



American
Heart
Association.

AMERICAN

HEART

MONTH

CHALLENGE

2025 OFFICIAL PLAYBOOK

WELCOME

Welcome to the American Heart Association's 2025 American **Heart Month Challenge!**

February is American Heart Month, a month dedicated to raising awareness about cardiovascular disease - the No. 1 cause of death for Americans.

In addition to American Heart Month, February is also Black History Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death among Black adults, and hypertension affects Black Americans at some of the highest rates in the world.

The good news is, all Americans can improve their odds of preventing and beating these diseases by taking simple steps like those found in our 28 day challenge. Each day will have a new, healthy activity to try. We hope that throughout this challenge, you will find small habits you enjoy and incorporate them into your life after these 28 days.

We encourage you to share your accomplishments on social media using the provided social media graphics and the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** to join a large network of support. You are not alone, other hearts are waiting to cheer you on!

We are so excited to see how you take on this challenge! Make sure to tag us and use our hashtag in all of your posts so we can feature you on our social media pages!

Have a great American Heart Month!



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LIFE'S ESSENTIAL 8



Life's Essential 8 are the key measures for improving and maintaining cardiovascular health, as defined by the American Heart Association. Better cardiovascular health helps lower the risk for heart disease, stroke and other major health problems. Each of our challenges will focus on a different key measure of health, so stay on the lookout for the icon at the bottom left side of the page.



LIFE'S ESSENTIAL 8



EAT BETTER: Aim for an overall healthy eating pattern that includes whole foods, lots of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts, seeds and cooking in non-tropical oils such as olive and canola.



BE MORE ACTIVE: Adults should participate in 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity. Walking is great for moderate levels of activity. Kids should have 60 minutes every day, including play and structured activities.



MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR: Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (or blood sugar) that our bodies use as energy. Over time, high levels of blood sugar can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. As part of testing, monitoring hemoglobin A1c can better reflect long-term control in people with diabetes or prediabetes.



MANAGE WEIGHT: Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many benefits. Body mass index (BMI), a numerical value of your weight in relation to your height, is a useful gauge. Optimal BMI for most adults ranges from 18.5 to less than 25. You can calculate it online or consult a health care professional.



LIFE'S ESSENTIAL 8



CONTROL CHOLESTEROL: High levels of non-HDL, or “bad,” cholesterol can lead to heart disease. Your health care professional can consider non-HDL cholesterol as the preferred number to monitor, rather than total cholesterol, because it can be measured without fasting beforehand and is reliably calculated among all people.



MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE: Keeping your blood pressure within acceptable ranges can keep you healthier longer. Levels less than 120/80 mm Hg are optimal. High blood pressure is defined as 130-139 mm Hg systolic pressure (the top number in a reading) or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic pressure (bottom number).



QUIT TOBACCO: Use of inhaled nicotine delivery products, which includes traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes and vaping, is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., including about a third of all deaths from heart disease. Roughly 40% of U.S. children ages 3-11 are exposed to secondhand smoke.



GET HEALTHY SLEEP: Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to cardiovascular health. Adults should aim for an average of 7-9 hours, and babies and kids need more depending on their age. Too little or too much sleep is associated with heart disease, studies show.



PRE-AMERICAN HEART MONTH CHECKLIST

GET PREPARED:

You wouldn't run a marathon without training or take a test without studying. So, make sure to review the American Heart Month Challenge and prepare for what is to come. Go grocery shopping. Create calendar alerts. Visualize the next 28 days of living heart-healthier.

GET ON TRACK:

Figure out how you will keep yourself on track. Will you rely on social media to remind you of daily challenges? Will you use the provided calendar to track yours and your friends' progress? The goal is to find the best way to keep you on the course!

GET FOLLOWING:

The American Heart Association will use social media heavily during this challenge, posting weekly challenge reminders and recaps throughout the month of February to highlight the community participating in the challenge. Make sure to follow us on our social media accounts so you don't miss any information, and tag us in all your challenge posts for the chance to be featured!



