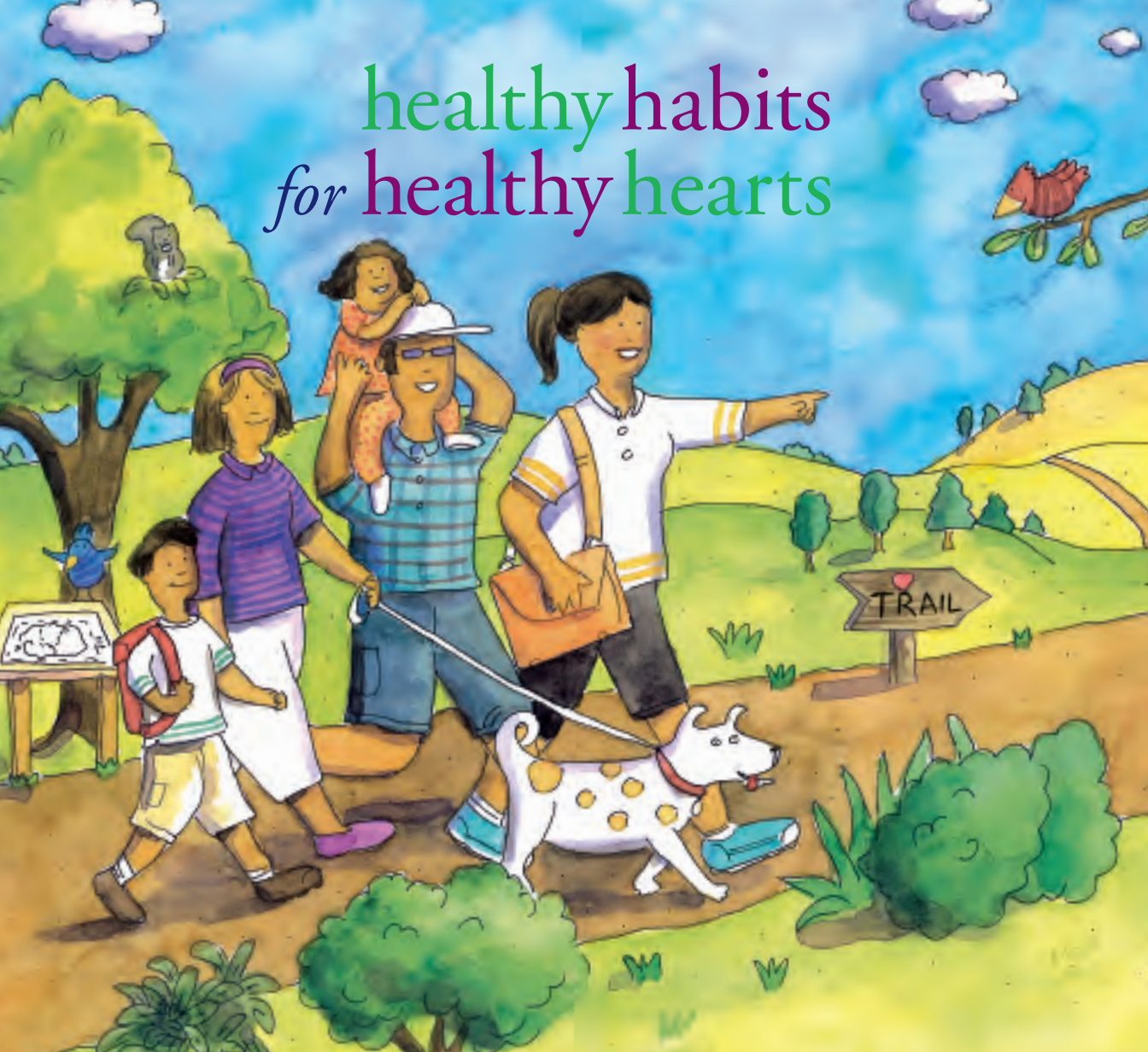


healthy habits *for* healthy hearts



A Family Guide to Heart-Healthy Living



The heart is a strong muscle that is about the size of your fist. It pumps blood to the millions of cells in your body. The blood carries oxygen and nutrients. The heart is divided into four small sections called chambers. The two chambers on the right side get blood from the body and pump it to the lungs for more oxygen. The chambers on the left side pump the oxygen-filled blood back to the body.

