February Heart Health Challenge

February is American Heart Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for men and women. But you can do a lot to protect your heart and it starts with education.

Do you know how much sodium is recommended each day? Do you know how much sodium you consume each day? If you're like most Americans, the answer is 'no' to both of these questions. And if you're like most Americans, you're getting far more sodium than is recommended, which can lead to serious health problems.

Sodium is a mineral found in many foods. Your body needs some sodium to conduct nerve impulses, contract and relax muscles and maintain the proper balance of water and minerals.

The kidneys balance the amount of sodium in the body. When sodium is low, the kidneys hold on to it. When sodium is high, the kidneys release some in urine.

If the kidneys can't eliminate enough sodium, it builds up in the blood. Sodium attracts and holds water, so the blood volume increases. The heart must work harder to pump blood, and that increases pressure in the arteries. Over time this can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

Some people are more sensitive to the effects of sodium than are others. That means they retain sodium more easily, which leads to fluid retention and increased blood pressure.

How much sodium should I eat per day?

The American Heart Associated recommends no more than 2,300 mg a day and moving toward an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults. On average, Americans eat more than 3,400 mg of sodium each day, much more than the American Heart Association and other health organizations recommend. The average American eats so much excess sodium, even cutting back 1,000 mg/day can significantly improve blood pressure and heart health.

How I can tell how much sodium I am eating?

You can find the amount of sodium in your food by looking at the Nutrition Facts Label. The amount of sodium per serving is listed in milligrams (or mg). Check the ingredient list for words like "sodium," "salt" and "soda." The total sodium shown on the Nutrition Facts label includes the sodium from salt, plus the sodium from any other sodium-containing ingredient in the product. For example, this includes ingredients like sodium nitrate, sodium citrate, monosodium glutamate (MSG) or sodium benzoate.

Remember to take note of the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label. If your portion size equals two servings of a product, you're actually eating double the sodium listed.

February Heart Healthy Challenge

This month's challenge asks you to track your sodium, set a goal and identify steps to reach your goal.

Directions:

1. Track your sodium intake for 1 week in the table below.
2. Based on your results, set a reasonable SMART goal for reducing sodium if your daily average is above 1,500 mg.
    a. SMART Goals are <u>s</u>pecific, <u>m</u>easureable, <u>a</u>chievable, <u>r</u>elevant and <u>t</u>ime-bound
        i. Ex: I will reduce my average daily sodium intake by 500 mg by the end of March 2023.
3. Submit participation to the Well-Being Team (well-being@stoughtonhealth.com) with the following information:
    a. Was your Daily Average above or below the recommended daily sodium intake of 1,500-2,300 mg/day?
    b. If above 1,500 mg, what is your SMART goal?
        i. What are 2 small habits you will implement to help reach your SMART goal?
    c. If your average daily sodium intake is 1,500 mg or less, what 2 habits help you be successful in hitting the recommended daily sodium intake?

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Snacks & Drinks							
Daily Total (Goal = 1,500-2,300 mg/day)							