LOVE YOUR HEART EVERY DAY

Valentine's Day is a celebration of love and affection. Do you know what else needs some love? Your heart! If you want to feel better and be here longer for all the ones you love, remember that your heart needs tender loving care too. Do you love your heart? February is American Heart Month, which is a great time to learn about heart disease.

Yewande Austin didn't have time to worry about the rapid heartbeat she'd been experiencing. As she reached down to pick up some music equipment before a performance, her heart rate spiked for the fourth time. She thought, "This isn't happening to me. I have too much to do. I have people waiting on me." Fortunately the ambulance got her to the hospital in time. Yewande calls herself a survivor and cautions others, "Heart disease does not discriminate. Get your check-ups!"

To help you love your heart, the American Heart Association recommends you "eat smart, add color, move more, and be well."

To eat smarter, have small, healthy meals every three to four hours. Choose more whole grains and protein to feel full longer. Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables for more vitamins and minerals. Drink more water and cut down on salt and fats.

If you are struggling to get enough exercise, just walk. Walking is easy. It's safe for your body. Walking reduces your risk of heart disease and stroke. It lowers your risk of high blood pressure and high cholesterol. It helps you maintain a healthy body weight, and it leaves you feeling more energetic.   It is one of the simplest ways to make changes to your health.

Finally, be well. Take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, finding ways to relax, and keeping your annual wellness visits with your health care provider.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among both men and women. It is the cause of 1 in every 4 deaths. Many people who die suddenly of heart attacks have no warning signs, so it is important to get regular check-ups and make healthy lifestyle choices.

The risk of heart disease increases as you get older, but it can affect people of all ages. In fact, more and more younger people are being affected by heart disease because of their lifestyle choices. In most cases, heart disease is preventable. So love your heart! Eat smart, add color, move more, and be well!

So, be good to your heart, and your heart will be good to you. We wish you a happy and healthy Valentine's Day! XOXO

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth,org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■

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