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AMERICAN HEART MONTH CHALLENGE

OFFICIAL CALENDAR

1 <u>COMMIT</u> <u>TO THE</u> <u>CHALLENGE</u>							
2 <u>EAT</u> <u>SMART</u>	3 <u>LET'S</u> <u>MOVE</u>	4 <u>LEARN</u> <u>THE</u> <u>RISKS</u>	5 <u>EMBRACE</u> <u>BETTER</u> <u>SLEEP</u> <u>HABITS</u>	6 <u>CHECK</u> <u>YOUR</u> <u>BP</u>	7 <u>WEAR</u> <u>RED</u>	8 <u>BECOME A</u> <u>LIFESAVER</u>	15 <u>5 MIN</u> <u>GRATITUDE</u>
9 <u>BREAK</u> <u>UP WITH</u> <u>SALT</u>	10 <u>MEATLESS</u> <u>MONDAY</u>	11 <u>GET 8</u> <u>HOURS</u>	12 <u>BUDDY</u> <u>UP!</u>	13 <u>REST</u> <u>DAY</u>	14 <u>SWEETHEART</u> <u>DAY</u>		22 <u>100%</u> <u>HOMEMADE</u>
16 <u>PRESS</u> <u>PLAY</u>	17 <u>PHONE</u> <u>EATS</u> <u>FIRST</u>	18 <u>FIND</u> <u>THE AED</u>	19 <u>HABIT</u> <u>STACK</u>	20 <u>10K</u> <u>TODAY</u>	21 <u>BEST</u> <u>FRIEND</u> <u>FRIDAY</u>		
23 <u>OHMM</u>	24 <u>LEARN</u> <u>THE</u> <u>SIGNS</u>	25 <u>ADVOCATE</u> <u>FOR</u> <u>CHANGE</u>	26 <u>TAKE THE</u> <u>PLEDGE</u>	27 <u>SWAP</u> <u>YOUR</u> <u>SODAS</u>	28 <u>FINISH</u> <u>STRONG!</u>		



DAY 1

COMMIT TO A HEART-HEALTHIER YOU!

Post a video or the commitment graphic using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.

Tell us who you are, where you're from and why you are participating in the challenge. Invite your friends and family to follow along and offer support...or join the fun!

Make sure to tag our accounts so we can cheer you on!

Find our commitment graphic [here](#).





EMBRACE EATING SMART

Eating smart starts with a commitment to embracing health through food!

Share with us the commitment you are making to eating smart this month. This commitment can be big or small!

Examples:

- *I am committing to not drinking alcohol this month*
- *I am committing to adding one more serving of vegetables every day*
- *I am committing to making all but one meal from home a week*

Share this commitment on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.

Find our commitment graphic [here](#).





LET'S MOVE!

Exercise is one of the best ways to keep your body healthy and release stress. Regular physical activity improves mood, gives you energy and improves quality of sleep.

Share a photo/video of you getting some exercise! Whether it is going on a walk, lifting weights, taking a workout class, gardening, swimming, etc., share your favorite way to move.





