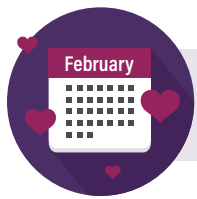


25 Ways To Take Part in Heart Month

#OurHearts
are healthier together

Each February, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) marks American Heart Month by raising awareness about heart health and urging Americans to reduce their risk for developing heart disease. Taking care of your heart health has never been more important and there's a lot you can do to prevent heart disease. Encourage others to join you. More work needs to be done—and you can help!

There are dozens of ways to spread heart health messages during February and beyond. Here are a few:



Help Share Heart Health Messages. Check out these ideas to honor American Heart Month.

- 1 Join the #OurHearts movement** by [sharing on social media](#) how you're working with friends or family to be heart healthy. Encourage your friends and family to as well. Be sure to use the hashtag!
- 2 Wear red on the first Friday of February** for National Wear Red Day to raise awareness about heart disease and encourage others to do the same. Use [NHLBI's social media materials](#) to help spread the word.
- 3 Set up an online support group with friends far and wide** to encourage each other in your goals to manage your weight, eat healthier, quit smoking, or work out.
- 4 Commit to a walking schedule** with a friend or family member, even if you can't walk together.
- 5 Challenge your organization to participate in a "steps" contest.** Use activity trackers to see which team takes the most steps.
- 6 Share NHLBI's Heart Month [video](#)** on social media or play it before your next team meeting to encourage colleagues to work together for a healthier heart.
- 7 Try a new recipe weekly.** Ask friends and family to share their favorite heart-healthy recipe with you. NHLBI offers a variety of [recipes](#) on its website.
- 8 Be social.** Use [NHLBI's Heart Month social media resources](#) to promote Heart Month to your friends and followers.
- 9 Make television watching more active** by doing jumping jacks or push-ups during the commercials, or just standing up and stretching.
- 10 Sign a social support contract** with three family members or friends who also want to lose weight.
- 11 Blog about it.** Write a blog post about Heart Month, the risk factors for heart disease, and how you're making heart-healthy changes in your life.
- 12 Attend an online cooking class** with friends and learn new heart-healthy recipes. Or sign up your kids for one!
- 13 Plan a date** to go on a hike or cook a heart-healthy meal with your loved one on Valentine's Day.



- 14 **Write an article** for your organization's newsletter or the local newspaper about Heart Month and ways to keep your heart healthy. Don't have time? NHLBI has [**pre-written articles**](#) you can use.
- 15 **Send a press release** to your local paper to promote local Heart Month activities within your community, and pitch them stories of how community members are taking steps to prevent heart disease.
- 16 **Post flyers** with heart-healthy messages at local clinics or pharmacies.
- 17 **Create a Pinterest board** with heart-healthy recipes and share it with your organization, friends, and family. Make it a public board and encourage others to add their favorite recipes. See [**The Heart Truth's® Pinterest board**](#) for other ideas you can repin.
- 18 **Ask if you can insert a fact sheet** with heart-health information in grocery bags or prescription bags at your local grocery store or pharmacy.
- 19 **Share NHLBI's slides** as part of a heart-health, online educational presentation, distribute during faith-based services, or show on informational screens such as those in local clinics, or anywhere there are screens to share information.
- 20 **Encourage your local representatives to post statistics** about [**coronary heart disease in your state**](#) on their social media sites.
- 21 **Ask health care providers to give a presentation to your organization** about ways to prevent heart disease.
- 22 **Host an online community event** where families can be active and learn about local health resources.
- 23 **Partner with a local hospital to do heart screenings** such as those for blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, and body mass index (BMI).
- 24 **Work with local recreation and fitness centers** to spread the word online about the importance of physical activity to prevent heart disease.
- 25 **Use NHLBI's Heart Month materials.**
Share the materials with your organization's members, your workplace wellness team, and other health advocates to encourage them to champion Heart Month.

