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FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

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Sanford, Fla. – The Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) encourages residents to take charge of their blood pressure and make control their goal. Uncontrolled blood pressure is the leading cause of heart disease and stroke. February is American Heart Month, an important time to raise awareness about heart disease and how people can prevent it, both at home and in the community.

According to health statistics obtained through the 2016 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update, 17.3 million deaths are contributed to cardiovascular disease, while nearly 801,000 people died in the U.S. from heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases in 2013. In Seminole County, the age-adjusted rate of death for heart disease was 131.7 per 100,000 in 2013, which is higher than the Healthy People 2020 goal of 100.8 per 100,000. The age-adjusted death rate for stroke in 2013 was 33.5 deaths per 100,000, which is slightly below the Healthy People 2020 goals, but above the state rate of 31.2 deaths per 100,000.

In addition to mortality, there is significant morbidity associated with cardiovascular disease, including heart attack and stroke. Patients also suffer from decreased quality of life and increased health care costs. According to the 2012 National Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project statistics, the average hospital charge for a vascular or cardiac surgery or procedure in 2012 was \$78 897 and cardiac revascularization cost \$149 480.

“Lifestyle changes are crucial, especially with the diagnoses of hypertension and/or diabetes,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. “Appropriate lifestyle modifications such as eating a healthy diet, limiting salt intake, losing weight, exercising regularly, and not smoking can improve health outcomes.”

Eating a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables as well as limiting sodium, saturated and trans fats and cholesterol will help control blood pressure, blood sugar, and weight loss. Thirty minutes of moderate physical activity such as brisk walking or bicycling on most days of the week will improve not only your physical health but also your mental health.

In order to encourage awareness of the issue of heart disease and stroke among women, which kills 1 in 3 women in the United States each year, the American Heart Association created National Wear Red Day, which is Friday, February 5, 2016.

"A woman who 'Goes Red' follows an exercise routine, eats healthy, gets important tests done and influences others by practicing heart health," said Meena Joseph MD, Medical Director for DOH-Seminole.

For more information about American Heart Month, visit the [American Heart Association](#) and [Go Red for Women](#) websites. Additional information can also be found on DOH-Seminole's website, www.seminolehealth.com.

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