brush and floss their teeth alone.



Pinellas County Health Department
205 Dr. M.L. King Street North
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 824-6908
www.pinellashealth.com
PinCHD52Info@doh.state.fl.us