Find graphics, videos, flyers,
and article samples at
[**nhlbi.nih.gov/heartmonth**](https://nhlbi.nih.gov/heartmonth)



28 Days Toward a Healthy Heart

Try one of these tips each day for a month, then keep up the momentum and make your favorites part of your regular routine.

#OurHearts
are healthier together

Day 1

Call a friend and join the #OurHearts movement.



Day 2

Make a heart-healthy snack.

Day 3

Schedule your annual physical. Discuss your heart health goals with your doctor.



Day 4

Squat it out. Do 1 minute of squats.



Day 5

Sport red today for National Wear Red Day.



Day 6

Make today a salt-free day. Use herbs for flavor instead of salt.



Day 7

Visit Smokefree.gov to take the first step to quitting smoking.



Day 8

Get your blood pressure checked.



Day 9

Walk an extra 15 minutes today.



Day 10

Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity today.



Day 11

Plan your menu for the week with [heart-healthy recipes](#).



Day 12

Reduce stress using [relaxation techniques](#).



Day 13

Give the elevator a day off and take the stairs.



Day 14

Protect your sweetheart's heart: Plan a heart-healthy date.



Day 15

Swap the sweets for a piece of fruit for dessert.



Day 16

Stress less. Practice mindful meditation for 10 minutes.

Day 17

Head to bed with enough time to get a full 7-8 hours of sleep.



Day 18

Add a stretch break to your calendar to increase your flexibility.



Day 19

Eat vegetarian for a day.



Day 20

Share a funny video or joke that makes you laugh.

Day 21

Dance for 15 minutes to your favorite music.



Day 22

Call a relative and ask about your family health history.



Day 23

March in place during commercial breaks to get your heart going.



Day 24

Get a tape measure and find out the size of your waist.

Day 25

Ask a family member or neighbor to join you for a walk.



Day 26

Fill half of your lunch and dinner plates with vegetables.



Day 27

See how many push-ups you can do in 1 minute.

Day 28

Pay it forward and tell a friend about [The Heart Truth](#).



Taking Care of Our Hearts, Together

#OurHearts
are healthier together

Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States, causing one in four deaths each year. But there's a lot you can do to live a heart-healthy life—and connecting with others can make your efforts even more successful.



Studies show that if you join forces with people at home or online, you have a better chance of staying motivated. Best of all, you don't have to make big changes all at once. Small steps can get you where you want to go. Gather your friends and family and make a commitment to your heart health, together.

Here's How to Start:

Move more

Get *at least* 2½ hours of physical activity each week—that's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. In addition, do muscle strengthening exercises at least 2 days a week. Can't carve out a lot of time in your day? Don't chuck your goal, chunk it! Try 5, 10, or 15 minutes a few times a day. Some physical activity is better than none.

Be active, together:

Get creative. Invite a colleague to keep you on track. Text each other a reminder to go for a walk or take an online exercise class together. Grab your kids and do jumping jacks, shoot some hoops, or dance. People with friends or family who support their efforts to be physically active are more likely to be successful, studies show.



Eat healthy foods

A healthy diet that is low in sodium and saturated fat is key to heart disease prevention. Try the highly rated Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan. It recommends:

- Eating vegetables, fruits, and whole grains
- Eating fish, poultry, beans, nuts, vegetable oils, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products
- Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat and sodium
- Limiting sugar and other sweeteners.

Find heart-healthy DASH recipes at:
[healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov](https://www.hearttruth.gov/healthy-eating)

Eat healthy, together:

When you get fast food, ask for a salad instead of fries, and don't get the "deluxe" sandwich. Start your meal with a salad or appetizer of veggies so you'll have something healthy first. Studies suggest that we tend to eat like our friends and family. Your healthy choices may inspire those around you.



