

HEALTHY *You!*

Your Source for a Happy and Healthy Lifestyle

February 2025

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BROUGHT TO YOU BY


AmeriHealth
Administrators



The Beat Goes On

February is Heart Health Month. It's the perfect opportunity to focus on simple, impactful ways to keep your heart strong. Heart health doesn't require extreme dieting or exercise. It's about making small, steady changes to your routine that can lead to big improvements over time.

One of the easiest and most effective changes you can make is to increase how often you move throughout the day. Taking a brisk walk around the office, going up and down a flight of stairs, or taking short stretching breaks can boost circulation, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress — three key factors for a healthier heart.

Eating for heart health is also important. Build meals that are vibrant and colorful. Bright berries, leafy greens, orange peppers, and whole grains are packed with essential nutrients and fiber, which help protect against heart disease. Incorporating heart-friendly fats like those found in olive oil, avocados, and nuts can further support healthy cholesterol levels and overall cardiovascular health.

Equally important is the mind-heart connection. Stress has a significant impact on the heart, making stress management crucial. Prioritizing small moments of relaxation can make a big difference in your overall health. Simple practices like deep breathing, five-minute meditations, or light stretching can reduce stress levels and support heart health. Don't underestimate the power of joy — laughing, connecting with loved ones, or taking a peaceful walk in nature can also provide unexpected benefits for your heart.

Having one month to focus on heart health is good, but it's vital to take care of your heart year-round. Every day is a new opportunity to make heart-healthy choices. Small, intentional steps — whether it's moving more, eating better, or finding moments of peace — can keep your heart strong and establish a rhythm for a happier, healthier life.

Sources:
nhlbi.nih.gov
heart.org

Snack Swaps for Better Blood Pressure

We all love crispy, crunchy snacks. But if you have high blood pressure, it's worth rethinking salty favorites. The good news? A heart-healthy diet doesn't have to be bland! Whether it's game day or a quick bite between meals, there are plenty of healthy, delicious, satisfying snack options.

Foods high in potassium and magnesium can help manage blood pressure and lower the risk of heart disease. Try these tasty alternatives:

- Sweet potato fries or chips, lightly seasoned
- Crunchy roasted chickpeas
- Unsalted pistachios
- Fresh fruit
- Carrot sticks with hummus
- Broccoli with Greek yogurt dip

The key to heart-smart snacking? Ditch the extra salt and choose nutrient-rich foods instead. When you snack smarter, you can enjoy the benefits of better health!

Sources:
[healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)
[teladoc.com](https://www.teladoc.com)
[summitmedicalclinic.com](https://www.summitmedicalclinic.com)





Foods Your Heart Will Love

What you eat has a huge impact on your heart. Create meals using these delicious, heart-healthy ingredients:

- **Leafy greens.** Spinach and kale are rich in vitamin K and nitrates, which help improve blood flow and maintain healthy arteries.
- **Berries.** Blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries are filled with antioxidants that combat inflammation and lower blood pressure.
- **Fatty fish.** Salmon, mackerel, and sardines provide omega-3 fatty acids, which can reduce triglycerides and protect against heart disease.
- **Nuts.** Walnuts and almonds are packed with healthy fats, fiber, and magnesium, all essential for a steady heart rhythm and lower cholesterol.
- **Whole grains.** Oats, quinoa, and brown rice help manage cholesterol levels and support artery health.
- **Dark chocolate.** In moderation, dark chocolate is full of flavonoids that improve heart function and boost circulation.

Try to incorporate more heart-healthy foods into your daily meals and snacks. Start with the flavorful recipe on the next page, and for more inspiration, search “heart-healthy recipes” online or check out cookbooks from your local library.

Sources:
nhlbi.nih.gov
heart.org



RECIPE

Lemon Garlic Chicken with Veggies

Ingredients

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts,
sliced in half for quicker cooking
1 tbsp olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 lemon, juiced
1 tsp dried oregano
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1 cup broccoli florets
1 zucchini, sliced

Directions

1. **Marinate the chicken.** In a bowl, mix olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, oregano, salt, and pepper. Add chicken breasts and coat well. Let marinate for 10 minutes.
2. **Cook the chicken.** Heat a non-stick skillet over medium heat. Place chicken in the pan, cooking for 5-6 minutes per side or until cooked through and golden brown.
3. **Add veggies.** Add cherry tomatoes, broccoli, and zucchini to the skillet with the chicken. Sauté for 4-5 minutes or until veggies are tender but still crisp.
4. **Serve.** Transfer to a plate and garnish with additional lemon juice if desired.

