



## Heart Health



**Heart disease** can happen to anyone at any age. February is Heart Month, the perfect time to learn about the risk for heart disease and the steps to take to manage heart disease.

High rates of obesity and high blood pressure among younger people (ages 35-64) are becoming more prevalent and increasing the risk for heart disease earlier in life. Half of all Americans have at least one of the top three risk factors for heart disease; high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking (CDC, 2017).

### Risk Factors and Statistics

1.13 billion people worldwide have hypertension (World Health Organization, 2020). Hypertension is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease that contributes to 1 in 7 deaths in the United States each year. Adults who have intellectual disability have similar risk factors for hypertension as the general population, which includes adverse dietary and lifestyle factors such as obesity and low physical activity (Erickson & Kornel, 2016).

High cholesterol can increase the risk for heart disease. Having diabetes and obesity, smoking, eating unhealthy foods, and not getting enough physical activity can all contribute to unhealthy cholesterol levels (CDC, 2017).

More than 37 million U.S. adults are current smokers. Smoking damages the blood vessels and can cause heart disease (CDC, 2017).

### Conditions and Behaviors that Contribute to Heart Disease

People with intellectual disabilities have a higher prevalence of untreated caries and periodontal disease and may have higher rates of obesity, edentulous, and chronic oral and systemic diseases than the general population (Ziegler & Spivack, 2018). Studies have shown that periodontal disease is associated with heart disease. While a cause-and-effect relationship has not been proven, research has indicated that periodontal disease increases the risk of heart disease. Scientists believe that inflammation caused by periodontal disease may be responsible for the association. Periodontal disease can also exacerbate existing heart conditions (American Academy of Periodontology, 2019).

Carrying extra weight puts stress on the heart. More than 1 in 3 Americans and nearly 1 in 6 children ages 2 to 19 has obesity (CDC, 2017).

Diabetes causes sugar to build up in the blood. This can damage blood vessels and nerves that help control the heart muscle. Nearly 1 in 10 people in the United States has diabetes (CDC, 2017).

Physical inactivity. Staying physically active helps keep the heart and blood vessels healthy. Only 1 in 5 adults meets the physical activity guidelines of getting 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity (CDC, 2017).

Unhealthy eating patterns. Most people eat too much sodium (salt), which increases blood pressure. Replacing foods high in sodium with fresh fruits and vegetables can help lower blood pressure. Only 1 in 10 adults is getting enough fruits and vegetables each day. Diets high in trans-fat, saturated fat, and added sugar increases the risk factors for heart disease (CDC, 2017).

### Positive Ways to Manage Heart Health

**Smoking cessation.** Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

**Manage conditions.** People with ID/DD (Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities) often experience inadequate physician-patient communication, anxiety during office visits, and experience irregular medical care, all of which are noted to be potential reasons for disparities in disease identification, management, and outcomes (Erickson & Kornel, 2016).

It is crucial that caregivers work with a health care team to manage conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol. This includes ensuring that routine medications are taken consistently, (as prescribed, and blood pressure monitoring is checked and documented, in order to establish efficacy.

**Encourage heart-healthy eating changes.** Eating foods low in trans-fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium is recommended. At mealtimes, at least half of each "plate" should be filled with vegetables and fruits.



### Positive Ways to Manage Heart Health, continued

**Encourage activity.** To stay healthy, individuals should be active at least 150 minutes per week. Try breaking up the activity into 30 minutes intervals throughout the week. These intervals can be broken down into 10-minute blocks of activity throughout the day.

Adults with intellectual disabilities are now aging in a manner similar to their peers and living well beyond their third decade of life (Erickson & Kornexl, 2016). According to a study by Tyler et al, individuals with autism spectrum disorders have an estimated rate of hypertension that is close to 20%, and they have a higher rate of diagnosis of hyperlipidemia than that of their peers (Tyler, Schramm, Karafa, Tang, & Jain, 2011). Likewise, adults with cerebral palsy typically have rates of hypertension and coronary heart disease that mirror or exceed those of the general population. People who have Down syndrome have a lower incidence of hypertension than other people with intellectual disabilities, as well as the general population. Generally, (with the exception of adults with Down syndrome), adults with intellectual disabilities appear to be at risk for development of hypertension at a rate that is comparable to that of the general, aging population, which increases their risk for heart disease (Erickson & Kornexl, 2016).

### Training Opportunities in February

#### The Oral Health for DSP (Train the Trainer program) & MRE Training

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Hilton Garden Inn Chesapeake / Greenbrier  
1565 Crossways Blvd, Chesapeake, VA 23320,  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/985FVVK>

#### The Special Needs Dentistry Training for Dental Professionals. Nurses are welcome to attend. 11 FREE Contact units offered.

Friday, February 28 - Saturday, February 29, 2020  
Hilton Garden Inn Chesapeake/Greenbrier,

### References

- American Academy of Periodontology (2019). Gum disease and heart disease. Retrieved from: <https://www.perio.org/consumer/gum-disease-and-heart-disease>
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- Erickson, S. R., & Kornexl, K. (2016). Blood pressure screening, control, and treatment for patients with developmental disabilities in general medicine practices. *Journal of Pharmacy Technology*, 32(6), 234–239. doi: 10.1177/8755122516663219
- Tyler, C. V., Schramm, S. C., Karafa, M., Tang, A. S., & Jain, A. K. (2011). Chronic disease risks in young adults with autism spectrum disorder: Forewarned is forearmed. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 116(5), 371–380. doi: 10.1352/1944-7558-116.5.371
- World Health Organization (2020). Health topics. Hypertension. Retrieved from: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/hypertension/>
- Ziegler, J., & Spivack, E. (2018). Nutritional and dental issues in patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *The Journal of the American Dental Association*, 149(4), 317–321. doi: 10.1016/j.adaj.2017.11.014

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### Educational Resources

- Virginia Department of Health: February is American Heart Month  
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/blog/2017/02/01/february-is-american-heart-month/>
- February American Heart Month Toolkit  
<https://healthfinder.gov/nho/FebruaryToolkit.aspx>
- Heart Health Educational Resources for Healthcare Providers  
<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/consumer-healthcare/patient-education-resources-for-healthcare-providers>
- Food that is good for your heart. Find heart healthy recipes for menu planning  
<https://recipes.heart.org/en>
- The American Heart Association Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations  
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/aha-diet-and-lifestyle-recommendations>
- The Heart-Check mark makes it easy to spot heart-healthy foods in the grocery store or when dining out.  
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/company-collaboration/heart-check-certification>
- What is heart disease and how to help someone in the event of a heart attack or cardiac arrest?  
<https://theheartfoundation.org/about-heart-disease-2/>



### App of the Month



Created by cardiologists, Cardio Visual is a multimedia interactive educational heart health app. Its comprehensive library of curated, shareable informational videos & interactive graphics provides efficient, clear explanations of all aspects of heart health including risk factors, prevention, conditions and treatments of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. (App of the Month is not endorsed by DBHDS OIH. User accepts full responsibility for use).

