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## **Eye on Safety | February is American Heart Month**

Since 1964, February has been recognized as American Heart Month – a time of year dedicated to increasing awareness about heart health and highlighting steps we can take to create a heart healthy lifestyle. Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States, claiming the lives of more than 650,000 people each year.

### **Here are some other facts everyone should know about heart disease:**

In the U.S., one person dies every 34 seconds from cardiovascular disease.

Every year, about 800,000 Americans suffer a heart attack.

Many different risk factors affect your chances of developing heart disease. Understanding what aspects of your life play a role can help you make changes to improve your health. Of course, there are some risk factors that you cannot change, but you should still be aware of them.

### **Here are the risk factors that the American Heart Association identifies for this condition:**

**Advanced Age:** Your risk of developing and dying from a heart-related illness increases as you age.

**Gender:** Men are more at risk of having a heart attack than women, and having one earlier, too.

**Heredity Risk:** You have a higher chance of developing heart disease if other family members have it.

**Smoking:** You have a higher chance of developing heart disease if other family members have it.

**Low Physical Activity:** Leading a sedentary lifestyle is one of the major risk factors for developing coronary heart disease.

**Being Overweight:** Excess body fat around the stomach and abdomen areas is particularly dangerous, and can also lead to high blood pressure.

**Stress:** Look for healthy ways to deal with the stress of your everyday commitments, such as mindfulness and meditation.

**Alcohol:** Drinking alcohol excessively can raise your blood pressure, which is a real risk for heart-related illnesses.

**Poor Diet:** What you eat affects your health. Eating nutrient-rich foods and limiting your red meat and sugar consumption is a good place to start.

**You can learn more about improving your heart health by visiting [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org).**