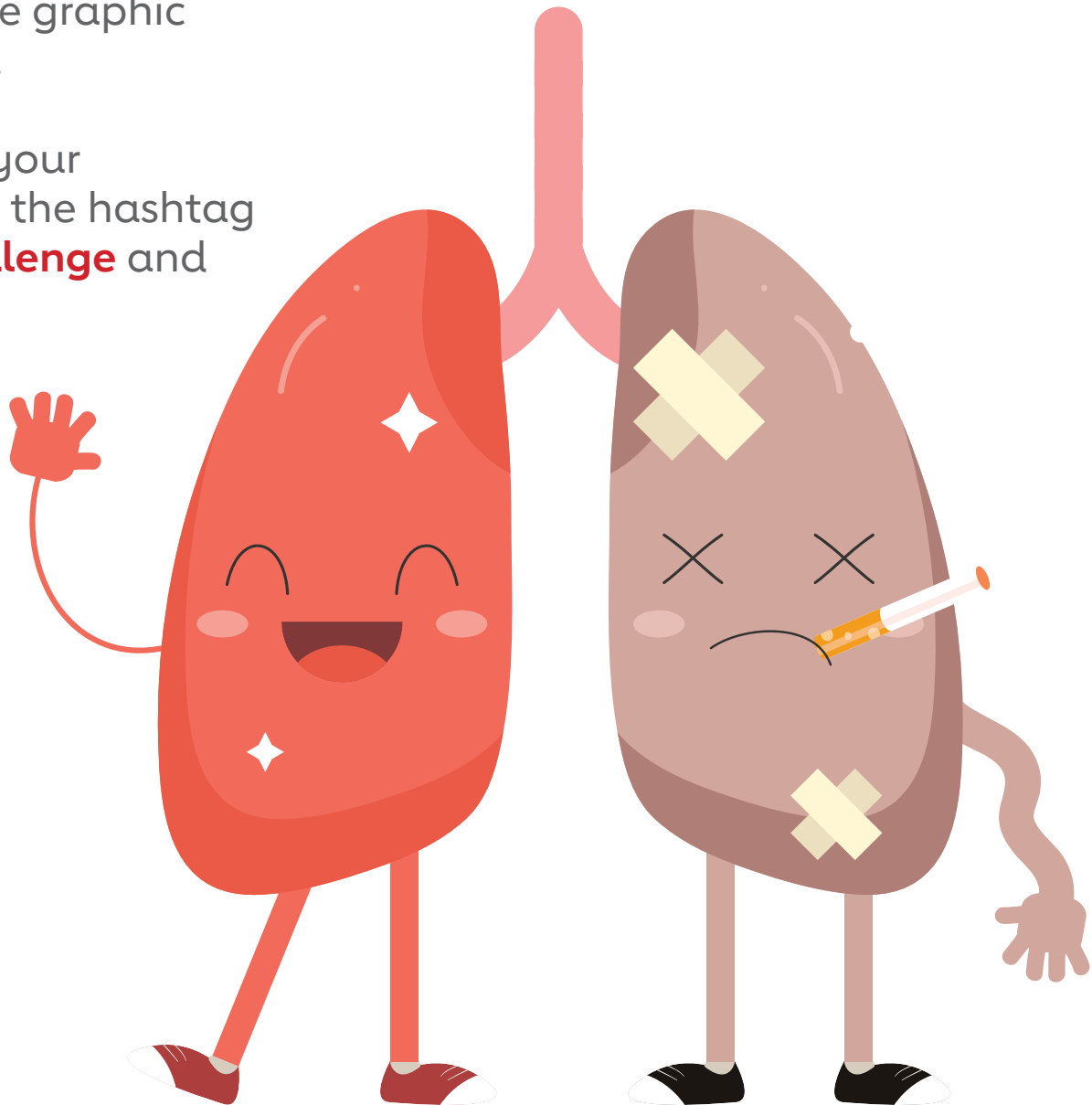
LEARN THE RISKS

Take some time today to learn about the risks of smoking, vaping and tobacco use.

Resources on the risks of smoking, vaping and tobacco use can be found [here](#).

Then, post a photo or make a video teaching others about something you didn't know on social media and encourage others to learn more too. A ready-to-use graphic can be found [here](#).

Share this fact on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** and tag us!





DAY 5

EMBRACE BETTER SLEEP HABITS

You deserve to feel refreshed!

Take some time to learn about healthy sleep habits (why is sleep important? what can you do to improve your sleep? etc.). Identify a new habit you can pick up to improve your sleep and share this commitment on your social media by tagging us and using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.

Find our commitment graphic [here](#).





CHECK YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Nearly half of U.S. adults have high blood pressure (BP), and many don't even know they have it. The only way to know if you have high BP is to have your BP checked.

Take some time to learn about high BP by checking out [this link](#).

Then, get your BP checked! Don't have your own BP monitor? Call your doctor or local pharmacy and see if they can take it or have a free-to-use BP kiosk.

For additional resources, visit [this link](#).





DAY 7

WEAR RED!

February 7 is National Wear Red Day!

From landmarks to online communities, neighborhoods to news anchors, this annual campaign unites millions of people for a common goal: saving more women's lives. Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women. Wear Red - To be seen. To be counted. To be heard. To make an impact. Together, we are stronger than heart disease and stroke.

Are you wearing a red shirt? Tie? Socks? Is your whole outfit red? Show us by posting on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** and **#GoRedforWomen**, and tag us for a chance to be featured on our social media!

To learn more about Wear Red Day, click [here](#).

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DAY 8

BECOME A LIFESAVER IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

As we celebrate the rich heritage and resilience of the Black community, Black History Month serves as a poignant backdrop for the Nation of Lifesavers campaign, aligning the principles of empowerment, community engagement and health equity.

