



Valentine's Day Facts

Every February 14, across the United States and in other places around the world, candy, flowers and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine.

The Valentine's Day chocolate boxes were introduced in 1868 by Richard Cadbury.

Some popular symbols of love used to express the feelings are cupid, arrows, doves, love birds, roses, and hearts.

Pope Gelasius I of Rome declared Saint Valentine's burial day as the Valentine's Day, in 496 AD.

The girls during medieval times used to eat strange food items, as it was believed that by doing so they would dream of their future spouse or lover.

During 19th century, physicians would prescribe chocolates to their patients, who would pine for a lost love.

The famous gifts and cards company Hallmark, launched its first valentine product in 1913

The Medieval concept of Courtly Love, where male lover would court and praise the beloved through chivalrous deeds and poetry, descended from the ancient traditions associated with Valentine's Day.

Happy Valentine's Day!

Wellness Corner Connection

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Getting to the Heart of the Matter

State the facts: America's Heart Disease Burden

- About **600,000 people** die of heart disease in the United States every year—that's **1 in every 4 deaths**.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women. **More than half** of the deaths due to heart disease in 2009 were in men.
- Coronary heart disease is the most common type of heart disease, killing nearly **380,000 people** annually.
- Every year about **720,000 Americans** have a heart attack. Of these, 515,000 are a first heart attack and 205,000 happen in people who have already had a heart attack.
- Coronary heart disease alone costs the United States **\$108.9 billion** each year. This total includes the cost of health care services, medications, and lost productivity.

Heart disease may be the leading cause of death, but it doesn't mean that you have to accept that as your fate. Even if you have a family history of heart disease, you CAN minimize, even prevent the chances it will happen to you by following a heart-healthy lifestyle. Most of us already know this. And many of us know exactly what we should (or should not) be doing. But it's not always so easy to do. However, when it comes to your health, the choice is in your hands. So as a reminder, here are some strategies to help you protect your heart. It could be a matter of life or death.

1. **Don't Smoke or use tobacco**—smoking or using tobacco of any kind is one of the most significant risk factors for developing heart disease. Carbon monoxide replaces some oxygen in your blood causing your blood pressure to increase and forcing your heart to work harder to supply enough oxygen.
2. **Exercise for 30 minutes on most days of the week**—Even shorter amounts of exercise can benefit your heart if that's all you can fit in. Physical activity helps control your weight and can reduce your chances of getting other conditions that may put a strain on your heart.
3. **Eat a heart-healthy diet**—A diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can help protect your heart. Low fat sources of protein such as beans, fish and poultry can reduce your risk. Avoid trans fats. Read labels and avoid items listing "partially hydrogenated".
4. **Maintain a healthy weight**—Excess weight, especially if carried around your middle, ups your risk of heart disease. Checking your body mass index (BMI) can be one way to see if your weight is healthy. BMI numbers 25 and higher are associated with higher blood fat, higher blood pressure, and an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. Waist circumference is also a useful tool. Considered overweight if: Men = greater than 40 inches; Women = greater than 35 inches
5. **Get enough quality sleep**—Not enough sleep can increase your risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. Make sleep a priority in your life. A minimum of seven hours is recommended. Make every effort to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
6. **Get regular health screenings**—High blood pressure and high cholesterol can damage your heart and blood vessel. Know your numbers. Get checked regularly. Ask your doctor how often you should be screened. And get tested for diabetes.

Take care of your body, your mind and your spirit. Take your health matters to heart. We only have one chance at this life!

Resources: MayoClinic and Center for Disease Control and Prevention



Resource: WebMD

Quiz: Myth and Facts about Your Heart

How Heart Smart Are You?