Chances are your kids have more energy than they know what to do with.

You can help them use that energy to keep their hearts healthy and strong all through their lives. The key is to develop good habits for healthy hearts early. You can be their role model. Show them that exercising often and eating right is not only healthful, it's fun. Help them take on an active lifestyle now and they'll be on a path to good heart health for their adult lives. By showing your kids good habits, you'll be improving your own heart health, too.



The human heart beats more than 2.5 billion times in an average life span. This booklet teaches you how to strengthen your heart, no matter how old you are.

Exercise and Fitness

The most important thing you can do for your heart is to get up and **get moving.**

Too often we think that exercise only counts if it's hard to do it and it takes a long time. But researchers have shown that three 10-minute walks burn as many calories and exercise your heart as well as one 30-minute walk. Look for new ways to get your heart pumping each day.



Health experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day to reduce the risk of chronic disease, such as heart disease.

Make physical activity a bigger part of your everyday life

- ▶ Give your children household chores that require some physical effort, such as sweeping the sidewalk or raking the yard.
- ▶ Park your car further out in the parking lot than usual.
- ▶ Climb the stairs instead of taking an elevator.
- ▶ Ride your bike to school or on quick errands to the post office or market.
- ▶ Make outdoor play a part of your kids' daily routine. If the weather is bad, help them choose active indoor games, such as ping-pong, dancing, scavenger hunts, or musical chairs.
- ▶ Limit TV and computer game time to one hour each day.

Raise your heart rate through exercise

- ▶ Take a brisk walk with your kids after dinner.
- ▶ Encourage your kids to join a volleyball or hockey team.
- ▶ Try individual sports such as gymnastics, rollerblading, or swimming.
- ▶ Plan a family or neighborhood soccer game.
- ▶ Play a game of catch or kickball.
- ▶ Race the length of the block or run laps at the local high school track.
- ▶ Shoot baskets.
- ▶ Put up a basketball hoop in your driveway.

How Much Exercise?

To strengthen the heart, get at least 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three to five times a week. Aerobic exercise is steady, moderate effort that raises your heart rate, increases your breathing, and gets your muscles working. But you don't want to risk injury by overdoing it. The intensity is just about right if you are breathing too hard to sing, but can still talk.

Healthy Eating



Just as exercise can help strengthen your heart, **eating right** can help protect it.

Most children have good appetites. They need enough fuel to grow properly. At the same time, they need to learn to make the right food choices. Lead by example. Whether following a traditional, cultural or vegetarian diet, eat and make foods low in saturated fat and high in fiber. Plan menus with a mixture of foods from the food pyramid. (See your health care provider or ask your specialty food market for more ideas.)

To find out how much of each food group your body requires in order to meet your personal needs, check out www.mypyramid.gov




Tips for heart-healthy meals

- ▶ Urge your kids to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Keep a bowl of fresh fruit or cut-up vegetables on the top shelf of the refrigerator.
- ▶ Bake, grill, or steam food instead of frying it.
- ▶ Choose leaner meats such as chicken and turkey instead of beef.
- ▶ Give fresh fruit or pretzels as snacks instead of fat- and calorie-laden cookies and candy. Serve water with lemon slices or low fat milk.
- ▶ Use fresh herbs and other spices instead of salt.
- ▶ Make lower fat choices after your child reaches age two. For example, buy skim or one percent milk instead of whole milk and give low fat cheese a try.



This is a good time to start teaching your kids about nutrition, too. Spend time with your kids at the grocery store or in the kitchen to talk about food choices.

- ▶ Read the nutritional label on food packages.
- ▶ Look for the heart-check mark  which shows heart-healthy foods.
- ▶ Let your kids help make meals and talk about ingredients as you add them.
- ▶ Encourage your kids to eat slowly and to know when they're full.
- ▶ Stick to reasonable serving portions.



Kids as well as adults can improve their hearts' health by following a low-saturated-fat and low-cholesterol diet, keeping a healthy weight, staying tobacco free and being physically active.

Feelings

So far we've talked about ways to protect the heart physically. But **feelings matter**, too.