Black Americans have the highest incidence of cardiac arrest outside the hospital and are significantly less likely to survive.

In honor of Black History Month, let's unite to promote heart health equity. Access to CPR and AED training is crucial for every community. Let's turn bystanders into lifesavers, empowering individuals to save lives through CPR and AED training.

Currently, 90% of people who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests die, in part because they do not receive CPR more than half of the time. CPR, especially if performed immediately, can double or triple a person's chance of survival.

Today, join the Nation of Lifesavers and learn CPR.

Watch the videos linked [here](#) to learn how to perform Hands-Only CPR, and encourage friends, family, coworkers, etc. to also learn this lifesaving skill.

To learn more about how the American Heart Association is addressing health equity, [click here](#).





DAY 9

BREAK UP WITH SALT

Sodium pulls water into your blood vessels slowing blood flow, so give your heart a rest today!

Look for foods with low or no sodium. Experiment with spices, herbs, and citrus to enhance the natural flavor of your food. Share the steps you're taking today to break up with salt on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.

A ready-to-use graphic can be found [here](#).





DAY 10

MEATLESS MONDAY

Did you know cholesterol is only found in animal byproducts, including eggs and dairy?

It's possible to stay nourished while limiting or eliminating meat. Check out produce that's in season locally. Stick to whole grains, beans, fruit, veggies and leafy greens for a nutritious knock-out!

Make sure to document your recipe on your social media, tag our accounts and use the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





GET 8 HOURS

Catching ZZZs could be the key to unlocking a healthier you. Amount and quality of sleep can influence your eating habits, mood, memory, internal organs and more.

Tonight, commit to getting 8 hours of sleep!

Here are some tips for getting better sleep to try out if you struggle with getting enough sleep:

- *Increase your physical activity during the day*
- *Try not using cell phones or other devices late in the evening*
- *Find a relaxing ritual for before bed*





BUDDY UP!

Today, let's team up to get our hearts pumping while we focus on improving our health!

Ask a friend, coworker, neighbor, partner, child, etc. to join you in getting some exercise today! A brisk walk with your desk neighbor or a workout class with friends is a great way to get your body moving and your heart pumping.

Make sure to document it on your social media, tag us and your workout partner and use the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





REST DAY

Congrats! You're halfway through the challenge!

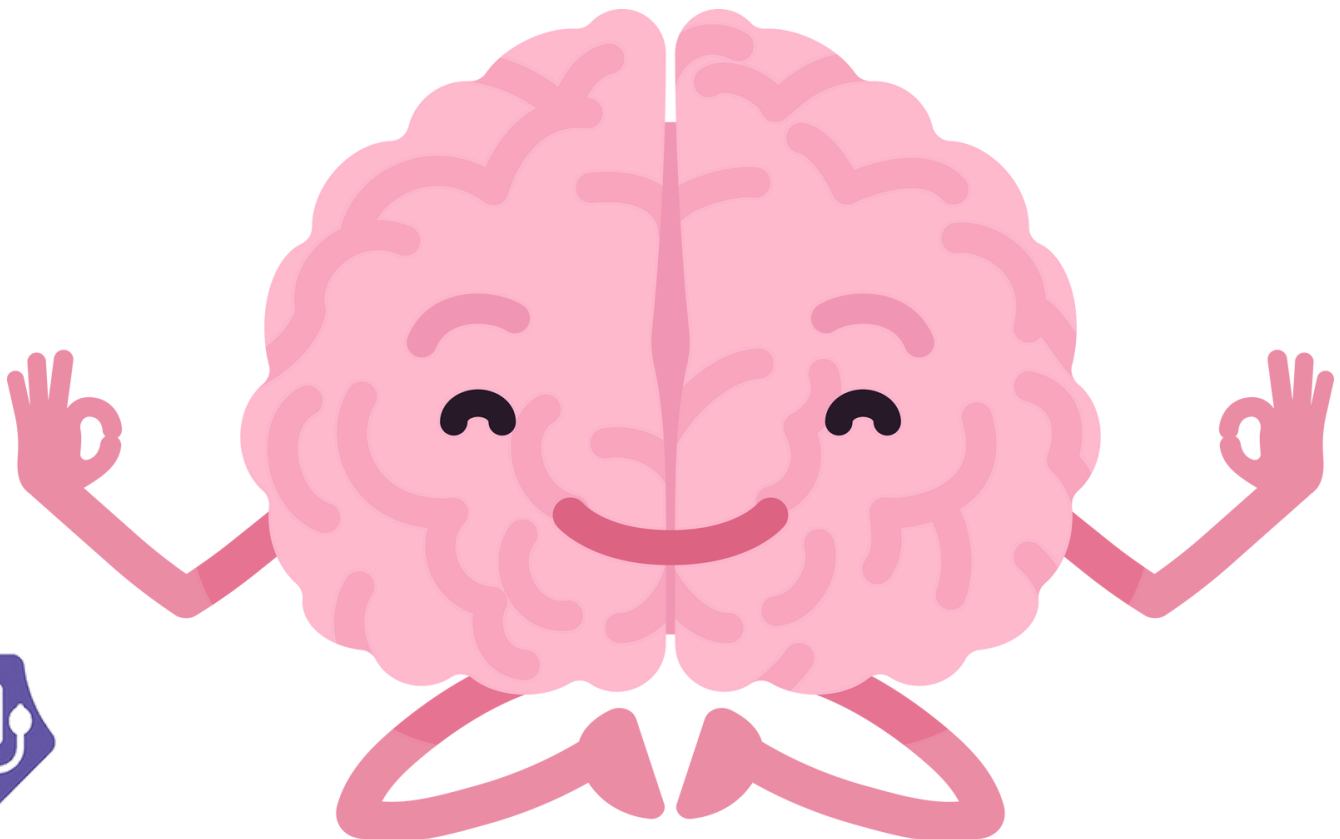
Rest and recovery is incredibly important to maintaining overall health. Show us your favorite way to recover today.