Aim for a healthy weight

Being overweight is hard on your heart. It increases your risk of having heart disease, a stroke, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Choosing heart-healthy foods and getting regular exercise will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Manage weight, together:

A study of one popular weight loss program showed that participants who were the most connected with others in the program's online community lost the most weight. Join an online weight loss program with a buddy, or sign "social support" agreements with three family members or friends. Be sure your agreement includes ways to reduce stress, which affects energy and hunger and, if chronic, can make your body store more fat.



Reduce stress and improve sleep

Stress can contribute to high blood pressure and other heart risks.

Not getting enough sleep or regularly getting poor quality sleep increases the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions. Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep a night.

Manage sleep and stress, together:

Practicing meditation, being more physically active, doing relaxation therapy, and talking with someone you trust can help you cope with stress and sleep better. Find a friend or family member who shares your goals. Together, take steps to lower your stress and follow healthy sleep practices, like having a regular bedtime and not eating late at night.



Quit smoking

The chemicals in tobacco smoke harm your heart and blood vessels in many ways. Quitting is hard, but many people have succeeded, and you can too. Set a quit date and let those close to you know about it. Ask your family and friends for support in your effort.

Be smoke-free, together:

The websites [BeTobaccoFree.hhs.gov](https://www.be tobacco free.hhs.gov) and [Smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov) have many free resources, including apps and a chat line, to help you connect with others trying to quit. To keep your hands busy and be with others when you get urges, consider taking an online class for an activity like sewing, knitting, woodworking, art, or music.



Know your numbers

Meet your heart health goals by keeping track of how much you exercise, your blood pressure, your cholesterol numbers—all of which can impact your heart health—and tell your doctor how you're doing.

Track your heart health stats, together:

Keeping a log of your blood pressure, weight goals, physical activity, and if you have diabetes, your blood sugars, will help you stay on a heart-healthy track. Ask your friends or family to join you in the effort. Check out NHLBI's **Healthy Blood Pressure for Healthy Hearts: Tracking Your Numbers worksheet and other materials** at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension



Figure 1-5

Customizing the *Dietary Guidelines Framework*

The *Dietary Guidelines* approach of providing a framework—not prescriptive details—ensures that its recommendations can “meet people where they are,” from personal preferences to cultural foodways, and including budgetary considerations. The examples below are a sample of the range of options in each food group—to be eaten in nutrient-dense forms. Additional examples are listed under [Table A3-2](#) in [Appendix 3](#).

Vegetables

Vegetables

- **Dark-Green Vegetables:** All fresh, frozen, and canned dark-green leafy vegetables and broccoli, cooked or raw: for example, amaranth leaves, bok choy, broccoli, chamnamul, chard, collards, kale, mustard greens, poke greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, taro leaves, turnip greens, and watercress.
- **Red and Orange Vegetables:** All fresh, frozen, and canned red and orange vegetables or juice, cooked or raw: for example, calabaza, carrots, red or orange bell peppers, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, 100% tomato juice, and winter squash.
- **Beans, Peas, Lentils:** All cooked from dry or canned beans, peas, chickpeas, and lentils: for example, black beans, black-eyed peas, bayo beans, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), edamame, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, mung beans, pigeon peas, pinto beans, and split peas. Does not include green beans or green peas.
- **Starchy Vegetables:** All fresh, frozen, and canned starchy vegetables: for example, breadfruit, burdock root, cassava, corn, jicama, lotus root, lima beans, plantains, white potatoes, salsify, taro root (dasheen or yautia), water chestnuts, yam, and yucca.
- **Other Vegetables:** All other fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables, cooked or raw: for example, asparagus, avocado, bamboo shoots, beets, bitter melon, Brussels sprouts, cabbage (green, red, napa, savoy), cactus pads (nopales), cauliflower, celery, chayote (mirliton), cucumber, eggplant, green beans, kohlrabi, luffa, mushrooms, okra, onions, radish, rutabaga, seaweed, snow peas, summer squash, tomatillos, and turnips.



