



# In Touch, In Tune

[www.extension.purdue.edu/dearborn](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/dearborn)



February 2025

Dear Friends,

February makes us think about our hearts due to American Heart Month. I have challenged myself to walk 2 miles each day of February thanks to the American Heart Association. This is good for my heart. I encourage you to be more active and sit less in some way this month. Check out Leslie Sansone for Walk at Home programs, if you need a way to start. During commercials, do arm raises, march in place, do leg lifts, or a movement that suits you.

From movement, our thoughts should move to eating heart healthy. I am sharing two recipes from the *Steps to a Healthy You* curriculum that I am offering beginning February 17<sup>th</sup>. I also support reading food labels to pick the food lowest in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Eat raw vegetables, whole fruits, unsalted rice cakes, or fat-free and low-fat yogurt as snacks.

From eating well, I hope that you will manage stress by practicing self-care and healthy relationships. Develop relationships with neighbors, family, and friends. I quote the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's *Take Action for Your Heart: Get Started!*, "Try to do at least one positive action for your heart health each day." Have a heart healthy frugal February.

Warm Regards,  
Marcia Parcell  
Extension Educator, Health and Human Sciences

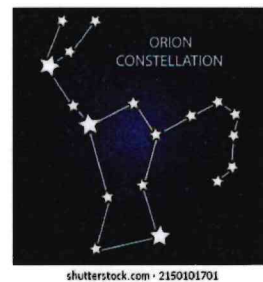
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## DATES TO REMEMBER

- February 4 Thank a Mailman Day—They will appreciate any day that you show gratitude.
- February 7 Wave All Your Fingers at Your Neighbor Day
- February 11 Make a Friend Day. Meet a neighbor in your community.
- February 16 Do a Grouch a Favor Day. We all have bad days.
- February 17 Random Acts of Kindness Day
- February 17 Presidents Day, Extension Office closed
- February 17 Steps to a Healthy You program, Extension Office conference room, 6:00-8:00pm
- February 19 Steps to a Healthy You program, Extension Office conference room, 6:00-8:00pm
- February 24 Steps to a Healthy You program, Extension Office conference room, 6:00-8:00pm
- February 26 Steps to a Healthy You program, Extension Office conference room, 6:00-8:00pm
- March 3 Steps to a Healthy You program, Extension Office conference Room, 6:00-8:00pm
- March 7 Dining with Diabetes 3 month follow up Reunion at 1 PM at Dearborn Hills Church Public is invited to learn about this program and sign up for future sessions.

## 44 WINTER ACTIVITIES TO WORK WELNESS INTO FEBRUARY!

1. Drink hot chocolate with mini marshmallows.
2. Stargaze on a clear night and learn a constellation.
3. Adopt a tree and care for it throughout the year.
4. Build a den. Try a wig wam in the woods or throw some covers over the table.
5. Watch a movie snuggled up together.
6. Have a snowball fight (with cotton balls if you don't have snow).
7. Read a novel together.
8. Ski/snowboard or sled.



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9. What fruit or vegetables could you grow? Buy seeds and get a plan.
10. Visit a library and while away the hours reading.
11. Have a shopping mall treasure hunt. Who can find a red bag etc.?
12. Charity shop challenge who can buy the best thing for the least money.
13. Take a bus to somewhere new.
14. Visit a pet store and learn how to look after your favorite animal.
15. Visit a free museum, there are lots of different kinds.
16. Visit a toy shop and see what's new.
17. Bake a sweet treat together.
18. Do something nice for a friend or neighbor, like run an errand, do crafts together or just visit.
19. Watch the full moon and make up a story about the man in the moon.
20. Have a trip down memory lane and look through old photos.
21. Have a game night with snacks.
22. Go for an extra early walk and watch the sun rise and listen to the birds sing.
23. Make homemade bread and soup. Try butternut squash, sweet potato, or lentil. Mmm
24. Feed the birds.
25. Make a salt dough ornament.
26. Make a snow globe together.
27. Find some animal tracks.
28. Build a snowman
29. Make a stain glass window picture.
30. Have a barbeque and toast marshmallows.
31. Try 3 new recipes.
32. Climb a tree.
33. Feed some squirrels.
34. Make a scrap book.
35. Go bowling.
36. Write and perform a puppet show. Use teddies if you don't have puppets.
37. Make puppets!
38. Make a paper Mache snowman.
39. Catch a snowflake on your tongue.
40. Play chase in the woods.
41. Find a different park/woods to explore.
42. Playdoh snowmen.
43. Play alphabet eye spy.
44. Write a story and read it to someone.



