

February is American Heart Month



A Message for Commanding Officers

Heart disease and stroke are among the nation's leading causes of death and major causes of disability, and these conditions can be expected to increase sharply as this country's "baby boom" generation ages. Yet these conditions are largely preventable.

Elevated blood cholesterol and blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, and certain other potentially modifiable characteristics are recognized as "risk factors" for cardiovascular disease (CVD). Leaders can promote CVD prevention by using the materials in this health promotion toolbox to promote awareness, education, and intervention programs that aim to improve health behaviors associated with CVD.

The following guidance is offered to leaders for consideration during

American Heart Month

Demonstrate Leadership

- ✓ Establish and support a worksite wellness committee.
- ✓ Hold a physical activity or health promotion day, month, or season, spearheaded by a health promotion & wellness committee and supported by the CO.
- ✓ Disseminate heart disease prevention messages to employees (e.g., delivering personal messages; posting signs reminding employees to get their blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked, eat 5 fruits and vegetables per day, quit smoking, and avoid exposure to secondhand smoke; and providing educational resources to their staff).
- ✓ Demonstrate a personal example of healthy lifestyle.

Implement policies and incentives to make health choices the easy choices

- ✓ Create opportunities for physical activity and good nutrition by * Promoting healthy options in cafeterias and vending machines. * Providing time to exercise and de-stress.
- ✓ Prohibit all tobacco use in indoor areas and near building entrances and exits. Reduce exposure to secondhand smoke by establishing smoke-free worksite policies.
- ✓ Promote office-based team incentives such as time off for service members who participate in health risk assessments, competitions, and wellness programs that promote disease prevention measures (e.g., logging miles walked, quitting smoking, getting blood pressure checked, getting cholesterol checked).
- ✓ Contact your local MTF-health promotion program to provide healthy nutrition, weight control, and tobacco cessation classes through a worksite health promotion program.

Promote coverage for and use of preventive health services

- ✓ Ensure that service members are completing their annual Periodic Health Assessment (PHA). During each members PHA they will be screened to determine what prevention services they may need based on gender, age, and risk factors. They will also receive education and guidance on how to prevent/improve health risks they may have.
- ✓ Ask your local MTF-health promotion program to provide tobacco cessation counseling or access to counseling services.

Implement life saving improvements in health services and medical response

- ✓ Install automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) as appropriate. Train employees to use AEDs. (This training can be coordinated with annual CPR training.)
- ✓ Ensure that you have an emergency response plan.