Examples:

- *I like to play with my pets*
- *I like to do my self care routine*
- *I like to take a walk with my friend*

Share your relaxation technique on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** and tag us for the chance to be featured on our various platforms.

A ready-to-use graphic can be found [here](#).





SWEET-HEARTS DAY

Happy Valentine's Day from the American Heart Association to you ♥

On this sweet day, take some time to learn more about sugar by visiting [this link](#) and browsing through the resources available.

But don't worry, we are not asking you to cut out sugar today! Instead, take a look through our [heart-healthy dessert recipes](#) and try one out for your sweetheart today!

Make sure to share the end result with us on social media and use the hashtag [#HeartMonthChallenge](#) for the chance to be featured on our official accounts.





5 MINUTE GRATITUDE

Research has shown that that the practice of gratitude is associated with many positive effects in a person's physical and mental health. Expressing gratitude can improve sleep, mood and immunity, and can decrease depression, anxiety, chronic pain and disease.

Before you go to sleep tonight, take five minutes to write these answers down and reflect on your day today. In five minutes, you can practice gratitude from the heart.

Health: What did your body do for you today?

You take about 8 million breaths per year, based on 15-16 breaths per minute. Your feet can take you up a mountain; your arms can hold someone you love. Take a minute to marvel at the finely tuned machinery of your body and thank yourself for the steps you take every day to keep it safe and healthy.

Eat: What did you feed your body to nourish yourself today?

Was it an old favorite, something you made or something new and different? If you eat three meals a day, you'll eat about a thousand meals this year. Take a minute to savor an especially yummy meal.

Activity: What did you enjoy doing today?

Did you give it your all when exercising today, or find a quiet moment while sitting in traffic to reflect? Take a minute to think back on one particularly awesome moment.

Relationship: With whom do you look forward to connecting?

Is it someone who sets your heart on fire, always has a smile for you, has your back or makes you laugh until you cry? Take a minute to smile as you think about this special person. Then plan to get together or talk with them soon.

Time: What are you doing right now?

Every single day you wake up with 24 brand new hours. The past is history, the future is a mystery and today is a gift — that's why it's called the present! Take a minute to be thankful for the gift of time, including any extra time you have right now for your family or yourself.





DAY 16

PRESS PLAY

Did you know there is a whole list of songs that go to the beat of CPR?

