

Heart-Healthy Habits Every Man Should Adopt

(NAPSA)—More than 300,000 men die each year from heart disease in the United States, making it the leading cause of death for men. Unfortunately, half of the men who die suddenly from this disease have no previous symptoms.

High blood pressure is the top contributor to heart disease and death. Research shows 25 percent of men have high blood pressure—many without knowing it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), men's risk for heart disease increases with age and typically begins at 45, although it can occur at a younger age. In fact, African American men develop the condition more often and at an earlier age, compared to their white and Hispanic peers.

The good news is that you can take charge of your health by knowing your risk and taking steps to adopt a healthier lifestyle. The CDC recommends the following tips to help decrease the risk of heart disease:

- **Check your blood pressure regularly.** Your doctor can measure your blood pressure or you can check it yourself at home and many pharmacies. If you already have high blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe medications in addition to recommending lifestyle changes. Take the medications as directed by your doctor.

- **Eat more heart-healthy foods.** Eat lots of fruits and vegetables, which provide heart-protecting nutrients such as potassium and fiber.

- **Reduce your sodium intake.** More than 75% of the sodium we eat is from restaurant and processed foods. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend people aged 2 and up reduce sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg per day. People 51 and older and those of any age who are African Americans or who have high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease should further reduce intake to 1,500 mg per day.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** If you are overweight, losing weight can help lower your blood pressure. Your doctor can help you determine your target weight and the best way



After surviving a near fatal heart attack at age 42, Aaron considers himself to be in the “bonus round” of life. He’s vigilant about getting his blood pressure checked, taking his medications, and seeing his doctor regularly. He urges others to take care for their bodies so they can spend more time with their loved ones too.

to achieve it.

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity can also help lower your blood pressure. CDC recommends you engage in moderate-intensity exercise, like brisk walking or a muscle strengthening activity, for at least 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) every week.

- **Limit alcohol use.** Drinking too much alcohol is associated with high blood pressure. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation—no more than two drinks per day for men or one drink per day for women.

- **Don't smoke.** Smoking damages blood vessels and speeds up the hardening of arteries. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease and stroke. Call a tobacco quit line (1-800-QUITNOW) or visit www.smokefree.gov.

Keeping your heart in good condition does require work, but the lasting health impact is worth the effort. Learn your risk for heart disease and adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle. More information on cardiovascular disease and heart health is available on CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/.