

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**Loving Your Heart - for the Health of It!**

**February 1, 2019,** (Haskell, TX)– While February is best known for Valentine’s Day, did you know that it is also American Heart Month? This February, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service County Extension Agent for Family and Community Health- Darlene Hopkins recommends giving your heart love, too, by being aware of heart problems and the steps you can take to prevent them.

Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) is the leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for 610,000 deaths each year, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). The root cause of heart disease is plaque formation and buildup that occurs when coronary arteries become clogged by cholesterol, fatty deposits, and calcium. Buildup causes arteries to become narrow, making it difficult for oxygen and blood to flow through the body and to the organs.

Anyone is at risk for developing heart disease. However, people who have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoke cigarettes are at higher risk. According to the CDC, about 47% of Americans have at least one of these risk factors. Additional factors that contribute to the progression of the disease include:

* Diabetes
* Being overweight or obese
* Poor diet
* Physical inactivity
* Excessive alcohol use
* Having a family history of heart disease
* Age, especially in women 55 and older

Dr. Sumathi Venkatesh, Extension Program Specialist with Healthy South Texas, recommends taking preventative measures by becoming aware of risk factors and consulting with a doctor on a regular basis. Developing a treatment plan with a physician can help stabilize blood pressure, blood sugar, and blood cholesterol levels. Other preventative measures include:

* Eating a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables
* Being physically active
* Stopping the use of cigarettes
* Limiting alcohol intake
* Reducing sodium intake

When it comes to pursuing a healthy lifestyle, try incorporating heart healthy foods into your diet such as green, leafy vegetables, avocadoes, whole grains, and seeds. Add these ingredients into meals like Quinoa Cakes, a Fresh Berry Caprese Salad, or an Avocado Mandarin Salad by using recipes from AgriLife Extension’s Dinner Tonight. To find more recipes, visit [dinnertonight.tamu.edu](https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/).

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Sources: <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>