Stress can damage the hearts of adults and kids. As you work with your kids on diet and exercise issues, also look for ways to help them deal with their feelings. Tell them you'd be glad to talk about anything. Suggest that older kids keep a journal — a place where they can write out their thoughts and fears.

Help kids build their own circle of friends

- ▶ Team sports and other group activities help kids gain a sense of belonging as well as confidence, social skills, and self esteem. Encourage your kids to join.
- ▶ Interacting with people of all ages helps kids better understand society and their place in it. Help your kids build friendships with the librarian, postmaster, or an elderly neighbor.
- ▶ Allow your kids to follow their interests. They will meet others with similar talents when they take classes or join clubs.
- ▶ Seek out parent and child volunteer opportunities.

- ▶ Know who their friends are and help them build healthful friendships. Plan play dates, sleepovers, and other fun activities.

Get them to “work out” their problems

- ▶ Tough exercise releases endorphins, or natural chemicals in the brain. These chemicals help reduce stress, raise spirits, and strengthen the immune system.
- ▶ Physical activity helps regulate appetite, digestion, and sleep.
- ▶ Participation in a group or productive activity drives away the boredom that can lead to trouble.



Six percent of preteens smoke once in a while by age 11. Twenty-eight percent light up once in a while by age 14. Kids may be drawn to smoking for any number of reasons — to look cool, act older, lose weight, seem tough, or feel independent. For their hearts' sake, help them find healthier ways to express themselves!

Family Involvement

When it comes to teaching kids how to live and how to take care of themselves, nothing compares to **family involvement**.

Children look to the adults in their lives for strong examples of day-to-day decision-making. If you're a single parent, know that your child is watching you extra closely. If other adults live in your household, recruit them to be good role models, too.



You work hard. Your days are long. Finding the energy for healthy habits may seem daunting. Yet...for their hearts and yours — model good health habits.

- ▶ Keep up with an exercise program and healthy diet for yourself as well as your kids. Both will give you added energy.
- ▶ Choose active hobbies over passive past times as often as you can. Shoot hoops instead of watching the game. Garden a few hours instead of reading. Include your kids.
- ▶ Quit smoking. Talk to your kids about your choice for better health. Impress upon them how hard it is to quit. You want to make sure they never start!
- ▶ Drink alcohol in moderation and never as a way to deal with problems. Don't say that you "need a drink."
- ▶ Talk about other adults in your life who have healthy habits. Brag about Aunt Rose finishing a marathon or your best friend playing in a softball tournament.



Get your kids into the act, too

- ▶ Plan family outings around physical activities such as hiking, horseback riding, or bowling.
- ▶ Give your kids fitness-related birthday or holiday gifts, such as a bicycle or a tennis racquet.
- ▶ Make physical activity a reward. When kids finish their homework, let them go outside to skateboard or play ball until dinner is ready.
- ▶ Attend your kids' games or tournaments as a family. This lets your kids know they count.
- ▶ Encourage your kids to set a health goal. Start small. Eat an apple a day or cut back on TV time by an hour each night. Celebrate every success.



Changing habits is hard. Have your family work on goals together and see how teamwork makes the success come easier. Use the chart below to help.

Sample:

See back cover for a copy of this chart that you can use.

Family goals for the week of: <i>May 1st</i>							
Name	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mom	<i>Family bike trip</i>	<i>Yoga w/ Sarah</i>	<i>Walk 30 min.</i>	<i>Yoga w/ Sarah</i>	<i>Walk 30 min.</i>	<i>Go for hike</i>	<i>Healthy snack</i>
Dad	<i>Family bike trip</i>	<i>Eat more fruit</i>	<i>Go to gym</i>	<i>No sweets</i>	<i>Go to gym</i>	<i>Salad for lunch</i>	<i>Rake yard</i>
Lin	<i>Family bike trip</i>	<i>Walk dog</i>	<i>No T.V.</i>	<i>Walk dog</i>	<i>Swim</i>	<i>Walk dog</i>	<i>Softball game</i>
Sarah	<i>Family bike trip</i>	<i>Yoga w/ Mom</i>	<i>Play tennis</i>	<i>Yoga w/ Mom</i>	<i>No T.V.</i>	<i>Dance lessons</i>	<i>Shoot hoops</i>
Jake	<i>Family bike trip</i>	<i>Skateboard</i>	<i>Soccer practice</i>	<i>No T.V.</i>	<i>Soccer practice</i>	<i>No T.V.</i>	<i>Shoot hoops</i>
<p>How we did this week: <i>We did a great job staying true to our goals and are celebrating by going bowling!</i></p>							

Healthy Hearts for the Fun of It!

