



## Barry-Eaton District Health Department

Be Active • Be Safe • Be Healthy

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### February is American Heart Month

In the United States, one in every four deaths is due to heart disease. Heart disease is serious, but can often be prevented. To promote heart-healthy behaviors, February is American Heart Month.

Additionally, February 1<sup>st</sup> is National Wear Red Day. Heart disease is the leading killer of women in particular, and causes one in every three deaths. The American Heart Association encourages individuals observing this day to wear red clothing to raise awareness.

Heart disease can refer to a number of problems that affect the health of your heart. Many of these problems are related to a condition called atherosclerosis, which is when a substance called plaque builds up in the walls of arteries. This makes arteries narrower and easier to clog. If a blood clot forms, blood flow may be cut off, causing a stroke or a heart attack.

Anyone can develop heart disease, and younger adults are developing it more and more frequently. High blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and smoking are the top three risk factors for heart disease, and half of all Americans have at least one of these factors. Other factors include obesity, diabetes, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diet. Fortunately, addressing these factors can lower your risk. You can take control of your heart health by:

- **Not smoking.** If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting can improve your heart health.
- **Manage conditions.** Work with your health care provider to manage high blood pressure and cholesterol. This can include taking prescribed medication.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Food low in trans-fat, saturated fat, and added sugar and salt is best for your heart.
- **Stay active.** At least 150 minutes of physical activity per week is recommended.

Heart disease was the leading cause of death in both Eaton and Barry counties in 2017. In 2017, 124 people in Barry County and 221 people in Eaton County died of heart disease.

For more information on heart disease, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/index.html> or <https://bit.ly/2HJtfGH>. For information about National Wear Red Day and women's heart health, visit <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/about-heart-disease-in-women/facts>.