

FEBRUARY
TIP SHEET



For years, doctors thought the **connection between mental health and heart health** was strictly behavioral – such as the person who is feeling down seeking relief from smoking, drinking or eating fatty foods. That thinking has started to change. Research shows there could be physiological connections, too. **The biological and chemical factors that trigger mental health issues also could influence heart disease.**



The American Heart Association shares Dr. Barry Jacobs assertion that **“The head-heart connection should be on everyone’s radar.”** “It’s not just being unhappy. It’s having biochemical changes that predispose people to have other health problems, including heart problems.”

Harvard Medical School reported on a study that included more than 221,000 people ages 45 and older without any history of heart disease. They all filled out a short mental health questionnaire. After an average follow-up of more than four-and-a-half years, **people who had reported high or very high levels of depression and anxiety were more likely to have had a heart attack or stroke than people without those symptoms.**

If you have depression or anxiety talk to your doctor about how it can affect your heart health and ask for information to improve your heart health through diet and lifestyle. If you are not seeing a mental health professional for your anxiety or depression, ask your doctor for a referral or call HMC HealthWorks at