

AMERICAN HEART MONTH

WHY DO WE OBSERVE AMERICAN HEART MONTH EVERY FEBRUARY?



FEBRUARY
National Heart Month

FEBRUARY 2023

Well, every year more than 600,000 Americans die from heart disease. It's the number one cause of deaths for most groups, heart disease affects all ethnicities, genders and ages.

Risk factors include high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, and excessive alcohol use.

Do you know how to keep your heart healthy? You can take an active role in reducing your risk for heart disease by eating a healthy diet, engaging in physical activity, and managing your cholesterol and blood pressure. This is a great chance to start some heart-healthy habits!

■ Why is American Heart Month so important?

● It reminds us to take care of our heart

American Heart Month motivates us to examine our own health habits and risks and take steps to improve our heart health

● It promotes education about heart health

Knowing the risk factors for heart disease and how to reduce

them can help people lead healthier lives and diminish their risk for heart attacks or other cardiovascular diseases

● It raises awareness of heart disease

As the number one killer of Americans, heart disease is a slow-moving epidemic that affects almost everyone

■ History of American Heart Month

The human heart is responsible for pumping blood throughout our body, supplying oxygen and nutrients and removing toxins and waste. The heart weighs between 8 and 12 ounces, it is a mighty organ divided into four chambers that work together to pump blood in and out. The heart gets oxygenated blood from the lungs and pumps it throughout the rest of the body. It does this by contracting at a rhythmic pace, about 60-80 times per minute, thanks to electrical cells called “pacemakers.” When the heart ceases to perform its regular function, a medical device also called a pacemaker can be implanted to assist the heart.

Heart disease will occur when the arteries leading to the heart becomes clogged. Although heart disease has been around for thousands of years, we know that many aspects of modern life exacerbate risk factors and make people more prone to heart disease and heart failure. Today, one in four deaths in the U.S. is attributable to heart disease. Heart disease can affect everyone, but taking stock of your prior health risks, activities and diet can help you reduce your risk.

Although we've learned a lot about how the heart works, there are still many unanswered questions about heart health and the cardiovascular system. As far as we know, the best way to protect your heart is to stay active, eat a healthy and balanced diet, and reduce your daily stress. To celebrate American Heart Month, take some time to learn about heart health risks, find your favorite heart-healthy activities, and cook some healthy meals with your family.

AMERICAN HEART MONTH TIME LINE

May 1967

First Bypass Surgery Performed

Argentinian surgeon Rene Favaloro from the Cleveland Clinic performs the first bypass surgery, changing heart treatment forever. Today, coronary artery bypass grafting is the most common cardiac surgery in the world.

1950s

Diet Becomes Important

In the 1950s, doctors begin to understand cholesterol and the role of a low-fat diet in cardiovascular health.

1924

American Heart Association Forms

Several heart disease research groups coalesce to form the AHA, hoping to coordinate and promote efforts to understand and treat heart disease.

1200+ B.C.E.

Ancient Heart Disease

Egyptian mummies, some more than 3,500 years old, show signs of cardiovascular disease, proving that heart disease isn't an entirely modern phenomenon.

Researchers speculate that the high-fat diet and sedentary lifestyle of upper-class Egyptians may have contributed to their poor health, but other pre-modern factors could also be at play.



American Heart Month FAQs

What is the purpose of American Heart Month?

American Heart Month is observed to raise awareness on the importance of a healthy heart and to encourage healthy habits that reduce the risk of heart disease

At what age does heart disease start?

The warning signs for heart disease have been known to appear when people as young as 18. Red flags such as high blood pressure should be taken seriously and healthy habits should be adopted

What day do you wear red for heart disease?

On the first Friday in February is National Wear Red Day in the United States. It's your chance to raise awareness for heart disease while also wearing your favorite red outfit

Stay on top of your medical care

Your physician and healthcare team are your partners. Keeping regular checkups and managing existing medical conditions is crucial to heart health. They may be able to offer assistance to those who have little family in the area or who need help with access to resources of services.

Cardiovascular health is crucial to human longevity and wellness. So it seems fitting that each February, the month of valentines and heart-shaped candies, should be the month the United States observes [American Heart Month](#). [Proclaimed by Lyndon B. Johnson, February 1964](#) was the first American Heart Month. And in 2004, the American Heart Association launched [Go Red for Women](#)[®], a global initiative to end heart disease and stroke in women.

Although deliberating cardiovascular risks may be frightening, know that with healthy lifestyle decisions and regular medical checkups, heart disease can be managed and prevented.

5 Interesting Facts About Heart Health

- Heart attacks can be silent**
One in five heart attacks occurs without the person even knowing they had one.
- Heart attacks often affect women differently**
Women may experience different symptoms than men. These include pain in the back, arm, neck, or shoulder, nausea, fatigue, shortness of breathe or vomiting.
- Young women are at higher risk than men**
Women under the age of 50 are twice as inclined to die of a heart attack as men in the same age group.
- Another reason to hate Mondays**
Heart attacks are more likely to occur on Monday mornings than other days of the week. Scientists attribute this to the disruption in our circadian rhythm over the weekend which leads to increased blood pressure and other changes to the nervous system.
- Diet soda raises heart attack risk**
If you drink one or more diet sodas a day, your chances of having a heart attack are 43% higher than those who drink regular soda or none at all.

How to observe American Heart Month

- Take up a heart-healthy habit**
Staying active, eating healthy, and watching our weight are all very important parts of maintaining healthy cardiovascular systems. Select a new heart-healthy habit like substituting sodas with water, or jogging and try to stick to it for a month.
- Educate yourself**
Learn about the risk factors for heart disease, the ways you can prevent them, and the lifestyle choices that can help you stay healthy.
- Get your cholesterol tested**
If you are worried you might be at risk for heart disease, ask your doctor to perform a simple cholesterol test to let you know if you are at risk and you should make adjustments to your diet.