- During a heart attack, your heart stops beating.
 - True
 - False
- Heart disease kills more men than women.
 - True
 - False
- Heart disease is the No. 2 killer of women in the US, second only to breast cancer.
 - True
 - False
- If you think you're having a heart attack, you should:
 - Lie down and see if you feel better.
 - Call 911 immediately
- Which of the following could be a sign of a heart attack?
 - Neck pain
 - Back pain
 - Chest pain
 - All of the above
- "Broken heart syndrome" is a real medical condition, and its symptoms are similar to those of a heart attack.
 - True
 - False
- The most common risk factor for heart disease in the US is:
 - Inactivity
 - Obesity
 - Smoking
 - High blood pressure
- Approximately what percentage of the US population suffers from some form of cardiovascular disease?
 - 12%
 - 21%
 - 28%
 - 37%
- A Mediterranean-style diet has been associated with a reduced risk of heart disease.
 - True
 - False
- The FDA approved which of the following aspirin regimens to help prevent heart attacks?
 - One baby aspirin (81mg) per day
 - One adult aspirin (325mg) per day
 - One adult aspirin (325mg) every other day
 - None of the above
- You can lower your risk of heart disease by:
 - Reducing your sodium intake
 - Taking vitamin E supplements
 - Taking folic acid supplements
 - All of the above



Go to the JIF Website to find out how heart smart you really are.

Trans Fat is Double Trouble for you Heart Health by the MayoClinic



Trans fat is considered by many doctors to be the worst type of fat you can eat. Unlike other dietary fats, trans fat — also called trans-fatty acids — both raises your LDL ("bad") cholesterol and lowers your HDL ("good") cholesterol. A high LDL cholesterol level in combination with a low HDL cholesterol level increases your risk of heart disease, the leading killer of men and women. Here's some information about trans fat and how to avoid it.

What is trans fat?

Some meat and dairy products contain small amounts of naturally occurring trans fat. But most trans fat is formed through an industrial process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oil, which causes the oil to become solid at room temperature.

This partially hydrogenated oil is less likely to spoil, so foods made with it have a longer shelf life. Some restaurants use partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in their deep fryers, because it doesn't have to be changed as often as do other oils.

Trans fat in your food:

The manufactured form of trans fat, known as partially hydrogenated oil, is found in a variety of food products, including:

—Baked goods —Snacks —Fried food —Refrigerator dough —Creamer and margarine

Reading the food Labels:

In the United States if a food has less than 0.5 grams of trans fat in a serving, the food label can read 0 grams trans fat. This hidden trans fat can add up quickly, especially if you eat several servings of multiple foods containing less than 0.5 grams a serving. When you check the food label for trans fat, also check the food's ingredient list for partially hydrogenated vegetable oil — which indicates that the food contains some trans fat, even if the amount is below 0.5 grams.

What should you eat?

Don't think a food that is free of trans fat is automatically good for you. Food manufacturers have begun substituting other ingredients for trans fat. Some of these ingredients, such as tropical oils — coconut, palm kernel and palm oils — contain a lot of saturated fat. Saturated fat raises your LDL cholesterol. In a healthy diet, 25 to 35 percent of your total daily calories can come from fat — but saturated fat should account for less than 10 percent of your total daily calories. Monounsaturated fat — found in olive, peanut and canola oils — is a healthier option than is saturated fat. Nuts, fish and other foods containing unsaturated omega-3 fatty acids are other good choices of foods with monounsaturated fats.



Random Acts of Kindness Could Have Health Benefits Resource: Prevention.com



Did you ever have one of those days when nothing seemed to be going right? You were late getting out of the house then got stuck in traffic, arrived a few minutes late for work, only to realize you had forgotten your wallet at home and had nothing for lunch? Then a co-worker calls and says "let's do lunch, my treat"... just for being a good friend who helped her out of tough situations in the past. Wow! The stress you were feeling somehow dissipates tremendously. But not only do you feel good, so does the friend doing the random act of kindness. People who engage in kind acts become happier over time, says Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of California. When you are kind to others, you feel good as a person—more moral, optimistic and positive. Lyubomirsky studied happiness for more than 20 years and her research discovered that performing kind and positive acts once a week led to the most happiness.

