February

American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Every year, 1 in 4 deaths are caused by heart disease. Heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions.

To prevent heart disease and increase awareness of its effects, the District is planning several events throughout the month of February to raise awareness of heart disease.

**GES**

* Heart Word search
* Jump rope for heart
* Hands-only CPR for 3rd graders

**GIS**

* Heart Word Search
* Jump rope for Heart
* Design a poster contest
* Weekly physical activity log
* Rethink your drink Sugar Savvy activities
* Hands-only CPR for all 4th & 5th graders

**GMS/GHS**

* BP checks during lunch periods
* Hands- only CPR for 7th graders
* CPR Certification in Health class (10th graders)

**Following a Heart-Healthy Diet at an Early Age**

American children and adolescents, on average, eat more [saturated fat](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/What-About-Fat-And-Cholesterol.aspx)and have higher blood cholesterol levels than young people their age in most other developed countries. The rate of heart disease tends to keep pace with cholesterol levels. One study found early signs of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) in 7% of children between ages 10 and 15 years, and the rate was twice as high between ages 15 and 20.

According to the [American Heart Association](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/), a heart-healthy diet from an early age lowers cholesterol and if followed through adolescence and beyond, should reduce the risk of coronary artery disease in adulthood.

Teenagers frequently experience chest pain. Rarely, though, is the symptom related to the heart. Nevertheless, such complaints should be brought to the attention of your pediatrician, who will diagnose the problem through process of elimination.

“Usually, just asking the patient questions points us to the source of the pain,” says Dr. Reginald L. Washington, a [pediatric cardiologist](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/health-management/Pages/What-is-a-Pediatric-Heart-Surgeon.aspx) from Denver. Among the red flags he looks for are chest pain upon physical exertion and chest pain accompanied by dizziness. “Those situations would warrant further evaluation,” he says, “but most of the time the cause turns out to be anxiety, too much caffeine, asthma, muscle strain or*costochondritis.*” The latter condition, an inflammation of the chest wall, is treated with rest, over-the counter anti-inflammatory medications and heat.

You can make healthy changes to lower your risk of developing heart disease. Controlling and preventing risk factors is also important for people who already have heart disease. To lower your risk:

* Watch your weight.
* Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
* Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
* If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.
* Get active and eat healthy.