



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Learn How To Be Heart Healthy This February

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By Senator John A. DeFrancisco

About every 25 seconds, an American has a harmful coronary event, and about one person every minute will die from one. Heart disease has become the single leading cause of death in the United States. This February, as we observe American Heart Month, I encourage you to become knowledgeable on how to prevent this fatal disease from harming you or your loved ones.

Since 1963, February has been designated to raise awareness about cardiovascular diseases. In the past three years, the American Heart Association has conducted their “Go Red for Women” campaign, designed to raise public awareness of the fact that heart disease has become the number one killer of women, causing more death in women than the next six causes of death combined. This campaign has attempted to raise awareness of this little known fact and to promote stronger and healthier lifestyles.

But for all Americans, preventing cardiovascular diseases can be as simple as learning your “ABC’s.” **A**void tobacco, **B**ecome more active, and **C**hoose good nutrition.

The American Heart Association recommends reducing your risk factors by controlling your cholesterol and high blood pressure. Exercising for 30-60 minutes daily, lowering your intake of saturated and trans fats, and achieving a healthy weight will dramatically reduce your risk. It is also important to limit alcohol intake and reduce stress. By taking these initiatives towards a healthy lifestyle, you will also reduce your chances of being diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, another contributing factor to cardiovascular diseases.

While some heart disease risk factors are manageable through lifestyle changes, there are also a number of factors that are out of our control. Americans who are over 55, and of African, Mexican, or Hawaiian descent should be extremely careful – since their heredities have proven to be more prone to cardiovascular diseases.

As important as it is to prevent cardiovascular diseases, it is also crucial to recognize its symptoms. While some heart attacks can be sudden, most start slowly. Repetitive pain or pressure in the chest, arm, back, neck, jaw, or stomach can indicate the onset of a heart attack. If you or one of your loved ones is experiencing any of these symptoms, it is important to call 9-1-1 immediately.

Learning ways to manage your lifestyle and continuing them throughout your life can keep your heart healthy. To find out more about the ways you can maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle, please visit the American Heart Association at, www.americanheart.org.