Fruits

Fruits

- All fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and 100% fruit juices: for example, apples, Asian pears, bananas, berries (e.g., blackberries, blueberries, currants, huckleberries, kiwifruit, mulberries, raspberries, and strawberries); citrus fruit (e.g., calamondin, grapefruit, lemons, limes, oranges, and pomelos); cherries, dates, figs, grapes, guava, jackfruit, lychee, mangoes, melons (e.g., cantaloupe, casaba, honeydew, and watermelon); nectarines, papaya, peaches, pears, persimmons, pineapple, plums, pomegranates, raisins, rhubarb, sapote, and soursop.



Figure 1-5 Customizing the *Dietary Guidelines Framework* (continued)

Grains



Grains

- **Whole grains:** All whole-grain products and whole grains used as ingredients: for example, amaranth, barley (not pearled), brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, oats, popcorn, quinoa, dark rye, whole-grain cornmeal, whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat chapati, whole-grain cereals and crackers, and wild rice.
- **Refined grains:** All refined-grain products and refined grains used as ingredients: for example, white breads, refined-grain cereals and crackers, corn grits, cream of rice, cream of wheat, barley (pearled), masa, pasta, and white rice. Refined-grain choices should be enriched.



Dairy



Dairy and Fortified Soy Alternatives

- All fluid, dry, or evaporated milk, including lactose-free and lactose-reduced products and fortified soy beverages (soy milk), buttermilk, yogurt, kefir, frozen yogurt, dairy desserts, and cheeses. Most choices should be fat-free or low-fat. Cream, sour cream, and cream cheese are not included due to their low calcium content.



Protein



Protein Foods

- **Meats, Poultry, Eggs:** Meats include beef, goat, lamb, pork, and game meat (e.g., bison, moose, elk, deer). Poultry includes chicken, Cornish hens, duck, game birds (e.g., ostrich, pheasant, and quail), goose, and turkey. Organ meats include chitterlings, giblets, gizzard, liver, sweetbreads, tongue, and tripe. Eggs include chicken eggs and other birds' eggs. Meats and poultry should be lean or low-fat.
- **Seafood:** Seafood examples that are lower in methylmercury include: anchovy, black sea bass, catfish, clams, cod, crab, crawfish, flounder, haddock, hake, herring, lobster, mullet, oyster, perch, pollock, salmon, sardine, scallop, shrimp, sole, squid, tilapia, freshwater trout, light tuna, and whiting.
- **Nuts, Seeds, Soy Products:** Nuts and seeds include all nuts (tree nuts and peanuts), nut butters, seeds (e.g., chia, flax, pumpkin, sesame, and sunflower), and seed butters (e.g., sesame or tahini and sunflower). Soy includes tofu, tempeh, and products made from soy flour, soy protein isolate, and soy concentrate. Nuts should be unsalted.



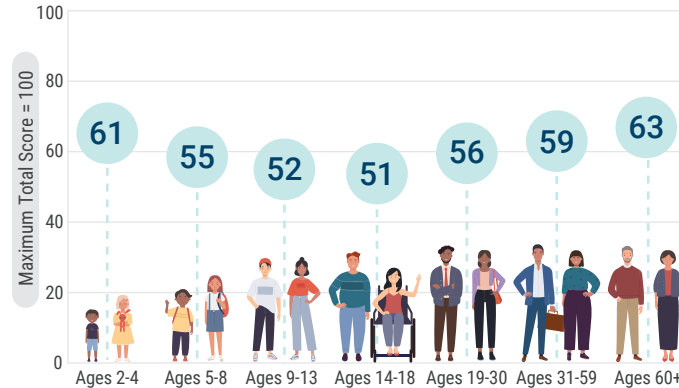
Make every bite count with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

1 Start with the 4 Guidelines:



2 The foods and beverages we consume have a profound impact on our health. Yet we're still not following a healthy dietary pattern.

