

February... the Month of the Heart

Take time to be Health Conscious

February...the month of the heart. Valentine time with all the candy, and flowers and "love" stuff. To give and receive love is essential for health and wellness. During December, people tend to give love more freely than any other month, except February.

Did you know that giving and receiving love improves your heart health? Researchers found that hugging your mate can help reduce heart rate and blood pressure.

Women who regularly hugged that "significant other" had higher levels of hormones, which in turn, helped lower the blood pressure. Another study found that men and women in happy marriages had fewer risk factors for cardiovascular disease than men and women in unhappy marriages.

You do not have to send flowers or candy to that loved one, but it's nice to get these things on Valentine's Day. There are many ways to give and show love this month. Make it a goal to hug a few people every day this month. There's your spouse, members of your family and your dear friends. A simple pat on the back or a squeeze of the hand can show someone that you care. It could possibly become a habit. A simple act of kindness can really make someone's day. Give sincere compliments. It will make the other person feel good and their

pleasure will make you happy as well.

February is a good time to check up on elderly loved ones. This could be a perfect time to check up on their health. Some people may need a little extra help, but don't want to ask for it. Use the visit as a chance to find out just what it is that they do need.

Using this holiday as an excuse to visit home will give you clues about how they are doing. A visit at mealtime will show you if they are eating well. Drop in at different times of the day. Look for signs that the loved one might need help getting around and how they move about from room to room. Ask questions about their visiting friends or times that they go out. If they are staying at home a lot and do not have visitors, they may be depressed.

If something worries you about your loved ones, listen to your gut feeling. Ask him or her about it. Look for signs of depression. Some of these might include: an unusually messy or dirty place, a lot of unopened mail, wearing dirty clothing, odors (such as spoiled food), or they may be unusually tired. Your loved one may not want to talk about needing help. Be respectful and kind, and then go talk to your loved one's doctor. Often, all he or she might need is just a little extra help and attention to get back on track.

During this month of February, I increase my

love for others.

Increase my love for others, Lord; O, hear my earnest prayer! May I be sensitive to pain and truly love and care. Brighten my smile, dear Lord; May I more fervent be, going willingly out of my way, A lonely heart to see. And let my greeting be warm and true, lovingly meeting the eyes; Let no one go from my presence today with lonely tears or sighs. May I be quick to share my time with anyone having a need; May Christ be filling my heart today, and be glorified indeed! -Helen Neimy

Here's a Valentine's Day check-list for you and your sweetie.

Does your sweetheart have a healthy heart? Answer yes or no!

- Does he or she smoke? (no)
- Does he or she have blood pressure below 120/80? (yes)
- Does he or she get 30 to 60 minutes of exercise every

day? (yes)

-Does he or she control stress through hugs, laughter, and (of course) medicine? (yes)

If you answered accordingly, then you are lucky enough to have a reasonably healthy sweetheart!

Here are some heart-healthy eating ideas for you to think about. The American Heart Association recommends two servings per week of fish, like salmon and mackerel, because they contain heart-healthy omega-3 oils.

Canola oil is heart healthy for cooking. Three ounce tenderloin of beef, marinated and grilled for a main course are the least unhealthy of fat. Limiting the amount of salt in your diet can help to lower blood

pressure. Eating foods that contain saturated and trans fat can make your cholesterol go up. Oranges, apples, pears, avocados and carrots are good sources for lowering your cholesterol. Stock up on frozen vegetables. They're just as nutritious, as fresh, and they save time and money.

There's an old Chinese proverb that, if practiced every day, would change the world in a most wonderful way. Its truth is so simple, and its so simple for people to do, and guess what, it works every time, with success too. You can't do a kindness, without receiving a reward, gold and silver won't do it, just joy from the Lord. You can't light a candle to show others the way, without feeling



by B J Armstrong

the warmth from each little ray. You can't pluck a rose, all covered with dew, without its fragrance remaining with you. - Adapted from Helen Steiner Rice

Just like when you were a kid, skipping is a good warm-up or cool-down exercise. It's guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

Happy Valentine's Day!

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