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## DOH-ST. LUCIE ENCOURAGES COMMITMENT TO A HEART-HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FOR AMERICAN HEART MONTH



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**St. Lucie County, FL** - February marks the beginning of American Heart Month, a federally designated month that is a great way to remind Americans to focus on their hearts and commit to a healthy lifestyle. By making lifestyle changes and eliminating their risk factors, Floridians can help fight one of the deadliest diseases in the state and the nation among both men and women—heart disease.

National trends show heart disease death rates are declining more slowly than they have in the past, especially among adults ages 35 to 64. In many communities across the U.S., death rates are increasing among adults in this age group. Risk factors for heart disease include high blood pressure, tobacco use and high cholesterol. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that roughly half of all Americans have at least one of these three risk factors.

“The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie (DOH-St. Lucie) is committed to helping residents live a healthy life which includes reducing a sedentary lifestyle. In January 2018, DOH-St. Lucie and Healthy St. Lucie launched the largest community physical fitness challenge in St. Lucie history, the **Billion Step Challenge**. To date, over 1,400 residents have accepted our challenge and my goal is to have at least 10,000 residents join the Billion Step Challenge by the end of the year. According to the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey, over 50% of adults in St. Lucie were not physically active. Physical inactivity has been linked with an increased risk for developing major health conditions that negatively affect lives from heart disease, diabetes and obesity. There is strong evidence of fitness and exercise improving metabolic levels, reducing rates of depression, improving balance, reducing falls and increasing cognitive function. We urge you to join us in making St. Lucie the healthiest county in the State of Florida,” said Clint Sperber, County Health Officer for the Department of Health in St. Lucie County. For more information visit: <http://healthystlucie.org/>.

DOH-St. Lucie reminds residents of the five steps they can take to improve their heart health:

- Quit Smoking: Cigarette smoking or using tobacco greatly increases your risk for heart disease;
- Increase your physical activity: Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar levels; Join Healthy St. Lucie 2019 Billion Steps Challenge and track your physical activity alongside 1,400 other likeminded residents, already signed up, please visit: <https://healthystlucie.walkertracker.com/> to learn more about the Billion Steps Challenge and set up an account.

- Control your blood pressure: High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, so you need to make sure to have it checked on a regular basis;
- Know your cholesterol: Your health care provider should test your blood levels of cholesterol at least once every five years; and
- Eat heart healthy foods: Choosing healthful meal and snack options can help you avoid heart disease and its complications. Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods.

Contribute to the prevention of heart attacks and strokes throughout Florida. Visit [www.flhealth.gov/Heart](http://www.flhealth.gov/Heart) to learn more about other resources that can be used to prevent heart disease.

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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