

February 2023

2/6/23: Life's Essential 8

In honor of heart health month, I'm sharing "Life's Essential 8", a list of 8 practices from the American Heart Association that are known as key measures for improving and maintaining heart health. Better cardiovascular health helps lower the risk for many chronic diseases and health conditions including but not limited to heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

1. Eat Better: focus on fruits and vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats
2. Be more Active: Adults need 150 minutes a week, kids need 60 minutes a day
3. Quit Tobacco- Use of tobacco products and vaping is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S!
4. Get healthy sleep- adults need 7-9 hours a night and kids need more, but it varies by age.
5. Manage weight- achieving and maintaining a healthy weight has many health benefits and reduces your risk for chronic diseases.
6. Control Cholesterol- this is a key indicator that shows your risk for heart disease.
7. Watch the blood sugar- Chronic hyperglycemia can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves. Be sure and monitor this even if you're not diabetic.
8. Manage blood pressure- hypertension is known as "the silent killer" for good reason.

There's your 8 essential steps for heart health! For more info visit heart.org or panola.agrilife.org.

[American Heart Association](#)

2/10/23: Sunscreen- Not a seasonal product

The groundhog said there's six more weeks of winter- so that means the sunscreen can stay away for six more weeks too, right? WRONG! Sunscreen is actually a year-round necessity, contrary to what most people think. I'm Clarissa Moon here to explain it all.

Ultraviolet, or UV, rays are lower in the winter due to the earth's tilt, but they are still a threat! In order to protect your skin from UV damage and premature aging, the National Cancer Institute recommends wearing sunscreen and limiting direct exposure during peak daylight hours *year-round*.

Clouds can provide protection from the sun, but only about 50%, so you still need to lather up on cloudy days. Don't forget clothing is also a protective factor, but you still need to protect the face, neck and hands that are still left exposed in cold weather.

Sunburn is one kind of damage that may fade in a few days, but let's not forget that most of the sun's damage is a long-term product. Wearing sunscreen, much like eating vegetables, seems like a miniscule thing on a daily basis, but its use over time can really make a difference.

For more information, visit medlineplus.gov. Thanks for listening to the Moon Minute!

[Source: Medlineplus.gov](https://medlineplus.gov)

2/20/23: 3 Steps to Quit Dieting for Good

Are you one of the millions of Americans who have tried a diet and eventually given up? If so you are not alone. According to a psychologist from UNC health, data shows that a whopping 95% of diets fail in the long term. Chew on that! Diets often allow people to lose some weight in the short term but then struggle to keep it off. This often creates a yo-yo effect with weight which causes many people mental and physical frustration. I'm Clarissa Moon here with some inspiration and 3 suggestions on where to focus your eating habits.

- Focus on healthy behaviors and the weight will take care of itself. Health is not defined by a number on the scale or a dress size. I recently had a PSA on "Life's Essential 8" which covers 8 dimensions of heart health beyond just diet and physical activity. Health encompasses so much more like mental health and sleep patterns. Don't overlook those! If you're struggling with any of these things (or want to revisit that PSA), visit our website.
- Listen to your body. This is called mindful eating or intuitive eating. Instead of eating at a set time each day or stuffing your face mindlessly while watching TV, focus instead on paying attention to your body and responding to it. Eat when you're actually hungry, pay attention to how certain foods make you feel and take time to enjoy what you eat. Your brain needs a full 20 minutes to realize that you're physically full, so slow down!

- Set realistic goals. Nothing is more discouraging than setting a lofty goal and feeling like a complete moron when you fail. Change takes time. It's a marathon not a sprint. Focus on meeting yourself where you're at and then take baby steps in the right direction. Failure is to be expected sometimes. It's all about how you learn from it and move on.

Hopefully these tips gave you something to chew on when it comes to eating habits and health behaviors. For more information, visit healthtalk.unchealthcare.org or panola.agrilife.org.

[Source: UNC Health Care](#)

2/27/23: Heart-y Snack Attack

Hi y'all, It is Heart Health Month *and* National Snack Foods Month for a few more hours so I'm celebrating by sharing some heart healthy snack ideas with you! I'm Clarissa Moon with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, here with all the goodies.

- 1) Nuts are one of the most wonderful snack foods- they're portable, have a long shelf life and are full of nutrients! Nuts are loaded with healthy fats which research suggests that eating 1.5 ounces of most nuts per day as part of a low saturated fat diet may reduce the risk of heart disease.
- 2) Low-fat and fat-free dairy are also part of a healthy eating pattern. Dairy products contain calcium, potassium, protein and vitamin D. For some travel-friendly options, try yogurt cups, string cheese, or snack-sized milk.
- 3) Whole Grains. These have been shown to promote heart health in many ways such as lowering cholesterol, blood pressure, and lipid levels. If you're not a whole wheat lover just yet, you can still get whole grains from popcorn, cornmeal, many cereals and granola made with oats!
- 4) Cocoa/Dark Chocolate- that's right, I said CHOCOLATE! It actually contains antioxidants called flavonoids which help promote the cardiovascular system and decrease overall inflammation. Opt for 55%+ cacao content or add a teaspoon or two to a smoothie!

There you go, 4 heart healthy snacks to wrap up your February on a heart-healthy note! For more info visit foodinsight.org or panola.agrilife.org. Thanks for listening to the Moon Minute!

<https://foodinsight.org/heart-y-snack-attack/>