Source: [growinghealthykids.co.uk](http://growinghealthykids.co.uk)

## SAVING FOR FRUGAL FEBRUARY

With all the new trends that are catching on, February is now a time to spend as little as possible on non-essentials while saving as much as you can.

February is a good time to look at your finances after the holidays and get back on track. To build wealth, it's not so much about how much money you make, but more about how much you save.

Where do you begin? Here are some ideas to help you get started:

Track your income and expenses - Most people are shocked when they track their expenses and see where their money is going. This often makes you think twice about eating out or spending money without tracking. It is also important to know how much money you have coming in every month. This can help you balance out your spending.

Cut back on your energy costs - This may not be the easiest change for people but can save you money in the long run. Two ways to help cut costs are limiting the lights in our home and turning down the thermostat. Turn off lights that are not being used and, it might also be a good time to consider changing light bulbs to LED lights. By turning down your thermostat 1 degree, you can save yourself 1% on your bill. Now think about if you turn it down 5 degrees. This might not be the most popular way to save money but will help cut costs.



Go on a money diet - Pay all your necessary bills, but NO extra spending. Think about the things you can spend less on. Getting Starbucks before heading to work, eating out on your lunch break, impulse shopping, etc. All the little things we do without thinking about them add up. Some of them can add up to much more than we realize. Making a conscious effort to cut back on the everyday spending that we do not budget for or even think about can make a big dent in our savings.

Audit your bills - Now is a good time to look at all your expenses. We have a habit of signing up for automatic drafts to pay bills, but are we making sure that is what is being taken out? Also, are you automatically paying for a service you no longer use or need? Have you taken the time to look at your insurance? Lots of times if your agent checks your policy against another company you could be saving yourself some money.



Put more money in your savings - Now that you have looked at your income and expenses and hopefully found some ways to save some money, it is time to move that money into your savings. Even adding half of the savings you have created for the month of February to your savings account will help in the future.

Budgeting and saving can be challenging. One important thing to remember is to start by making a plan. Having a plan in place before you even start looking at your finances will help you understand what you would like to accomplish and make it easier to start achieving that goal.

Source: <https://ksre.k-state.edu/tuesday/announcement/?id=95007>

### **PURDUE INVESTMENT RISK TOLERANCE AND CURRENT FINANCIAL STRESS ASSESSMENTS**

Check your risk assessment in February by following the link for a quick survey. Its purpose is to check your financial investment risk tolerance and current financial stress level in relation to your personal finances. By recognizing your financial investment risk tolerance and your current financial stress level you may be able to take steps to improve your personal finances.

Survey: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bmzIcCuuRWq1Ccu?\\_ga=2.216823702.1898799846.1739455640-377990526.1739455639](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bmzIcCuuRWq1Ccu?_ga=2.216823702.1898799846.1739455640-377990526.1739455639)

### **STEPS TO A HEALTHY YOU**

Here are 2 recipes from the *Steps to a Healthy You* curriculum. This curriculum teaches seven simple steps to following a Mediterranean style of eating. Send me ([mparcell@purdue.edu](mailto:mparcell@purdue.edu)) a review of one of the recipes, if you try them.

#### **Chili Lime Fruit Salad**

Serves: 6

##### **Salad:**

2 grapefruit, cut into sections    2 mangos, chopped    ½ pineapple, chopped (can use canned-discard juice)

##### **Dressing:**

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil (canola, grapeseed, or sunflower seed)	Juice and zest of 1 lime
2 Tbsp. white-wine vinegar	1 Tbsp. sugar (or less)
1 Tbsp. finely chopped jalapeno	Pinch cayenne pepper
½ cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves	Salt and pepper to taste

Place the fruit in a large bowl, cover, and refrigerate. Make the dressing using a screw top jar or plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. Place all dressing ingredients in the jar or container and shake to combine. Pour over the fruit and stir. Serve immediately or chill until serving.