CPR should be performed at 100-120 beats per minute, so have some fun today and listen to [this playlist](#) today to familiarize yourself with the rhythm of Hands-Only CPR. While you're at it, maybe brush up on your Hands-Only CPR skills you learned about earlier in the challenge by watching videos linked [here](#).

Share your favorite song from the playlist on your social media using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** and don't forget to tag us!

Find our sample graphic for sharing your song [here](#).



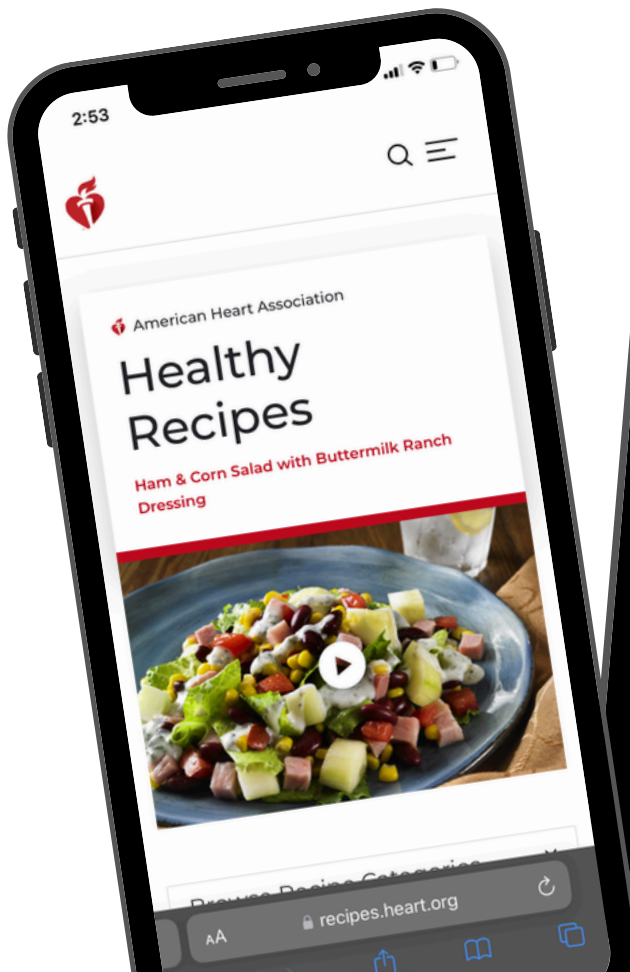


PHONE EATS FIRST

Time to treat your heart (and your taste buds) to something delicious.

Take to social media and share a heart-healthy recipe you love or a photo of you trying out a new heart-healthy meal!

The American Heart Association has hundreds of recipes online for heart-healthy meals if you want to try something new! Visit our website [here](https://www.heart.org) for inspiration.





FIND THE AED

AEDs save lives, and it is important to know what to do when someone goes into sudden cardiac arrest.

Earlier in the challenge, you learned how to perform Hands-Only CPR. Today, take time to learn about how to use an AED. Then, find the AED at your work, gym, school, etc. It is important to know the location of an AED during the event of a sudden cardiac arrest, and being prepared only takes a few minutes.

Make sure to take a photo of you finding the AED at your chosen place, or share a link to teach others how to use an AED. Make sure to tag us and use the **#HeartMonthChallenge**.

Helpful Links:

- *What is an [AED](#)?*
- *Demonstration of [how to use an AED](#)*





HABIT STACK

The goal of habit stacking is to tie (and eventually, stack) tiny but beneficial new habits onto your old ones every day.

We hope you'll use habit stacking to help reclaim your rhythm — to renew your focus on fitness, and maybe put a little extra joy and pep into the process.

Examples:

- *When you brush your teeth, add a few squats as you brush. Then work in other exercises, like calf raises or lunges.*
- *When you go to work or the store, look for a safe parking spot farther from the building so you can log a few more steps. Or if you take public transit, get off a stop early and walk.*

Let us know what habits you stack today and if you will keep them up through the rest of the challenge or even after the challenge by tagging our accounts and using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





10K TODAY

The simple act of walking has incredible health benefits. Walking lowers risk factors for cardiovascular disease, decreases body weight and fat stores, decreases blood sugar levels, modestly improves lipid profile and reduces chronic stress.

