

Taking Extra Steps Toward A Healthier Heart

How Better Access To Medications And Lifestyle Changes Can Improve Your Odds Against Cardiovascular Disease



(NAPSA)—Heart disease, also known as cardiovascular disease (CVD), can pose a serious threat to your health, but there are many steps you can take to improve your odds of beating it. Even if you know the basics, you can benefit from learning more.

For example, if you're being treated for high blood pressure or cholesterol, you know that the medication you take can reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, congestive heart failure and stroke. But you may not realize how important it is to stay on your medication and take it as often, and for as long as, your doctor recommends.

"Unfortunately, some patients who don't have prescription drug coverage stop filling their prescriptions, skip doses or even cut their pills in half," says Robert Rosenson, M.D., Director of Preventive Cardiology, Northwestern University Medical Center. "That can make the treatment less effective and their condition harder to manage."

A Way to Save on Medicines You Need

Fortunately, there's a new pro-

gram, the Together Rx Access Card, that makes it easier for uninsured Americans to get the medicines they need. The program offers most Cardholders savings of about 25 to 40 percent on more than 275 brand-name prescription products, including several cardiovascular medications.

Approximately 36 million uninsured people are eligible for the Together Rx Access Card, which is free to get and free to use. To qualify, applicants must be legal U.S. residents, not eligible for Medicare, without public or private prescription drug coverage, and with incomes of up to \$30,000 for a single person or \$60,000 for a family of four (income eligibility is adjusted for family size). To apply or get more information, call 1-800-444-4106 or visit www.TogetherRxAccess.com.

Make Better Eating Choices

You know that eating right is another way to reduce your risk of CVD, by helping to keep your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol at healthy levels. But you may not be sure what kind of diet will help the most.

Talk to your doctor about the eating plan that's best for you. He or she may recommend consuming less salt and sodium, and following a diet such as the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) plan or the American Heart Association Eating Plan for Healthy Americans. These heart-healthy regimens emphasize fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy foods, as well as whole grains, fish and poultry.

Get More Physically Active

Even if you know that exercise can lower your risk of CVD, you may not realize how easy it is to do. You don't need to join a gym—the American Heart Association recommends getting more active in simple ways, such as gardening, standing while talking on the phone, and walking to the store instead of driving.

"Seemingly small changes in your daily routine can make a big difference in your cardiovascular condition," says Dr. Rosenson, "especially when combined with today's highly effective medications for high blood pressure and high cholesterol."