Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Heart Disease: How Changes in Behavior Can Save Your Life

With the start of every new year, many people think about making resolutions and lifestyle changes. Heart Disease in particular can be impacted by lifestyle behaviors. It has become the nations #1 killer especially for women. Making healthy behavior changes can help save your life. Here are a few ways to get you started:

- **Are you a smoker?** The first step would be to make a true commitment to quit. Talk to your healthcare professional or EAP about programs that may help. Also keep yourself motivated by reminding yourself of the consequences of continuing to smoke (i.e. heart disease) and reward yourself when you are successful.

- **Thinking about dieting?** Think of eating healthy as more of a lifestyle change than a diet. Start with small steps (like gradually incorporating fruits or vegetables into your routine) instead of making dramatic changes or cutbacks. Remember to make your goals realistic. (i.e. if you know you can't live without eating carbs do not choose a diet that cuts them out).

- **Thinking about working out?** It's been proven that physical activity will not only help prevent heart disease, but can improve your mood, decrease stress, and help control your weight. Again, start with small realistic goals like taking the stairs or taking short walks. Remember that exercise does not have to be a chore. Chose an activity that you enjoy, or think of non-traditional forms of exercise like playing Wii, going dancing or doing household chores. Just keep yourself moving!

- **Are you stressed out?** Levels of stress are directly related to health issues such as heart disease. Though stress is inevitable, there are small steps we can take each day to manage it. Practice stress management techniques such as breathing exercises, time management, physical exercise, yoga, or taking time to relax.

- **When was the last time you went to the doctor?** Many people miss important warning signs because they neglected to visit their doctor. Attend your annual regular physical and if you think something is wrong, do not ignore it, schedule an appointment with your doctor for a checkup. An hour at the doctor's office can do some serious damage control!

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