

February 2024

2/6/24 Heart Health Month- look for the heart-check mark

February is American Heart Month- show your heart some extra love this season by looking for the heart-check mark. I'm Clarissa Moon here to explain it all for you, with help from the American Heart Association.

The Heart-Check mark is a simple tool to help you Eat Smart. When you see it, you can be confident that a product aligns with the American Heart Association's recommendations for an overall healthy eating pattern.

This is some of what it takes to be Heart-Check certified*:

- Source of Nutrients – Beneficial Nutrients (naturally occurring): 10% or more of the Daily Value of 1 of 6 nutrients (vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, protein or dietary fiber)
- Limited in Bad Fats –In order for it to have the heart check mark, the food must be low in saturated fats and trans fats. These types of fats build bad cholesterol, thus increasing your risk for heart disease and stroke.
- Limited in Sodium –There are four different sodium limits for this check mark, depending on the food category. It's important to watch sodium since it is a large contributor to high blood pressure.

Next time you're at the store, take a moment to look for the heart check mark. Eating these certified foods is a good way to give your heart a hug, and a high 5 to our friends at the American Heart Association.

Thanks for listening to the Moon Minute!

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/heart-check-foods/check-for-the-heart-check-mark-infographic>

2/13/24 10 tips to make exercise a daily habit

Whether you currently exercise and are looking to make a change, or if you're trying to overcome your current status as a couch potato, a little movement goes a long way. I'm Clarissa Moon here with 10 tips on making exercise a daily habit from the Harvard School of Public Health.

1. Piece your workout together. You don't need to get all your exercise at one time. Ten minutes morning, noon, and night can give much of the same benefit as 30 minutes all at once.
2. Exercise with a friend. Finding a workout partner can help keep you on track and motivate you to get out the door.
3. Keep it brisk. When you walk, make it brisk, since this may help control weight better than walking at a leisurely pace. What is brisk enough? Walk as though you are meeting someone for lunch and you are a little late.
4. Move your feet before you eat. Hit the gym or go for a 20-minute walk with coworkers, and have lunch afterward.
5. Try a pedometer. Step-counters (pedometers) are an easy, inexpensive way to motivate yourself to be active. Work up to 10,000 steps per day.
6. Turn off the TV, computer, and smart phone. Cutting back on screen time is a great way to curb your "sit time." Move around instead, by visiting the gym or even cleaning the house.
7. Turn sit time into fit time. Try to combine cardiovascular exercise with a sedentary activity that you already do. For example, try doing simple exercises while watching TV, or set a reminder at work to get up and walk a few minutes every hour.
8. Sign up for a class. Check out the fitness course schedule at your local gym or community center, or the dance or yoga class schedule at a nearby studio. You may find that having the structure of a class helps you learn a new activity and keeps you on track.
9. Plan exercise into your day. Set aside a specific time in your schedule to exercise and put it in your planner.
10. Reward yourself. Set short-term goals—and reward yourself for achieving them. Try targeting a specific event, such as a road race or a walk-for-charity, to participate in—this can help keep you motivated.

There you go! 10 ways to incorporate more exercise into your day. For more info, visit [hsph.harvard.edu](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu) or panola.agrilife.org

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/2013/11/04/making-exercise-a-daily-habit-10-tips/>

2/20/24 Dieting- Don't "eat" yourself up

We've all heard the phrase "don't beat yourself up about it", which can apply to many situations in life. Dieting is no exception. It feels like a perpetual cycle when you start off

strong, but then have a stumble and the guilt and shame consume you. I'm Clarissa Moon with some tips on not "eating yourself up".

- 1- Don't tell yourself that certain foods are bad. Instead, think about how a food makes your body feel. Generally speaking, when you fuel up on fruits and veggies, you'll feel energized whereas cakes and sweets can make you feel sluggish.
- 2- Don't subtract from you eating, add to it! Don't focus on what you can't eat, but focus instead on adding foods that make you feel good and keep you fuller for longer. The sky is the limit with both your dreams and your eating habits.
- 3- Limit your negative self-talk. Remind yourself that your worth as a human being is not dictated by the foods you eat or bad habits you possess. Instead, record the positive things you're doing like drinking water or taking the stairs.

So take off the boxing gloves and hold your head high! Today is the day for you to stop eating yourself up and be positive. For more info, visit clevelandclinic.org or panola.agrilife.org.

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/this-is-your-brain-on-a-diet/>

2/27/24 Warm up with a *safely* slow-cooked meal

Although our good friend Punxsutawney Phil said we're due for an early spring, we all know that Mother Nature likes to mess with us; so I'm giving you some tips on using that slow cooker for your warm, comforting meals in the meantime.

I'm Clarissa Moon, here with some food safety tips on cooking with your slow cooker.

1. First things first! Wash those hands for 20 seconds.
2. If you plan to use frozen meat, make sure to thaw it safely using the refrigerator, water method or microwave. It's not safe to let meat thaw at room temperature.
3. Rinse your fruits and veggies so that dirt and bacteria from the outside don't get inside when you cut into them.
4. Separate your raw meats and their utensils from ready-to-eat foods to prevent cross-contamination.
5. Don't use the delay start function! Bacteria can multiply quickly at room temperature.
6. Check your internal temperature using a food thermometer.
7. Last but not least, refrigerate your leftovers within two hours.

Enjoy these last few weeks of winter with food safety in mind! For more information, and a bonus slow cooker recipe, visit [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) or panola.agrilife.org!

https://www.foodsafety.gov/blog/warm-safely-slow-cooked-meal?ACSTrackingID=USCDC_485-DM72975&ACSTrackingLabel=CDC%20and%20Food%20Safety%20Newsletter:%202022%E2%80%932023%20IFSAC%20Interim%20Strategic%20Plan&deliveryName=USCDC_485-DM72975