While the science linking food and health has only become stronger, our Healthy Eating Index (HEI) score has remained low. The HEI measures how closely food and beverage choices align with the *Dietary Guidelines*. Our HEI score is higher early in life and in older adulthood, but we all fall far short of following the *Dietary Guidelines*.



Establishing a healthy dietary pattern early in life may have a beneficial **impact over the course of decades.**

It's never too early or too late to improve food and beverage choices, and to establish a healthy dietary pattern.

» People living with diet-related chronic conditions and diseases are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

Healthy eating is important at every life stage. For the first time, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025* provides recommendations for each life stage, from birth through older adulthood.

Nutrient needs vary over the lifespan and each life stage has unique implications for food and beverage choices and disease risk.

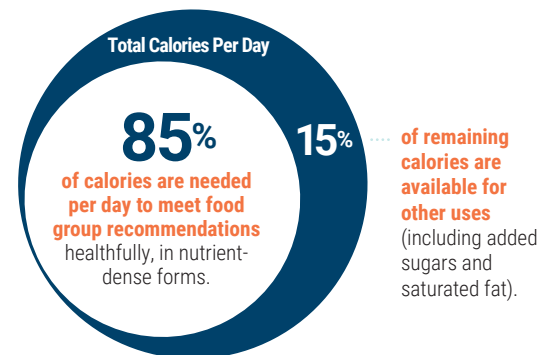
3 How do we "make every bite count"?

Focus on nutrient-dense foods and beverages, limit those higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and stay within calorie limits.



More than half of the U.S. population meets or exceeds total grain and protein foods recommendations, but are not meeting the subgroup recommendations for each food group.

Daily Goals: Most of a person's daily calories are needed to meet food group recommendations with nutrient-dense foods and beverages.



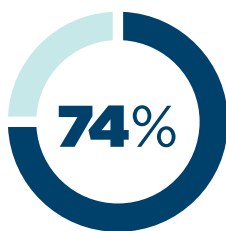
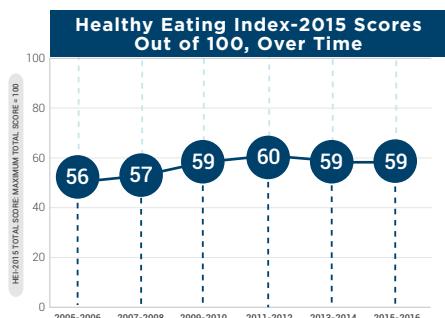
And follow these three key dietary principles:

- Meet nutritional needs primarily from nutrient-dense foods and beverages.
- Choose a variety of options from each food group.
- Pay attention to portion size.

THE *DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS* CAN HELP YOU EAT HEALTHY TO BE HEALTHY

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provide science-based advice to help everyone—no matter their age, race, socioeconomic, or health status—achieve better health by making every bite count.

Americans Do Not Follow the *Dietary Guidelines* and Our Health Is Suffering



of American adults are overweight or obese

6 IN 10 ADULTS are living with one or more diet-related chronic diseases



The Science Behind the *Dietary Guidelines* Represents Americans



The *Dietary Guidelines* is based on science that examines how diet promotes health and prevents disease in:

People who are healthy

People at risk for diet-related chronic diseases

Some people who live with diet-related chronic diseases



And the evidence base reflects the diversity of Americans, including:

All ages and life stages

Different racial and ethnic backgrounds

A range of socioeconomic statuses

Following the *Dietary Guidelines* Can Help Improve Americans' Health

Each step closer to eating a diet that aligns with the *Dietary Guidelines* is associated with:



Lower Risk of Heart Disease



Lower Risk of Type 2 Diabetes



Lower Risk of Cancer



Lower Risk of Obesity



Lower Risk of Hip Fracture

For more information about the *Dietary Guidelines*, visit DietaryGuidelines.gov.

