



## Heart Healthy Tips

In February, it seems like hearts are everywhere. You might have cartoon hearts on your clothes, in your house, or to give out to kids' friends at school. But when was the last time you thought about your own heart? February has been American Heart Month since 1964, encouraging us all to take steps to be more heart-healthy. Unfortunately, heart disease is still the top cause of death in the U.S. It can be hard for parents to find the time to prioritize their own health, but it is also important to make sure that you can care for and play with your children for years to come. In that spirit, here are some heart-healthy tips that you can easily implement as part of your family's regular routines:

**Prioritize family play dates** - Having close friendships is an underappreciated key to heart health. People with close friends are less likely to experience their first heart attack, perhaps due to the decreased stress or positive influence of those friendships. Getting the whole family involved is a great way to make sure you have time to cultivate these friendships and encourage your children to have those healthy relationships as well. Fellow parents are more likely to have things in common, and it's an easy way to ask someone to hang out. Of course, don't feel guilty if you get together with your friends without the kids sometimes. We all need a break and those fun times or vent sessions are also extremely healthy for your heart.

**Go on family hikes** - This is a two-for-one activity. We all know we need to be more active to stay healthy, but our busy schedules may make it difficult to squeeze in solo workouts. Taking the kids on a hike is a good way to get the whole family moving. As a bonus, being outside in nature is also known to reduce stress, which is a huge key to heart health. Even city-dwellers can usually find some trails nearby for a week-end activity. Too cold outside? Try family yoga or gymnastics or whatever you all like to do to stay active.

**Eat (the right kind of) chocolate** - This might be the most fun tip of all. When it's time to pick your Valentine's Day treats, skip the candy hearts and reach for the dark chocolate instead. Studies have shown that eating dark chocolate in moderation provides the body with healthy antioxidants that can lower the risk of heart disease. Other heart-healthy foods include almonds, salmon, and red wine (also in moderation!).

Of course, these are not the only ways to make your heart healthier. If you are a smoker, you already know you should take steps to curb this habit. If your family's diet consists of processed or sugary foods, you could try to incorporate some at-home cooking nights to incorporate more fruits, vegetables, and lean poultry. But if these larger changes seem overwhelming, start with the tips above instead. The great thing about healthy habits is that they tend to lead to more healthy habits!

## News & Events

### • Harlem Globe Trotters

- February 11 to February 12, 2023  
American Airlines Center and Dickies Arena  
Your favorite Globetrotter stars are bringing out their amazing basketball skill, outrageous athleticism, and a non-stop LOL good time.  
[www.harlemglobetrotters.com/](http://www.harlemglobetrotters.com/)

### • Frost Fest

- February 18, 2023  
10:00 AM until 01:00 PM  
Levy Event Plaza  
501 E. Las Colinas Blvd.,  
Irving, TX, 75039  
Free admission!  
Come enjoy the "cool" side of winter, without the freezing rain and slick roads. For more info visit:  
[www.cityofirving.org/](http://www.cityofirving.org/)

### • Read to a Therapy Dog- Austin

- Saturday, February 18, 2023,  
11:30am-12:30pm  
Saturday, March 04, 2023, 11:30am-12:30pm  
Saturday, March 18, 2023, 11:30am-12:30pm  
Wells Branch Community Library  
15001 Wells Port Drive  
Austin, TX  
Read to Princess Buttercup Dump Truck or Bentley, our reading therapy dogs from Divine Canines on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays from 11:30am-12:30pm. This program is for kids ages 4+ who can read or are starting to learn how to read. They can choose books and read aloud to one of our therapy dogs. For more info visit: [www.wblibrary.org/](http://www.wblibrary.org/)

## Resources

### • **VIVA Pediatrics Resources**

In an effort to help our families, we constantly strive to provide them with relevant and helpful resources and information. Visit our resources page online at: [www.vivaped.com/resources](http://www.vivaped.com/resources)

For current events visit us on Facebook. [www.facebook.com/VIVAPeds](http://www.facebook.com/VIVAPeds)