Fall in Love with Yourself

It's easy for us to criticize ourselves, especially when we make mistakes or don't meet expectations, but too much negative self-talk is toxic. Nurturing a more positive relationship with yourself can significantly boost your well-being, confidence, and overall happiness.

When you prioritize activities that uplift your spirit, you create a nurturing environment for personal growth and well-being. Some ideas include:

- **Daily affirmations.** Remind yourself of your worth and strengths. Speaking kind words to yourself can reduce your tendency toward toxic self-talk.
- **Scheduling self-care activities.** This could be indulging in a relaxing bubble bath, reading a few chapters of a book, or cooking your favorite meal.
- **Journaling.** Writing down your thoughts and feelings leads to self-reflection, which can help you understand what makes you feel valued and appreciated.
- **Embracing joy.** Whether it's exploring nature on a hike, spending time with friends, or engaging in creative pursuits like painting, doing what you love connects you to your authentic self.

Remember, self-love is the foundation for all healthy relationships. When you honor your own needs and show yourself compassion and acceptance, you set the tone for how you want others to treat you.

Source:
mhanational.org





Calm Your Mind, Brighten Your Day!

Staying calm is the secret to staying happy. When we feel overwhelmed, it's harder to think clearly and tackle daily tasks. When we're clear-headed, we can make better decisions, meet our goals, and feel fulfilled.

Stress is a normal part of life, but it doesn't have to take over. When you're feeling anxious, angry, or overwhelmed, try these simple and effective ways to relax and reset:

- **Name the feeling.** Writing down what you're experiencing can reduce its intensity and help you regain control.
- **Breathe deeply.** Slow your breathing to six or seven breaths per minute. Inhaling deeply can work wonders for calming your mind.
- **Engage your senses.** Tune into your surroundings — notice the sounds, smells, and textures around you.
- **Hold a meaningful object.** A special keepsake can offer comfort.
- **Get outside.** Fresh air works like magic.
- **Squeeze a stress ball.** Physical relief can ease tension.
- **Smell lemon.** It's proven to lower your heart rate and promote calmer feelings.
- **Dance or sing it out!** Letting loose with your favorite music can help you release pent-up emotions and boost your mood.

Sources:
experiencelife.lifetime.life
healthline.com

Heart-Pumping Cardio at Home

Cardiovascular exercise offers countless benefits, from improved heart health to better sleep. While outdoor activities like running or cycling may not be ideal when it's rainy or cold, there are plenty of indoor alternatives that can give your heart a good workout.

If you have access to a treadmill or stationary bike, jogging, running, or cycling are great options. You can also try jumping jacks, squats, mountain climbers, burpees, or jogging in place. A jump rope is a fun, effective tool for home workouts. Dancing to your favorite music can also boost energy and mood!

Start with 5–7 minutes of gentle stretches to warm up. For moderate-intensity cardio, aim for 65–70% of your maximum heart rate (220 minus your age) and about 100 steps per minute. For high-intensity, hit 76–95% of your max heart rate.

Stay safe by clearing your space, wearing non-slip shoes, and hydrating before, during, and after exercise. After your workout, cool down and stretch. Listen to your body, and enjoy building a stronger, healthier you!

Sources:
health.clevelandclinic.org/
medicalnewstoday.com



MONTHLY QUIZ

1. Which of the following activities is good for your heart?

- A. Watching television at night
- B. Going for a daily walk
- C. Eating salty snacks
- D. Playing games on your phone

2. Which of the following foods is highest in omega-3 fatty acids?

- A. Chicken
- B. Blueberries
- C. Salmon
- D. Wheat bread

3. Which of the following is a simple self-love practice you can start today?

- A. Daily affirmations
- B. Skipping meals
- C. Criticizing yourself
- D. Ignoring your needs

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1. B; 2. C; 3. A

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