



Improving Health in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties

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For Immediate Release

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Heart Month – Prevention is Key!

South Heartland residents are at higher risk for heart disease, according to Michele Bever, executive director for South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD). “SHDHD’s most recent community health assessment shows that a higher percentage of our residents report having a heart attack or heart disease than Nebraskans as a whole,” she said. “Our rate of death from heart disease is also higher than the state average.”

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, having a previous heart attack or stroke, or having diabetes, all increase a person’s chance for heart disease and heart attacks.

Elizabeth Hardy, a public health nurse at SHDHD, understands that not acting on risk factors like these can lead to heart problems. One of her family members experienced a heart attack in May of last year.

“My mother-in-law struggled with hypertension (high blood pressure) for quite a few years and took medication,” she said. “But it was never monitored very well and her blood pressure readings always seemed too high when we visited. This seems to be the main issue that led to her heart attack.”

According to Hardy, there are many ways that people can maintain or improve their heart health. “Maintaining a healthy blood pressure and maintaining a healthy weight are good places to start,” she said. “Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables, low fat dairy, and low sodium (salt).” In addition, Hardy says it is important to strive for 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

Hardy encouraged anyone who has been diagnosed with hypertension to regularly monitor their blood pressure at home or at a community site. “They should report their blood pressure numbers back to their health care provider, so their provider can determine the best treatment for them and can make any adjustments needed to keep their blood pressure healthy,” she said.

In recognition of American Heart Month, South Heartland health officials are encouraging residents to make time to talk to their health care providers about their risks for heart attack and heart disease, and then to make recommended changes to reduce their risks.

“If you or a loved one have high blood pressure or have had a heart attack, it is not too late to make lifestyle changes to avoid further heart problems,” Hardy said.

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