

HEALTHY *You!*

Your Source for a Happy and Healthy Lifestyle

February 2026

THIS EDITION FEATURES:

Heartfelt Habits

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Heart Health

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Blood Flowing

Bouncing Back
Together

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Winter Workout

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Independence 





February is all about hearts. From Valentine's Day to Heart Month, February brings gentle reminders to care for your emotional and physical well-being. But here's something you might not expect — being kind to others can improve your health. And it's a habit that brings benefits to both the giver and the receiver.



The Science of Kindness

Random acts of kindness, such as complimenting a coworker, helping a stranger, or sending a thoughtful message to a friend, do more than brighten someone's day. They trigger the release of oxytocin, a hormone that helps lower blood pressure and reduce inflammation, both of which are important for maintaining a healthy heart.



Less Stress, Healthier Heart

Kindness does more than create good feelings. It also helps lower stress levels, which is important because stress raises the hormone cortisol. Over time, high cortisol levels can take a toll on the heart. When you practice kindness regularly, you create a buffer against stress, giving your body and mind a chance to relax and recharge. It is a simple, natural way to support your overall well-being.



Kindness Is Contagious

People who make giving a regular part of their lives — whether through volunteering, mentoring, or checking in with loved ones — often experience stronger emotional connections. These connections help support a healthy heart. Even small acts, done consistently, can create lasting benefits and inspire others to spread kindness, which creates a chain effect of positivity.



Start Small, Think Big

This February, begin making kindness a daily habit. Start a kindness chain at work, leave a surprise note for someone, share a snack, or offer a friendly smile. Every small gesture makes a difference, sending ripples of well-being through your community and your own heart.



RED HOT for Heart Health

When it comes to heart health, color matters — and red foods are some of the most powerful allies you can have on your plate. Strawberries, red bell peppers, beets, red tomatoes, and cherries are packed with antioxidants, fiber, and heart-protective nutrients.

One superstar is lycopene, an antioxidant found in tomatoes and watermelon that may help lower “bad” low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and blood pressure. Beets are rich in nitrates, which support healthy blood vessels and circulation. Raspberries and strawberries are high in flavonoids, which have been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease. The anthocyanins in red grapes and cherries help reduce inflammation.

The fiber in many of these foods also supports cholesterol balance and healthy digestion, which both benefit your heart.

The best part? These vibrant foods are delicious and easy to add to meals. Toss strawberries in oatmeal, add roasted red peppers to wraps, or blend beets into smoothies. A colorful plate not only looks great but also supports your heart.

Get Your Blood

Flowing

Feeling sluggish or chilly even when it's warm? It might be your circulation. Good circulation delivers oxygen and nutrients throughout your body to keep your energy up and your organs working optimally. While movement and diet play a big role, what you drink can help, too! Here are some circulation-boosting beverages to try:



GREEN TEA

Packed with antioxidants like catechins, green tea is linked to better blood vessel function and reduced inflammation.



DARK CHOCOLATE HOT COCOA

Flavanols in cocoa boost nitric oxide production, helping widen blood vessels and improve blood flow. Just go easy on the sugar!



BET JUCE

This drink is rich in nitrates, which your body turns into nitric oxide — a compound that relaxes blood vessels and boosts circulation. It's great before workouts.



CITRUS WATER

Add lemon, orange, or grapefruit slices to your water. Citrus fruits provide vitamin C and antioxidants that support blood vessel health.



PLAIN WATER

Don't underestimate it. Dehydration can thicken your blood and slow circulation. Keep that glass or water bottle handy!



RECIPE

Heart-Healthy Salmon Cakes

Ingredients

2 cans salmon (5 oz. each), drained
½ cup whole wheat breadcrumbs
1 egg
1 tbsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. Old Bay seasoning
(or ½ tsp. paprika and ½ tsp. garlic powder)
1 tbsp. olive oil

Directions

1. In a bowl, mix drained salmon, breadcrumbs, egg, lemon juice, and seasoning until combined.
2. Shape mixture into six equal patties.
3. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat.
4. Cook patties 3 – 4 minutes per side until golden and crisp.



BOUNCING Back Together

When life gets bumpy, strong relationships can be our anchor, but even the closest bonds need care and resilience to thrive. **Emotional resilience** in relationships means the ability to handle stress, disagreements, and life's curveballs together, without letting them tear the connection apart. It's not about avoiding problems but bouncing back stronger and more connected.

At the heart of resilient relationships is **emotional regulation**. This means being aware of your own emotions and managing them before reacting. When both partners are emotionally regulated, they have fewer misunderstandings and more constructive conversations. According to the American Psychological Association, skills like empathy, active listening, and open communication are essential for managing relationship stress and staying emotionally connected.

Resilient couples also embrace **vulnerability**. Instead of bottling things up, they create space for honest conversations – even the tough ones. Emotional openness deepens trust and helps partners feel seen and supported.

Whether it's romantic relationships, friendships, or family ties, resilience grows with intentional practices like regular check-ins, expressing appreciation, and learning how to repair connections after conflict. Focus on being present, patient, and growing together.

Winter Budgeting



Made Easy

When the temperature drops, it's not just your heating bill that goes up. Holiday spending, comfort food cravings, and indoor entertainment can add up fast, but winter doesn't have to freeze your finances. With a few mindful habits, you can stay cozy and in control of your budget.

Creating a seasonal spending plan is one of the best ways to reduce financial stress. Factor in predictable costs like higher utility bills and gifts, while setting limits for things like takeout and impulse buys.

Here are some simple ways to help balance your winter budget:

- **Lower the thermostat** and layer up to save on heating costs.
- **Plan meals** to reduce food waste and avoid last-minute takeout.
- **Budget for joy** by setting aside money for winter splurges.
- **Choose free or low-cost fun**, like game nights or snowy walks.
- **Check in weekly** with your budget to stay mindful and motivated.

And remember, it's not just about dollars. Stressing about money can affect your mood, sleep, and relationships. A solid winter budget is good for your financial and emotional well-being.



A WINNING WINTER WORKOUT



Staying active during the colder months can be tough, but there's one easy, heart-healthy solution that doesn't require a gym or expensive gear: **interval walking**. This simple technique alternates between brisk walking and a slower recovery pace, and it's been shown to significantly boost cardiovascular fitness — especially in winter when movement can slow down.

Interval walking can help lower blood pressure, improve heart health, and even regulate blood sugar levels. It's especially effective because the bursts of faster-paced walking get your heart rate up, while the slower intervals allow for recovery. This allows you to build endurance without overexertion.

Start with a five-minute warm-up walk. Then, alternate three minutes of brisk walking with two minutes at a comfortable pace. Repeat for about 20 – 30 minutes, and finish with a five-minute cool-down.

Don't let chilly weather stop you! Bundle up in breathable layers, wear reflective gear if it's dark outside, and choose a safe, well-lit path. Or, walk indoors at a mall or on a treadmill.

MONTHLY QUIZ

1. Which of the following hormones that benefit heart health is released during acts of kindness?

- A. Adrenaline
- B. Cortisol
- C. Insulin
- D. Oxytocin

2. Which of the following drinks can improve blood flow?

- A. Beet juice
- B. Iced coffee
- C. Milkshake
- D. Soda

3. Which of the following activities helps build emotional resilience in relationships?

- A. Avoiding conflict
- B. Expecting perfection
- C. Ignoring emotions
- D. Practicing empathy

4. Which of the following is a key benefit of interval walking?

- A. Boosts appetite
- B. Builds muscle mass
- C. Enhances skin tone
- D. Improves heart health

1. D, 2. A, 3. D, 4. D

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