As for the benefit to your health, it begins when your acts of kindness and happiness give you what is known as a "helper's high". This happens because, on a biochemical level, the good feelings you get will elevate the levels of your brain's endogenous opioids, which in turn elevate the level of dopamine throughout your bloodstream, which gives you a natural high—a helper's high. This helper's high causes your body to release a hormone known as oxytocin. Oxytocin, in turn, causes your body to release another chemical that dilates your blood vessels. The ultimate effect of this chain reaction (that began with one random act of kindness) reduces your blood pressure and ultimately protects your heart.

February 17th is Random Acts of Kindness Day. How appropriate that it would be during Heart Health Month ♥...after all, we now know that doing kind acts actually can protect your heart. Here are a few simple ideas:

- Buy an extra cup of coffee or (healthy) snack for a co-worker.
- Smile and make eye contact with people in the grocery store. Sometimes that smile can be just what they need to see.
- Offer to stay and help a friend clean up after a party.
- When driving, let someone merge into your lane.
- Give a genuine compliment to someone.
- Volunteer to run an errand for a busy coworker.

The list is endless. Why not try it for yourself. Be kind to someone today. Just be sure you do it from your heart. The acts we do will come back to us. Let's start the chain reaction now and see if it catches on!

Recipe Corner

Chicken in Garlic-Vinegar Sauce from EatingWell.com

Braising chicken in vinegar and herbs is a very popular way of cooking in Mediterranean Europe. Often paired with sweet sausage, this is a gutsy, wholesome dish that can be made a day ahead. Serve with whole-wheat couscous tossed with fresh herbs and steamed broccoli.

Nutrition:

Per serving:

315 calories
15 g fat (5g sat, 7g mono)
123 mg cholesterol
9 g carbohydrates
35 g protein
1 g fiber
358 mg sodium
587 mg potassium.

Ingredients:

3-3 1/2 pounds bone-in chicken pieces, (thighs, drumsticks and/or breasts), skin removed, trimmed
1/2 teaspoon coarse salt, plus a pinch, divided
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
7 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup minced shallots
16 large cloves garlic, peeled

1/3 cup sherry vinegar, or red-wine vinegar
1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
2 sprigs fresh thyme, or 2 teaspoons dried
1/2 cup reduced-fat sour cream
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons tomato paste
2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
2 medium tomatoes, seeded and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons finely minced fresh chives



- Pat chicken pieces dry with paper towels and season with 1/2 teaspoon salt and pepper.
- Heat 2 teaspoons oil and butter in a large heavy casserole or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add half the chicken pieces and cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove to a large plate. Add 2 teaspoons oil to the pot. Add the remaining chicken and cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove to the plate.
- Heat 2 more teaspoons oil. Add shallots and garlic and cook, stirring, until the shallots are soft and lightly browned, about 1 minute. Add vinegar and bring to a simmer. Return the chicken to the pot. Pour in broth and then carefully nestle the thyme sprigs among the chicken pieces (or stir in dry thyme).
- Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid and simmer over medium-low heat until the chicken is very tender, about 50 minutes.
- Just before the chicken is done, whisk sour cream, mustard, tomato paste and flour in a small bowl until smooth. Combine tomatoes, chives, the remaining 1 teaspoon oil and pinch of salt in another small bowl; reserve for garnish.
- When the chicken is done, remove to a plate, discarding the thyme sprigs (if using). Stir the sour cream mixture into the sauce; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, return the chicken to the sauce and reheat, about 1 minute. Serve garnished with the tomato mixture.

Top Heart-Healthy Foods

These foods are loaded with heart-healthy nutrients that help protect your cardiovascular system.

From asparagus to sweet potatoes -- every bite of heart-healthy foods delivers a powerful dose of phytonutrients that prevent and repair damage to cells. That's the essence of preventing heart disease.

Salmon

Omega-3 fatty acids.

Grill salmon with a yummy rub or marinade. Save a chunk to chop for a pasta or salad later on.

Flaxseed (ground)

Omega-3 fatty acids; fiber, phytoestrogens.

Ground flaxseed hides easily in all sorts of foods -- yogurt parfaits, morning cereal, homemade muffins, or cookies.

Oatmeal

Omega-3 fatty acids; magnesium; potassium; folate; niacin; calcium; soluble fiber.