Aim for hitting 10K steps today! You can easily track your steps on your smartphone, smartwatch, pedometers, etc. Take a look at the number of steps you took yesterday, and try to add a few of these activities in to increase your step count today:

- *Take a quick walk around your workplace in between meetings*
- *When you go to work, shop, or eat out, park your car farther away from your destination*
- *Take the stairs instead of the elevator*
- *March in place while watching TV or cooking*

Share your final step count today by using this [ready-to-use graphic](#) and the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





BEST FRIEND FRIDAY

Pet ownership has so many benefits such as decreases in blood pressure, improved social relationships and a lower risk of depression.

Show your furry friend some love for the health benefits they bring you by sharing on social with us! Be sure to tag us and use our hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** - you and your pet just might inspire someone else, or be featured on our social media!





100% HOMEMADE

Today, if it comes from a wrapper, can or pre-packaged container, it can't go in your body!

Knowing every ingredient that goes into your body makes it easier to reduce the sodium, sugar and other ingredients that are hard on the heart. No one said being healthy was easy!

There are so many ways to share this on social media!

Examples:

- *Post your meals throughout the day*
- *Post a reflection of the day (How did you feel? Was it challenging? What did you learn?)*
- *Post a photo of one of the meals you had and challenge your friends to try a homemade day too*

Make sure to tag us and use the **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





OHHMMMMM

Research suggests that practicing mindful movement activities such as yoga, tai chi and qi gong may have significant health benefits.

Today, find time to practice mindful movement. These practices can be gentle and may be done by just about anyone, anywhere, with little to no special equipment needed. There are many free instructional videos online to help guide you in your practice today.

Whether it is 10 minutes or 60, take some time to practice mindful movement today. Share with us how you felt after incorporating this new movement, or if you found a new pose you like, take a photo and tag us! Make sure to use the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge** for a chance to be featured on our social media.