### • **Care Starter App**

The Connections App is a complete resource guide for families of kids, teens and adults with special needs. Their goal is to help you find providers, organizations and other resources in your community to help you along your path of care. Download the CareStarter App now! [www.carestarter.co/connectionsapp](http://www.carestarter.co/connectionsapp)



### • **The Parker Lee Project**

The Parker Lee Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping families of children with medical needs obtain the necessary supplies & equipment, education, and support they need. While most supplies are covered by insurance, some are not, or not enough supplies are provided. If you have a need for medical supplies or have supplies to donate, please visit their website at [www.theparkerleeproject.org](http://www.theparkerleeproject.org)

### • **Texas Star Kids**

The Texas' Star Kids mandate threatens the lives of our weakest and most vulnerable little citizens. Join us in standing up for those who have no voice. Click this link to sign up: [www.facebook.com/ProtectTXFragileKids](http://www.facebook.com/ProtectTXFragileKids)  
For more info visit: [www.protecttxfragilekids.org](http://www.protecttxfragilekids.org)

### • **Thrive Magazine**

Need Resources for your child with special needs? Thrive Magazine shares resources and stories of other families in the DFW area who are living and thriving with special needs. [www.dfwchild.com/thrive/directory](http://www.dfwchild.com/thrive/directory)

### • **Recognize a VIVA Star**

Viva Pediatrics has an Employee Rewards and Recognition Program to thank and recognize employees that go "above and beyond". Both employees and patient families are welcome to recognize a VIVA employee! Call one of our offices and let us know if a VIVA employee has gone above and beyond!



## Get Healthy with Giggles

### Getting Through Seasonal Allergies

We see it time and time again - itchy eyes, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat. If your child has these symptoms around the same time every year, the culprit is probably seasonal allergies. Allergy symptoms usually appear out of nowhere and can last as long as our child is exposed to the allergens. Common seasonal allergens include mold and pollen from trees, grass or weeds. These types of allergies often run in the family. If parents suffer from seasonal allergies, their children are more likely to have them too.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for allergies. However, there are ways to control symptoms. Aside from testing children for allergies and finding the right treatment, you can also try the following things at home:

- Keep nasal passages moist by drinking lots of fluids, using a humidifier as well as saline sprays
- Close windows during peak pollen periods
- Bathe your child at the end of every day to remove any allergens from their body and hair
- Stay inside while the lawn is being mowed if allergic to grass
- Have child wash hands and face as soon as he/she comes in from playing outside to avoid them rubbing pollen into their eyes and nose
- Avoid your child playing in piles of leaves if allergic to mold

If your child's allergy symptoms simply are too much to handle, consult with their pediatrician. Most likely, they will conduct an allergy test and provide you with medication options and/or long term treatments.

## Food for Thought



### Old Fashioned Rice Pudding

#### Ingredients

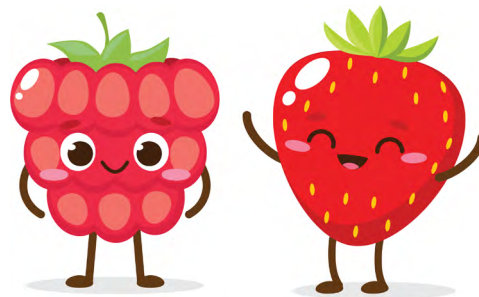
- 6 cups whole milk, divided
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup long grain white rice, (use a heaping half cup)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ground cinnamon, optional

#### Directions

- In a large saucepan, combine 5 1/2 cups milk, sugar, and salt. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
- Stir in rice and reduce heat to low. Be sure to adjust the heat so that it is at a gentle simmer.
- Stirring occasionally, cook for 50 to 60 minutes. Mixture should thicken up to consistency of yogurt.
- Once thickened, remove from heat and stir in vanilla.
- Let cool and then refrigerate. The last 1/2 cup milk is stirred in just before serving. Sprinkle with cinnamon if desired.

Enjoy!

What did the raspberry say to his valentine?



I love you berry much!



Just for Giggles!