

Wear Red—It's National Heart Month

By

Carolyn Hendry Wyatt, Extension Agent III, Family & consumer Science/4-H
Hardee County Extension Service

Did you remember to wear red on February 5, 2010? National Wear Red Day is celebrated on the first Friday of February each year to promote women's heart disease awareness and heart health. Nationwide, this observance provides an opportunity for everyone to unite in this life-saving awareness movement by showing off a favorite red dress, shirt, tie, or the Red Dress Pin, the symbol of heart disease awareness. The Red Dress Pin reminds everyone that heart disease doesn't care what you wear. It's the Number One killer of women.

Yes, that's right. Did you know that more women die of heart disease than any other disease— even breast cancer? In fact, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, one in four women dies of heart disease. And living with it can lead to disability and a decreased quality of life. My own mother suffered with heart disease for the last ten to fifteen years of her life and I saw firsthand the decreased quality of her life that resulted in disability.

Because heart disease is usually a man's disease, research has shown that few women take their risk seriously or personally. Having just one risk factor can double your risk for developing heart disease. Therefore, multiple risk factors will multiply your risk.

So, what can you do to lower your risk? Know the following risk factors for heart disease. They are:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Overweight/obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Family history of early coronary heart disease
- Age (for women, 55 and older)

It is always best to talk with your family doctor to find out if you are truly at risk. Then, do not delay. Take action! Stop smoking, eat a heart healthy diet, be physically active, maintain a healthy weight, and take prescribed medications. All of these actions will help to control and reduce the risks. In addition, here are some simple measures you can take to reduce your risk for heart disease. This is good information for both males and females to follow:

- Cook heart healthy recipes, like roasted beets with orange sauce or cinnamon glazed baby carrots from the Keep the Beat Recipes: Deliciously Healthy Dinners recipe book which can be ordered on line from the NHLBI website at nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov.
- Walk to the library or grocery store with your family to get exercise.
- Add a serving of vegetables to your meal at lunch or dinner.
- Get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night.
- Keep track of your progress with worksheets in the "Keep the Beat Healthy Choices for 2010 Calendar".
- Replace full fat versions of foods such as milk, yogurt, and salad dressing with the fat free or low-fat kind as much as possible.

These are some ideas that you may not have thought about before now that will help to get you started on the road to heart health today. Make February 2010 the month and year you began to discover how to protect your heart. It is the only heart you will ever have, so do all you can to keep it healthy. You will be glad you did! For more information about healthy eating contact the Hardee County Extension Office at 863-773-2164 or check out the website address in this article. Protect your heart starting today! (Source: www.hearttruth.gov)