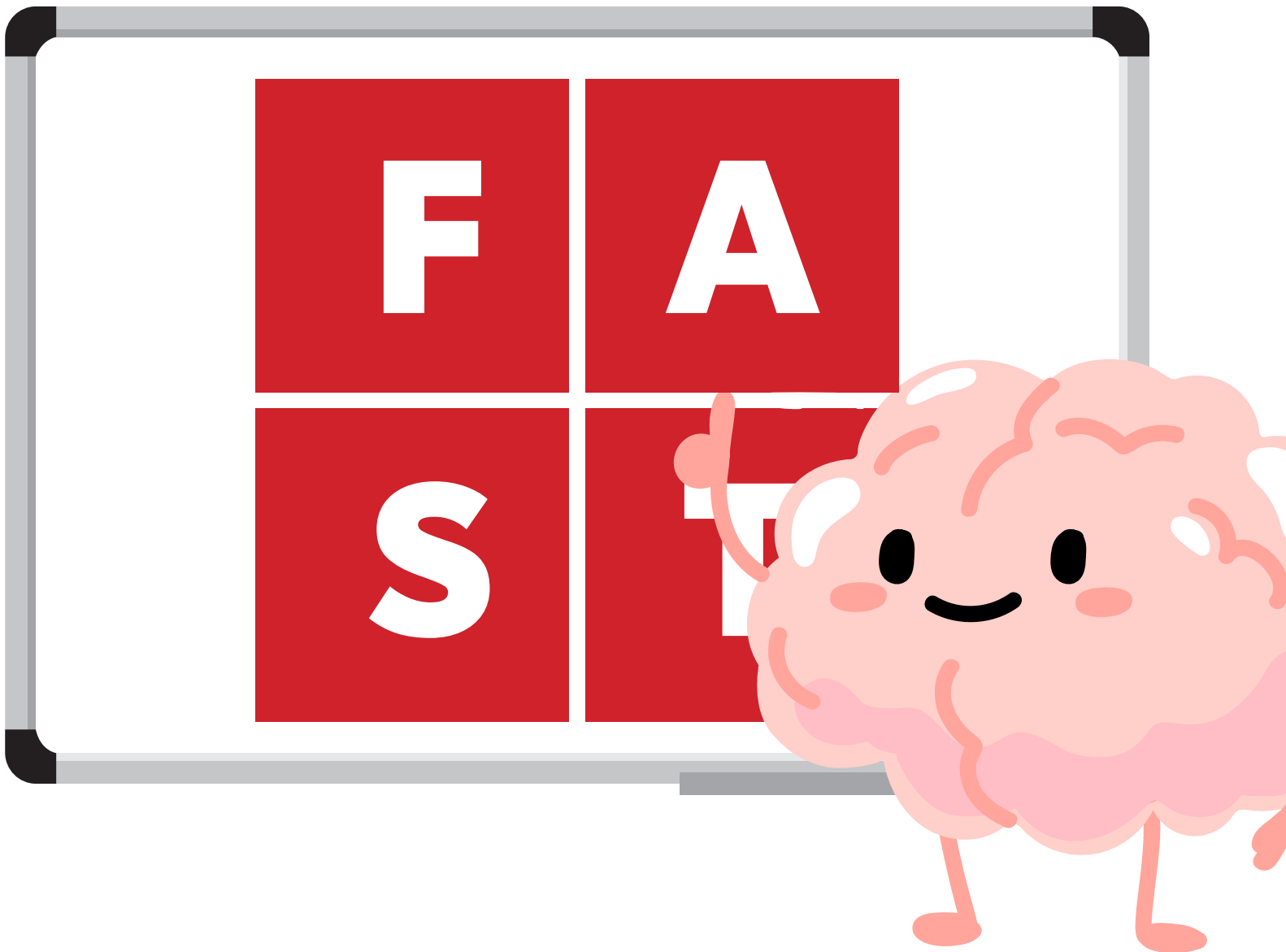


LEARN THE SIGNS

Take some time today to learn about the warning signs of stroke.

Resources from the American Stroke Association can be found [here](#).

Then, post a photo or make a video teaching others about the signs of stroke on social media and encourage others to learn more too using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**. Tag us for a chance to be featured on our accounts!





DAY 25

ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

You're the Cure is the American Heart Association's grassroots network of passionate advocates who promote high impact public health policies by sharing their stories with elected officials.

Today, look through the advocacy efforts of the American Heart Association and consider joining to help advocate online and offline at every level of government in support of life-saving policy.

To visit the You're The Cure official website, click [here](#).

To join the effort directly, click [here](#).





TAKE THE PLEDGE

We want to end tobacco and nicotine use for everyone to lower their risk of heart disease and stroke. It's a goal we call the Tobacco Endgame. We want you to join us.

Earlier in the challenge, you learned the risks of smoking, vaping and tobacco use. Today, we hope you will make a pledge to stop using or never use tobacco or nicotine.

If you're not sure where to start when it comes to quitting, that's ok! We've got you. Check out [this link](#) to find resources to help you come up with a plan.

When you're ready, make the pledge on social media using our [ready-to-use graphic](#) and announce your commitment to end tobacco and nicotine use. Circle which phrase fits your situation and encourage others to reconsider their use of these products! Make sure to tag us and use the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





SWAP YOUR SODAS

Plain water is your body's preferred way to hydrate, and it's naturally sugar free.

Today, swap your sodas or sugary drinks for water. It doesn't have to be plain water - try adding slices of fruit for flavor, or try seltzer or sparkling water if you prefer fizzy drinks.

Show us how you swap your sodas today using the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.





END OF CHALLENGE!

Congratulations! You've made it to the last day of the challenge!

Use today to reflect on your challenge. Is there something you tried that you really liked? Something you didn't? What will you take from this challenge and apply to your life after the challenge?

Then, share your thoughts on social media and let us know what you are planning to take from the challenge into your life! Use [this graphic](#) to announce the final day of the challenge.

Make sure to tag us and use the hashtag **#HeartMonthChallenge**.



REFLECTION

You did it! Congrats on completing the American **Heart Month Challenge**! We hope you enjoyed learning more about Life's Essential 8 and the steps you can take to improve your heart health in simple ways.

While this challenge only lasted 28 days, it's important to remember that the habits you've built over these weeks can have a lasting impact on your overall health and well-being.

Whether you found you enjoyed focusing on eating more nutritious foods, staying active, managing stress or prioritizing sleep, these small changes add up to a big difference.

Improving heart health doesn't happen overnight, but every positive step you take is a step toward a healthier, happier future.

Keep it up, and remember, **it's never too late to take charge of your heart health!**



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For more information, visit heart.org or stroke.org.