Source: <https://medinsteadofmeds.com/chili-lime-fruit-salad/>

#### **Baked Berry Yogurt**

Serves: 9

1 ½ cups nonfat, plain Greek yogurt	1 tsp. vanilla extract
4 eggs	4 Tbsp. maple syrup or honey
2 Tbsp. flour (all-purpose or wheat flour)	1 cup berries of choice

**Muffin Tin:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a muffin tin with cooking spray and set aside. Whisk together yogurt, eggs, flour, vanilla, and maple syrup until well combined. Fill each muffin tin about ¾ full, leaving a little room. Top

each with a few berries of choice. Bake for about 20 to 25 minutes, or until the centers of each cup are set (no longer jiggles when you move the pan).

**Baking dish:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray an 8x8 baking dish with cooking spray and set aside. Whisk together yogurt, eggs, flour, vanilla, and maple syrup until well combined. Pour batter into the baking dish and top with berries of choice. Bake for about 35 to 40 minutes, or until the center is set (no longer jiggles when you move the pan). Allow to cool for at least 5 minutes before cutting into squares.

Source: <https://medinsteadofmeds.com/baked-berry-yogurt/>



**FEBRUARY 28 IS NATIONAL TOOTH FAIRY DAY-**This is the perfect day to make a dentist appointment for 2025

### ORAL HYGIENE

February is Children's Dental Health Month. However, we should be good role models for children, so here is information on oral hygiene and details on how to improve your oral health.

Proper oral hygiene is essential for healthy teeth and gums. This includes daily brushing and flossing. In addition, you should see your dentist regularly for dental exams and cleanings. Preventative dentistry gives you the best chance for a beautiful smile and long-lasting oral health.

**What is oral hygiene?** Oral hygiene is the practice of keeping your mouth clean and disease-free. It involves brushing and flossing your teeth as well as visiting your dentist regularly for dental X-rays, exams and cleanings.

**Why is oral hygiene important?** Oral hygiene is preventative care. This means you can stop oral health problems – such as cavities, gum disease, bad breath (halitosis) and other issues – before they start by taking good care of your teeth and gums.

Oral health is also linked to whole-body health. For example, if an infection is present in your mouth, your bloodstream can carry the bacteria to other areas of your body, leading to other health concerns like heart disease and stroke. Keeping our teeth and gums healthy is an important part of long-lasting overall health.

**What conditions are linked to oral health?** Research shows that gingivitis and periodontitis can contribute to certain health conditions, including:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Stroke
- Endocarditis
- Pneumonia
- Pregnancy complications, such as premature birth and low birth weight.

Conversely, there are certain health conditions that can have a negative impact on your teeth and gums, including:

- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- HIV/AIDS
- Alzheimer's disease

If you or a loved one has any of the conditions listed above, ask your dentist how to promote and support overall health through proper oral hygiene.

**What are the signs of poor oral hygiene?** There are several warning signs that could indicate oral health problems. The most common signs of poor oral hygiene include:

- Bleeding gums
- Tooth decay
- Chronic bad breath
- Loose teeth
- Gum recession
- Mouth sores that don't go away
- Toothache
- Swelling of the jaw
- Gingivostomatitis, an infection of the mouth caused by certain bacteria or viruses.

**How can I improve my oral hygiene?** Excellent oral hygiene protects your teeth and gums and keeps your smile beautiful. Here are some general oral hygiene instructions to keep your smile healthy:

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Use fluoride toothpaste and a soft-bristled toothbrush. (Medium or hard bristles can damage your gums and tooth enamel.) When you brush, place your toothbrush at a 45-degree angle toward your gums. This helps sweep away plaque and bacteria at the gum line. Be sure to brush all teeth surfaces, including the backs and sides.
- Floss once daily. You can't reach the spaces between your teeth with brushing alone. To clean these areas, you need dental floss. Take a piece of floss that's about 18 inches long. Wrap each end around your middle fingers. Using your thumbs and forefingers, guide the floss between two teeth. Wrap the floss snugly around one tooth in a C shape and clean it using about 10 up and down strokes. Next, wrap



the floss around the other tooth and repeat. Continue this process on all of your teeth. If you have dexterity issues, you can also use interproximal brushes and dental picks to clean between your teeth. **(A note about water flossers:** While water flossers are excellent for removing large pieces of food and debris, they can't remove the biofilm from your teeth surfaces. So, if you use a water flosser, be sure to use traditional dental floss as well.)



