

February is American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, but there's a lot you can do to prevent it. Taking time to care for your heart can be challenging as you go about daily life. But it's easier than you think to show your heart the love it deserves each day. Small acts of self-care, like taking walks, getting quality sleep, and cooking healthy meals, help your heart. Research shows that self-care can help you keep your blood pressure in a healthy range and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Love Your Heart and Your Health

What parts of your self-care routine help your heart?

Self-care for your heart is really self-care for your whole self. You can improve and protect your health overall when you:

- Get a daily dose of physical activity, such as a brisk, 30-minute walk.
- Cook meals that are low in sodium and unhealthy fats.
- Take your medications as prescribed and keep your medical appointments.
- Sleep 7-8 hours a night.
- Manage stress through, for example, meditation, yoga, a warm bath, or quiet time with a good book or funny movie.
- Try to reach or stay at a healthy weight by moving more and having snacks like fruits and veggies ready to grab when hunger hits.

How can you make self-care for your heart easier?

The trick is to plan ahead. Build heart-healthy activities into your daily self-care routine. Schedule things that are both good for you and important to you. You might want to set aside time to:

- Cook delicious, heart-healthy recipes. Choose some from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's delicious heart-healthy eating website.
- Go for a bike ride, take an online exercise class, or have a family dance party.
- Make that doctor's appointment you've been putting off. Many providers now offer telehealth appointments to make accessing care easier.
- Organize your medications.

What does it take to give your heart the care and patience it deserves?

Self-care includes being patient with your body. You may not see or feel the results of your efforts right away. But small steps can lead to big progress. When we take care of our hearts as part of our self-care, we set an example for others to do the same. Visit www.heart.org for resources and tools to help you and your loved ones make heart-healthy lifestyle changes



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