Crockpot Chicken Fajitas

Cook Time: **3 hrs on High or 6 hrs on Low** # of Servings: **4**

Ingredients:

- 1 lb boneless skinless chicken breasts, sliced into strips
- 1 (14.5 oz) can petite diced tomatoes with green chilies
- 1 red bell pepper & 1 green bell pepper, julienned
- ½ of a large yellow onion, halved and sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ¼ teaspoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- For serving: tortillas, sour cream, cheese, salsa, guacamole



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Crockpot Chicken Fajitas

Directions:

1. Pour half of the canned tomatoes into the bottom of a crockpot. Top with half of the peppers and half of the onions. Sprinkle garlic in and top with chicken breasts.
2. In a bowl whisk together chili powder, cumin, paprika, coriander, and pepper. Evenly sprinkle half of the seasoning over chicken breasts then flip and sprinkle the other side.
3. Top with remaining tomatoes, peppers, and onions.
4. Cover and cook on high for 3 hours or low for 6 hours, until chicken has cooked through and veggies are tender.
5. Ladle out 1 cup of the broth in the crockpot (mostly tomato liquid) and discard. Add lime juice to the crockpot and gently toss.
6. Serve in warmed tortillas with toppings of your choice.

Nutrition Facts (does NOT include tortillas and toppings):

Calories: 163 Total Fat: 3gm Protein: 25gm Cholesterol: 65mg
Total Carbohydrates: 12gm Dietary Fiber: 1.6gm Sodium: 554mg

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Café Mocha Smoothie

Prep Time: 3 minutes Number of Servings: 1

Ingredients:

- 1 frozen banana, sliced*
- 1 cup strong brewed coffee, cold (can use decaf or regular)
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt
- Honey, to taste (optional)

*Take ripe bananas peel and slice and freeze for later use.

Tips:

- ✓ You can add ¼ of an avocado, 1 tablespoon chia seeds OR 1 tablespoon of ground flaxseed for a more filling smoothie & a dose of heart-healthy fats!
- ✓ Add more or less ice depending on the texture or thickness you desire.
- ✓ Add a handful of spinach to add some veggies to your smoothie.

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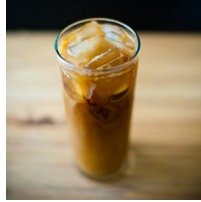
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Café Mocha Smoothie

Directions:

1. Add cold coffee, Greek yogurt, frozen banana, and unsweetened cocoa powder to your blender. Blend on high until creamy and mixed well.
2. Taste for sweetness and add honey to your desired taste preference.
3. You can also add ice cubes if you would like it to be thicker in texture.



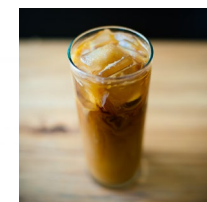
Nutrition Facts (for the recipe does NOT include honey):

Calories: 190 Total Fat: 1gm Protein: 14gm Cholesterol: 0mg
Total Carbohydrates: 3gm Dietary Fiber: 5gm Sodium: 60mg

Café Mocha Smoothie

Directions:

1. Add cold coffee, Greek yogurt, frozen banana, and unsweetened cocoa powder to your blender. Blend on high until creamy and mixed well.
2. Taste for sweetness and add honey to your desired taste preference.
3. You can also add ice cubes if you would like it to be thicker in texture.



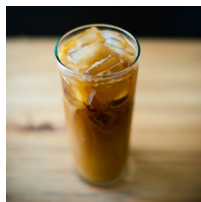
Nutrition Facts (for the recipe does NOT include honey):

Calories: 190 Total Fat: 1gm Protein: 14gm Cholesterol: 0mg
Total Carbohydrates: 3gm Dietary Fiber: 5gm Sodium: 60mg

Café Mocha Smoothie

Directions:

1. Add cold coffee, Greek yogurt, frozen banana, and unsweetened cocoa powder to your blender. Blend on high until creamy and mixed well.
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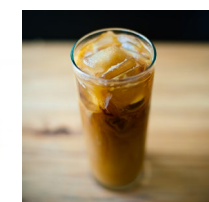
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