

[IMAGE]

It's American Heart Month! Four Ways to Show Your Heart Some Love

By Editorial Staff

Everyone knows Feb. 14 is Valentine's Day, but not as many people are aware that the entire month of February is American Heart Month! So while you're showing that special someone how much you care, don't forget to show your heart some love and help it do what it needs to do every second, every day for what is hopefully a long, enjoyable life: work nonstop without failing. Help make it easier on your heart by yes, taking these four heart-healthy tips to heart.

1. Make Your Heart Work (So It Will Work for You): Any heart health conversation begins with a discussion of exercise, particularly the kind that helps strengthen your heart. Cardiovascular exercise ("cardio") is a great way to strengthen the heart, but any form of moderate-intensity exercise is heart healthy, particularly when it's performed consistently (at least 150 minutes a week). *Tip:* Even taking a brisk, 30-minute walk most days of the week is good for your heart, particularly compared to the all-too-common alternative: sitting around.

2. Handle the Pressure: Blood and oxygen are both fairly important to your livelihood, correct? Well, if the heart and its affiliated arteries aren't functioning well, blood and oxygen don't move as well throughout the body, which as you might expect, can create serious problems – most dramatically in the form of a heart attack or stroke. *Tip:* To keep blood pressure in the safe range, limit saturated fat and sodium (salt) intake, exercise regularly and relieve stress whenever possible.

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Register Mark *3. Let Your Heart Rest:* A good night's sleep is a vastly underestimated contributor to heart health (and overall health, by the way). Research suggests approximately seven hours a night is ideal when it comes to artery health (better than five or nine hours a night). *Tip:* Create a sleep routine that prepares you for relaxing, refreshing slumber.

4. Don't Stress Your Heart: Stress is a killer, literally and figuratively, and in the case of your heart, too much stress can lead to a heart attack, pure and simple. In fact, research suggests more heart attacks occur

on Mondays than any other day of the week, suggesting stress associated with the impending work week / return to the workplace may be the cause. Stress also makes people more likely to abandon healthy behaviors that protect the heart, such as exercising, eating right, not smoking, etc. *Tip:* Try these easy stress-reducing tactics to keep your stress levels low and your heart-health levels high.

You've only got one heart, so treat it the way it deserves to be treated. Your doctor can assess your heart health, and discuss these and other ways to keep your heart healthy this month and every month, year after year.

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