Doctors talk about taking care of your heart so you can live longer. But kids need to know that a strong heart makes everything **more fun**.

It may seem hard to make healthful changes in your lifestyle and diet. Don't think about what you should not eat, drink, or do — focus on what these better habits are going to mean for you within a few months. A strong heart makes it easier to do everything better and faster.



Heart-healthy habits can make a world of difference

- ▶ You'll feel healthier and happier.
- ▶ You'll climb stairs or run to the bus without running out of breath.
- ▶ You will think more clearly at work or school.
- ▶ You will handle stressful situations more easily.
- ▶ You'll sleep better.
- ▶ You'll get grumpy when you don't exercise.
- ▶ You'll have a good appetite for meals but fewer cravings for between-meal snacks.
- ▶ Your immune system will be stronger.
- ▶ Your clothes will fit better.
- ▶ Your eyes, skin and body will look healthier.
- ▶ You'll relax more easily.
- ▶ You'll be more willing to take on new challenges and to try new things.

Again, make small changes and don't get discouraged if you slip. These are lifelong changes, and you have time to make them stick. Congratulate yourself for each success along the way. You're learning new, healthy habits for a healthy heart.







AMERICAN COLLEGE of CARDIOLOGY FOUNDATION

The American College of Cardiology Foundation is proud to join forces with HealthLink®, Inc. to educate families on the importance of heart health, a critical issue for all Americans.

The American College of Cardiology Foundation believes that research shows that obesity causes certain types of cardiovascular damage and can be reversed by adopting a healthier lifestyle. Given the substantial short- and long-term benefits of healthy lifestyle education, the development of *Healthy Habits for Healthy Hearts* is an important milestone.

For more information, please visit www.acc.org.

President
American College of Cardiology Foundation

About HealthLink®, Inc.

HealthLink®, Inc. is an Illinois corporation. HealthLink, Inc. is an organizer of independently contracted provider networks, which it makes available by contract to a variety of payors of health benefits, including insurers, third party administrators or employers. HealthLink has no control or right of control over the professional, medical judgment of contracted providers, and is not liable for any acts or failures to act, by contracted providers. HealthLink, Inc. is not an insurance company and has no liability for benefits under benefit plans offered or administered by payors. Any reference in this material to other organizations or companies, including their Internet sites, is not an endorsement or warranty of the services, information or products provided by those organizations or companies. HealthLink, Inc. and its subsidiaries and affiliates do not assume responsibility for any circumstance arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any of this information. Always consult your physician for appropriate examination, treatment and care recommendations. HealthLink is a registered trademark of HealthLink, Inc. and a separately incorporated and capitalized subsidiary of WellPoint, Inc.

Family goals for the week of:

Name	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

How we did this week:

Heart-Healthy Resources

American College of Cardiology Foundation
www.acc.org

Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov

The Healthy Fridge
www.healthyfridge.org

HeartInfo.org
www.heartinfo.org

National Heart, Lung,
and Blood Institute
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

The Quaker Oats Company
www.quakeroatmeal.com

U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services,
Office on Women's Health
www.4woman.gov/heart

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov/hearthealth/lifestyles



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HealthLink
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At HealthLink®, Inc., promoting healthy habits to families and increasing access to health care are two major priorities. Maintaining wellness and preventing chronic disease begins at home, and ensuring health coverage for all family members is fundamental to both.

Healthy Habits for Healthy Hearts is a collaborative effort with the American College of Cardiology Foundation to address the growing concerns about cardiovascular health of America's youth. This children-friendly publication has been developed to educate families on the long-term importance of living active, healthy lifestyles.

By encouraging millions of children to make lasting health behavior changes, together we are saving lives, inspiring healthy lifestyles and motivating our youth to help others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Matheis".

Dennis Matheis,
President
HealthLink®, Inc.