Top hot oatmeal with fresh berries. Oatmeal-and-raisin cookies are a hearty treat.

Black or Kidney Beans

B-complex vitamins; niacin; folate; magnesium; omega-3 fatty acids; calcium; soluble fiber.

Give soup or salad a nutrient boost -- stir in some beans.

Almonds

Plant omega-3 fatty acids; vitamin E; magnesium; fiber; heart-favorable mono- and polyunsaturated fats; phytosterols.

Mix a few almonds (and berries) into low-fat yogurt, trail mix, or fruit salads.

Walnuts

Plant omega-3 fatty acids; vitamin E; magnesium; folate; fiber; heart-favorable mono- and polyunsaturated fats; phytosterols. Walnuts add flavorful crunch to salads, pastas, cookies, muffins, even pancakes.

Tuna

Omega-3 fatty acids; folate; niacin. Here's lunch: Salad greens, fresh fruit, canned tuna. Keep "Salad Spritzer" - a light dressing -- in your office fridge.

Tofu

Niacin; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium. Tasty tofu is easy: Thinly slice "firm" tofu, marinate several hours, grill or stir-fry.

Brown rice

B-complex vitamins; fiber; niacin; magnesium, fiber.

Microwavable brown rice makes a quick lunch. Stir in a few chopped veggies (broccoli, carrots, spinach).

Soy milk

Isoflavones (a flavonoid); B-complex vitamins; niacin; folate, calcium; magnesium; potassium; phytoestrogens.

Soy milk is great over oatmeal or whole-grain cereal. Or, make a smoothie with soy milk.

Blueberries

Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); anthocyanin (a flavonoid); ellagic acid (a polyphenol); vitamin C; folate; calcium, magnesium; potassium; fiber.

Cranberries, strawberries, raspberries are potent, too -- for trail mixes, muffins, salads!

Carrots

Alpha-carotene (a carotenoid); fiber.

Baby carrots are sweet for lunch. Sneak shredded carrots into spaghetti sauce or muffin batter.

Spinach

Lutein (a carotenoid); B-complex vitamins; folate; magnesium; potassium; calcium; fiber.

Pick spinach (not lettuce) for nutrient-packed salads and sandwiches.

Broccoli

Beta-carotene (a carotenoid); Vitamins C and E; potassium; folate; calcium; fiber.

Chop fresh broccoli into store-bought soup. For a veggie dip, try hummus (chickpeas).

Sweet potato

Beta-carotene (a carotenoid); vitamins A, C, E; fiber.

Microwave in a zip-lock baggie for lunch.

Eat *au naturale*, or with pineapple bits.

Red bell peppers

Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex vitamins; folate; potassium; fiber. Rub with olive oil, and grill or oven-roast until tender. Delicious in wraps, salads, sandwiches.

Asparagus

Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex vitamins; folate; fiber.

Grill or steam slightly, then dress with olive oil and lemon. It's a pretty side dish.

Tomatoes

Beta- and alpha-carotene, lycopene, lutein (carotenoids); vitamin C; potassium; folate; fiber. For a flavor twist, try oil-packed tomatoes in sandwiches, salads, pastas, pizzas.

Acorn squash

Beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex and C vitamins; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium; fiber. Baked squash is comfort food on a chilly day. Serve with sautéed spinach, pine nuts, raisins.

Cantaloupe

Alpha- and beta-carotene and lutein (carotenoids); B-complex and C vitamins; folate; potassium; fiber. A fragrant ripe cantaloupe is perfect for breakfast, lunch, potluck dinners. Simply cut and enjoy!

Papaya

Beta-carotene, beta-cryptoxanthin, lutein (carotenoids); Vitamins C and E; folate; calcium; magnesium; potassium. Serve papaya salsa with salmon: Mix papaya, pineapple, scallions, garlic, fresh lime juice, salt and black pepper.

Dark chocolate

Resveratrol and cocoa phenols (flavonoids). A truffle a day lowers blood pressure, but choose 70% or higher cocoa content.

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When you do what you fear most, then you can do anything!

