

February is American Heart Month

Heart Month 2026 is a month-long initiative focused on heart health and cardiovascular disease prevention. It aims to educate individuals about the importance of maintaining a healthy heart and making lifestyle choices that support cardiovascular well-being. Heart disease remains a leading cause of death worldwide, and this observance seeks to reduce its impact through awareness and action.

Heart disease in the United States

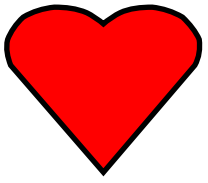
Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups.

One person dies every 34 seconds from cardiovascular disease.

About 1 in 5 heart attacks are silent—the damage is done, but the person is not aware of it.

Several other medical conditions and lifestyle choices can also put people at a higher risk for heart disease, including:

- Diabetes
- Unhealthy Diet
- Overweight and obesity
- Physical inactivity



How to Promote Heart Health



- **Eat a Balanced Diet:** Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy products. Limit saturated and trans fats, sodium, and added sugars.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Engage in physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week. Activities like walking, cycling, and swimming can help improve cardiovascular fitness.
- **Quit Smoking:** If you smoke, seek support to quit smoking. Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease.
- **Manage Stress:** Practice stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, or yoga to reduce the impact of stress on your heart.
- **Monitor Blood Pressure:** Check your blood pressure regularly and work with your healthcare provider to manage it within a healthy range.
- **Control Cholesterol:** Maintain healthy cholesterol levels by following a heart-healthy diet and, if necessary, taking prescribed medications.
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Achieve and maintain a healthy weight through a combination of balanced eating and regular physical activity.
- **Limit Alcohol Consumption:** If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Excessive alcohol consumption can contribute to heart problems.
- **Get Adequate Sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night to support heart health.

Heart Healthy Chicken Casserole

Ingredients

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 bell pepper, chopped | 8 oz low-fat sour cream |
| 1 onion, chopped | 4 cups cooked cubed chicken |
| 2 celery stalks, chopped fine | 1 cup gluten-free corn flakes, crushed |
| 1/4 cup water | 2 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley |
| 1 Tbsp paprika | |
| 1 can (10.75 oz) low fat, low sodium cream of mushroom soup | |



Step 1

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Step 2

In a large skillet lightly coated with nonstick cooking spray, sauté pepper, onion and celery until vegetables are softened. Place half the vegetables into a 2-quart casserole dish.

Step 3

In a large bowl, mix the remaining half of the vegetables, chicken, soup, sour cream and water until combined. Add chicken mixture to vegetables in casserole dish. In a small bowl, combine the crushed corn flakes, paprika and parsley and mix until well combined. Top the casserole filling with the cornflake mixture. Bake for 25 minutes.

Step 4

Remove from oven and lightly spray corn flake topping with nonstick cooking spray. Return to oven and bake for an additional 5 minutes, until topping is golden brown. Remove from oven and allow to rest for 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

Effective Heart Exercises for Seniors

Walking: The Gentle Heart Booster

Walking is arguably the most accessible form of heart health exercises for seniors. It requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere. Regular brisk walking improves cardiovascular endurance, helps control weight, and reduces the risk of heart disease. According to recent studies in 2025, seniors who walk at least 30 minutes daily lower their risk of developing heart-related issues by nearly 20%.

Chair Aerobics: Safe Cardio for Mobility Challenges

Chair aerobics offer a safe and effective way for seniors to engage in cardiovascular activity. These exercises can be performed seated, making them ideal for those with balance issues or limited mobility. They raise the heart rate gradually and improve circulation, key components of heart health exercises for seniors. Start with simple movements like arm raises, seated marching, or leg lifts, gradually increasing intensity as you build strength and stamina.

Stretching and Flexibility Routines

Stretching isn't typically the first exercise that comes to mind for heart health exercises for seniors, but it plays a supportive role in overall cardiovascular wellness. Improved flexibility reduces injury risk and enhances mobility, allowing seniors to stay active longer.

Simple Stretching Tips

Hold each stretch for at least 15-30 seconds and breathe deeply. Avoid bouncing or overstretching. Target areas like hamstrings, calves, shoulders, and neck.

Adult Cognitive Worksheet

Fill in the blank to complete each analogy.

1. Cat is to Meow as Dog is to _____
2. Finger is to Hand as Toe is to _____
3. Sun is to Day as Moon is to _____
4. Teacher is to School as Chef is to _____
5. Fire is to Hot as Ice is to _____
6. Clock is to Time as Thermometer is to _____
7. Pen is to Write as Brush is to _____
8. Fish is to Water as Bird is to _____
9. Pencil is to Eraser as Knife is to _____
10. Book is to Read as Song is to _____
11. Car is to Road as Boat is to _____
12. Eye is to See as Ear is to _____
13. Doctor is to Patient as Mechanic is to _____
14. Milk is to Cow as Wool is to _____
15. Lock is to Key as Puzzle is to _____
16. Hammer is to Nail as Screwdriver is to _____
17. Paint is to Artist as Words are to _____
18. Smile is to Happy as Frown is to _____
19. Sing is to Singer as Draw is to _____
20. Seed is to Plant as Egg is to _____

MEMORY CAFÉ

A safe space for caregivers and loved ones to socialize.

JOIN US!

- HOSTED BY CAREGIVER ADVISORY SERVICES THROUGH STARTING POINT; HELD AT EAGLE RIDGE SENIOR LIVING CENTER.
- EVERY 2ND AND 4TH MONDAY OF THE MONTH, 1:00-2:30 P.M.



For more information,
contact Tami or
Becky at
Starting Point
217-423-6550
opt 4.



StartingPoint

Your Aging and Disability Resource Center

Funding by the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Macon County Health Department
Decatur, Illinois

UPCOMING EVENTS:

January

1 New Year's Day
12 Memory Café at Eagle Ridge 1:00-2:30 p.m.
22 Caregiver Support Group at Randall 10:00-11:00 a.m.
26 Memory Café at Eagle Ridge 1:00-2:30 p.m.
27 Virtual Caregiver Support Group 10:00-11:00 a.m.

February

9 Memory Café at Eagle Ridge 1:00-2:30 p.m.
16 Memory Café at Eagle Ridge 1:00-2:30 p.m.
24 Virtual Caregiver Support Group 10:00-11:00 a.m.
26 Caregiver Support Group at Randall 10:00-11:00 a.m.



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Macon County Health Department
Decatur, Illinois



StartingPoint

Your Aging and Disability Resource Center



Macon County Health
www.maconchd.org
Department (Decatur, IL)

Macon County Health Department
Starting Point
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