

February is National Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, but it can often be prevented. Adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle can help you reduce the risk of heart disease and its risk factors. Take action to protect your heart by following these tips.

Get Enough Quality Sleep

Lack of sleep or poor-quality rest increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and other health conditions.

Tips for Better Sleep

- Aim for 7–9 hours of sleep each night
- Keep a consistent sleep schedule
- Exercise regularly, but avoid activity 2–3 hours before bed
- Limit caffeine and nicotine

Eat Better

A balanced eating plan can help lower high blood pressure and improve cholesterol.

- Healthy Eating Strategies
- Follow the DASH eating plan
- Choose foods low in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars
- Include lean meats, fish weekly, and two or more meatless meals
- Snack smart with whole fruits, dried fruits, rice cakes, low-fat yogurt, or raw vegetables

Maintain a Healthy Weight

A healthy weight supports overall wellness and reduces the risk of chronic February Heart Month disease.

Ways to Stay on Track

- Choose fruits, vegetables, yogurt, or nuts instead of sugary snacks
- Drink water as your primary beverage
- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly
- Keep a daily food log

Be More Active

- Regular movement lowers your risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Move More Throughout the Day
- Get at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of activity weekly
- Sit less—take stairs, park farther, walk during breaks
- Try strength activities: weights, resistance bands, sit-ups, push-ups, yoga
- Break activity into 10-minute sessions when busy

Stop Smoking

- Even light or occasional smoking harms your heart and blood vessels.
- Steps Toward Quitting
- Choose a quit date and write a quit plan
- Talk with your healthcare provider about support options
- Join a support group through hospitals or community programs
- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit smokefree.gov

Control Cholesterol

High cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease.

Cholesterol-Lowering Tips

- Try the TLC Program (diet + activity + weight management)
- Reduce saturated fats to lower LDL cholesterol
- Limit alcohol (more than 2 drinks/day for men or 1 for women raises cholesterol)

Manage Stress

Healthy coping strategies support emotional and physical well-being.

Stress-Relief Ideas

- Use relaxation techniques with breathing and calming imagery
- Try meditation
- Join a yoga class for mindfulness and community

Manage Blood Sugar

- Stable blood sugar supports heart health, especially for those with or at risk for diabetes.
- Blood Sugar Basics
- Eat whole foods: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats
- Choose complex carbohydrates like whole grains and legumes
- Ask your healthcare provider how often to check your blood sugar

Control Blood Pressure

- Blood pressure above 130/80 mm Hg can cause serious health problems.
- Know Your Numbers
- Check blood pressure at every doctor visit
- Use a home monitor and learn proper technique
- Track readings with a blood pressure log
- Monitor closely if pregnant or planning pregnancy

Practice Self-Care & Find Social Support

- Daily self-care strengthens your heart. Supportive relationships help you maintain healthy habits.
- Build a Supportive Routine
- Do at least one heart-healthy action each day
- Schedule overdue medical appointments
- Ask friends or family for reminders or encouragement
- Join an exercise class or weight-management group

Scripture for the Month

“The Lord sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.”
(Psalms 41:3 ESV)

In Faith & Health
Health & Wellness Ministry
Fountain of Faith Missionary Baptist Church