- Brush your tongue. Your tongue holds bacteria like a sponge. Whenever you brush your teeth, don't forget to brush your tongue. You can use your toothbrush for this purpose. Or, you can purchase a tongue scraper in the oral health aisle.
- Use an antibacterial mouthwash every day. Antibacterial mouthwash helps keep harmful oral bacteria at bay. In addition to washing away food and debris, it also reduces plaque buildup. Be sure to choose an alcohol-free formula to prevent dry mouth.
- Visit your dentist regularly. Routine dental exams and cleanings are essential for good oral health. Many people do well with six-month visits. But, if you're prone to cavities, gum disease or other oral health problems, you may need more frequent appointments.
- Avoid smoking and other tobacco products. Smoking is a leading cause of gum disease and oral cancer. It's best to avoid these products altogether. If you currently smoke and would like to quit, ask your healthcare provider about treatment options that can help.

Remember, the best oral hygiene routine is one that you can practice consistently. Talk to your dentist about a personalized oral health regimen to meet your needs.

**Which oral hygiene products should I use?** When shopping for oral health products, the best rule of thumb is to look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance. This seal, awarded by the American Dental Association, means that the product has been rigorously tested and approved by scientists in fields like microbiology, toxicology, pharmacology and chemistry.

Depending on your specific situation, your dentist may make personalized product recommendations. Ask your dentist which products are right for you.

*Source: Adapted from Cleveland Clinic*

### **RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION-Talk About: Building Community**

- What's happening in our neighborhood or community right now to make it a better place? How can we get involved in the effort?
- What are some things we could do to help us get to know our neighbors better?
- Let's brainstorm some actions we can take to spend more time with family, friends, and neighbors this week, this month, and throughout this year.
- How can we give our time, talents, or resources to lift up others? How have others given to us?
- What online communities are you a part of that you value? Why do you value them? Is there a way to create some of that same community face to face?
- Ideas from the holidays in February to build community.

*Source: Adapted from The Family Dinner Project*

### **FUNNY FEBRUARY**

- ♥ Do you have a date for Valentine's Day? *Of course! February 14<sup>th</sup>.*
- ♥ Why does coffee always taste better in the second month of the year? *It's Feb-BREW-ary!*
- ♥ What do you do at the end of the last day of February? *You March on!*
- ♥ Why is Lent the best time to run a marathon? *That's when you fast!*
- ♥ What did the stamp say to the envelope on Valentine's Day? *I'm stuck on you*





## Message in a Bottle

Encourage an imaginative act of kindness by making “Messages in a Bottle.” Collect empty bottles (wash well!) and have family members write kind notes to friends and neighbors. Stuff the bottles and leave them anonymously on doorsteps or in mailboxes with a note that says “Messages from a friend to brighten your day! Fill this bottle for another, then give it away!”



Messages from a friend to brighten your day!  
Fill this bottle for another, then give it away!

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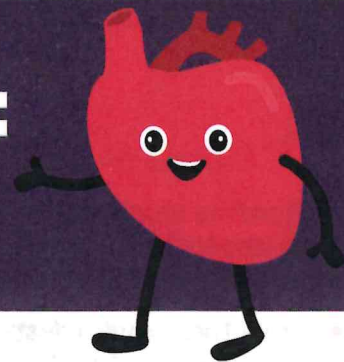
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# Take Action for Your Heart: Get Started!



**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 getting poor-quality sleep increases the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions.**

- Try to aim for 7-9 hours of sleep a night.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Exercise regularly, but not within 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine.



