

# FEBRUARY IS HEART HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

## THE HEARTBEAT CHEAT SHEET:

### Heart Health Tips for a Stronger, Healthier You

#### Why Heart Health Matters

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S., responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths each year. As first responders, we see firsthand the impact of heart-related emergencies—and we know that many are preventable.

#### Key Facts About Heart Disease

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. for both men and women.
- About every 40 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a heart attack.
- Nearly 50% of adults in the U.S. have some form of cardiovascular disease.
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking are the top risk factors.
- About 1 in 5 heart attacks are silent—the damage is done, but the person is not aware of it.
- Early CPR and AED use can double or triple survival rates for sudden cardiac arrest.

(Source: CDC, American Heart Association)

#### Know the Signs of a Heart Attack

- Chest pain, discomfort, or pressure
- Pain in the arm, neck, jaw, or back
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweats, nausea, or dizziness
- Call 9-1-1 immediately—every second counts!

#### Recognizing Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA)

- Sudden collapse and loss of consciousness
- No pulse or breathing
- Start CPR immediately and use an AED if available.

#### Be Prepared: Learn CPR & AED Use

CPR can save lives. When someone collapses and is unresponsive:

- Call 9-1-1.
- Kneel beside the person. Place them on their back on a hard surface.
- Push hard and fast in the center of the chest (100-120 beats per minute).

**Tip:** Some people find it easier to follow the beat of these songs when doing CPR compressions:

- "Stayin' Alive" by the Bee Gees.
- "Walk the Line" by Johnny Cash.
- "Crazy in Love" by Beyoncé and Jay-Z.
- "Hips Don't Lie" by Shakira.
- Give 2 breaths.
- Continue giving sets of 30 chest compressions and 2 breaths.
- Use an AED if available—follow the voice prompts.

(Source: American Red Cross)



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# HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HEART

## **Eat Heart-Healthy Foods**

Focus on fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Try to reduce the amount of processed foods, sugary drinks, sugary snacks, and excess salt in your diet. Follow the 80/20 rule: aim to eat nutritious foods 80% of the time, and allow yourself occasional treats in moderation.

## **Get Moving!**

Regular exercise strengthens the heart, lowers blood pressure, and improves circulation. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise (brisk walking, swimming) or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise (running, HIIT workouts) per week. Also, if you sit for long periods of time, try to break them up by getting up and moving every hour.

## **Other simple ways to stay active:**

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park farther away to add extra steps.
- Go for a walk after meals.
- Stretch or do light exercises during TV commercials.
- Join a local fitness or walking group for motivation.

## **Know Your Numbers**

Monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels. Your vital health numbers give insight into your heart disease risk. Get an annual check-up with your doctor and monitor your blood pressure regularly.

## **Quit Smoking & Limit Alcohol**

Smoking increases the risk heart disease by 2 to 4 times compared to not smoking (Source: CDC). Tobacco damages arteries, increases blood pressure, and raises the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Secondhand smoke is also dangerous. Protect your family by making your home smoke-free.

Excess alcohol can raise blood pressure and contribute to heart failure, and can also contribute to cardiomyopathy, a condition that affects the heart muscle. For women, the recommended drink limit is no more than 1 drink per day and not more than 7 per week. For men, no more than 2 drinks per day and no more than 14 per week is recommended.

## **Manage Stress**

Chronic stress can increase blood pressure and lead to unhealthy coping habits. Practice mindfulness, deep breathing, or physical activity. Spend time outdoors—studies show that just 20 minutes in nature can lower stress hormones! (Source: Harvard Health)