



a community for healthy ideas

## Do-It-Yourself Health: Heart Health, February 2018



### Health & Wellness

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What's one thing we all have in common? That's right, a heart! It drives us each and every day. It circulates necessary blood, oxygen, nutrients and energy throughout our bodies. To emphasize the necessity and importance of caring for our hearts, February is dedicated as [American Heart Month](#). So, for the first post with this year's revamped "top 5 DIY Health tips" format, here are 5 great heart-healthy tips to help you focus on your heart!

### Know Your Numbers

[Know your numbers!](#) Learn what your blood pressure (BP), cholesterol and weight are. The Mayo Clinic recommends getting your [BP screened at least once every two years](#), starting at age 18. They also recommend having your [cholesterol screened every five years](#), starting at age 18. Depending on other risk factors, your doctor may also recommend a screening for diabetes.

### Get Cardiovascular Exercise

Cardiovascular exercise is a key to maintaining good heart health. [The American Heart Association recommends](#) 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise, like running or biking, most days of the week, for a total of 150 minutes weekly. Keep in mind though that you can start gaining the heart

health benefits of cardiovascular exercise with sessions of 10-15 minutes at a time.

Check out our [monthly Move for Health downloadable PDF](#) for some tips and a weekly schedule to follow. Meanwhile, below is a video showing five exercises that can be combined into a simple 15-minute interval routine to get you started. Complete each move for one minute and cycle through the routine three times. Do the move as fast as you can, while maintaining good form. Give yourself a 30-second rest between each cycle.

Video Player

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- Burpees
- Jumping Jacks
- Spider Planks
- Jump Squats
- Single Leg Run (switching legs halfway through)

## Quit Using Tobacco

Stop any and all tobacco use, even if you only use tobacco from time to time.

Tobacco use of any kind is [one of the biggest risk factors for heart disease](#).

## Get Enough Sleep

A [lack of sleep has been linked to many health problems](#), including a higher risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes and depression. It may be hard to [always get the recommended amount of sleep \(7-9 hours per night for most adults\)](#), but if you're missing the mark night after night for weeks and months at a time, it's important to figure out what the problem is and address it.

One common sleep problem to be aware of is [sleep apnea](#), which occurs when there are interruptions to your breathing while you sleep. Uncontrolled sleep apnea directly effects blood pressure and heart function. If you think you

or a loved one may have this condition, get to a doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment.

## Eat Healthy

It's important to know the [basic rules of a heart-healthy diet](#), including:

- Keep sodium intake under 2,400 milligrams per day
- Trade in trans fats and saturated fats for healthy fats
- Eat more fruits and greens (especially those containing potassium and magnesium)
- Add plenty of colorful and fiber-rich foods in your meals

Knowing the rules is good — seeing (and tasting) them in action is even better. With that in mind, we created or curated five simple, tasty recipes that include the key aspects of nutrition to support good heart function.

Our [monthly Eat for Health downloadable PDF](#) includes all five recipes plus a grocery list with everything you need. And you can also check out each recipe (and one video demonstration) below!

### Healthy Fat Guacamole

Video Player



[Plenty of Color Stuffed Peppers](#) (based on a recipe from 21 Day Fix®)

[Massaged Greens Salad](#) (based on a recipe from the American Heart Association's <https://recipes.heart.org/>)

[Honey Baked Apples \(or Pears\) and Almonds](#)

[Squash and Bean Soup](#) (based on a recipe from the American Heart Association's <https://recipes.heart.org/>)

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