## **Eat Better**

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

- Follow the **Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan**, which can help you create a heart-healthy eating style for life.
- Read nutrition labels to pick the food lowest in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
- Try a mix of lean cuts of meat, eat fish once or twice a week, and eat two or more meatless meals each week.
- Consider whole fruits, dried fruits, unsalted rice cakes, fat-free and low-fat yogurt, or raw vegetables as a snack.

## **Maintain a Healthy Weight**

**Maintaining a healthy weight is important for overall health and can help you prevent and control many diseases and conditions.**

- Choose healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, yogurt, or nuts, instead of sugary or high-calorie snacks.
- Stay hydrated with water as your primary beverage.
- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (such as brisk walking) or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity (like running) exercise per week.
- Consider keeping a log of what you eat throughout the day.

## **Be More Active**

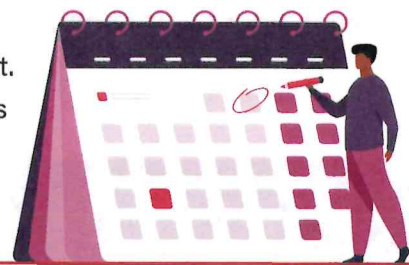
**Getting enough physical activity helps to lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.**

- Adults should spend at least 150 minutes (2 ½ hours) each week doing physical activity.
- Sit less! Take the stairs. Park farther away. March in place or take a walk around the block.
- Try muscle-strengthening activities like lifting weights, working with resistance bands, doing sit-ups and push-ups, or some forms of yoga—whatever works for you.
- If you don't have a lot of time in your day, try being active for 10 minutes at a time. Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts!

## **Stop Smoking**

**Any amount of smoking, even light or occasional smoking, damages your heart and blood vessels.**

- Select a quit date and write yourself a contract that outlines your **plan for quitting**.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about programs and products that can help you quit.
- Join a support group. Many hospitals, workplaces, and community groups offer classes to help people quit smoking.
- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW and visit [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) to get additional support.





## **Control Cholesterol**

**Unhealthy levels of cholesterol can lead to high cholesterol, which increases the risk of developing heart disease.**

- Try the **Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) Program** which combines diet, physical activity, and weight management to help lower high blood cholesterol and improve heart health.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that is low in saturated fats, as these can raise LDL cholesterol levels.
- Limit alcohol consumption. Drinking too much alcohol—more than two drinks a day for men or one drink a day for women—can raise your total cholesterol level.



## **Manage Stress**

**Learning how to manage stress with healthy coping strategies helps improve your emotional and physical health.**

- Use relaxation techniques that combine breathing and focused attention on pleasing thoughts and images to calm the mind and body.
- Consider meditation, as it can help to **lower stress**.
- Take a yoga class to help lower stress and improve mindfulness. It may also offer you a supportive community.

## **Practice Self-Care & Find Social Support**

**Daily acts of self-care can benefit your heart because self-care is heart care. Studies show that having positive social support, close relationships, and feeling connected to others makes it easier to stick to heart-healthy habits.**

- Try to do at least one positive action for your heart health each day.
- Make the doctor's appointment you've been putting off.
- Ask family and friends to text you reminders or encouragement to help you meet your health goals.
- Join an exercise class or a weight management group to connect with other like-minded people and stay motivated.

For more information about how you can take action to keep your heart healthy, visit **[hearttruth.gov](https://hearttruth.gov)**

## **Manage Blood Sugar**

**Maintaining stable blood sugar levels is crucial for heart health, especially for people with diabetes or those at risk of developing diabetes.**

- Eat a diet rich in whole foods, including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats.
- Monitor your carbohydrate intake and choose complex carbohydrates, like whole grains and legumes, to help control blood sugar levels.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about how often you should check your blood sugar levels, especially if you have diabetes.

## **Control Blood Pressure**

**Keep your blood pressure in a healthy range and keep track of your numbers. Blood pressure that's consistently higher than 130/80 mm Hg can cause serious health problems.**

- Have your blood pressure checked each time you visit the doctor.
- Use a blood pressure monitor to measure your blood pressure at home and **learn how to measure it correctly**.
- Use a **blood pressure tracker** to keep a record of your numbers each reading.
- If you're pregnant or planning to be, it's especially important to keep your blood pressure in a healthy range.

