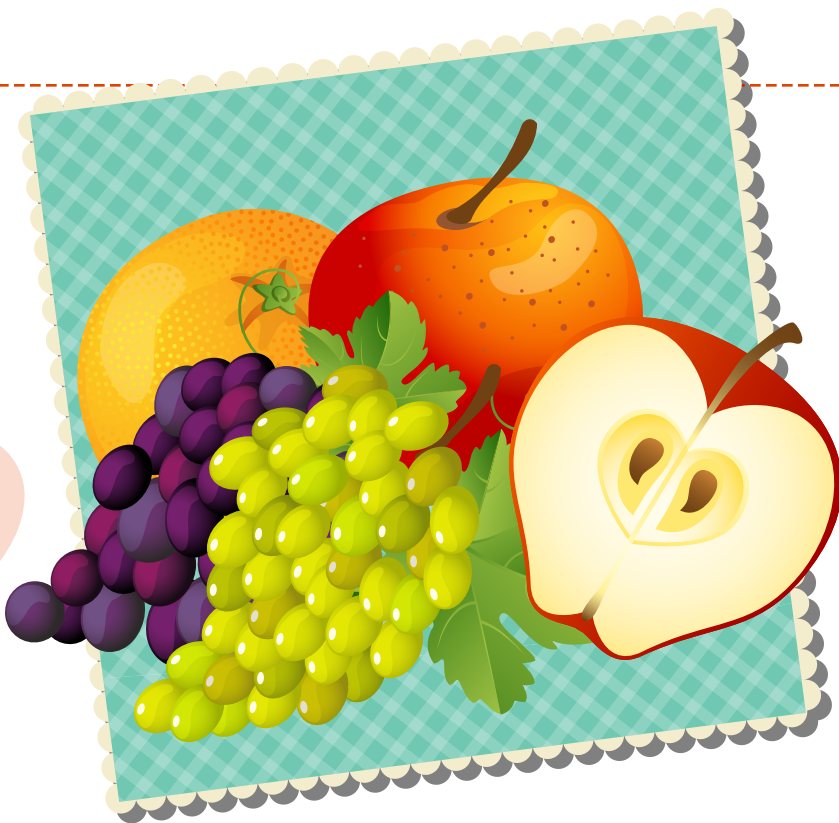




# Fall in Love with Your Heart

Your heart works hard for you. Every day it beats about 100,000 times and pumps around 2,000 gallons of blood throughout your body. It takes cues from your moods, beating faster during times of stress, or simply when you see that special someone. For everything it does for you, shouldn't you do something for your heart? Here are simple ways to show your heart some love.

**For more heart healthy information, or to find a heart specialist who is right for you, please visit [Scripps.org/myheart](http://Scripps.org/myheart).**

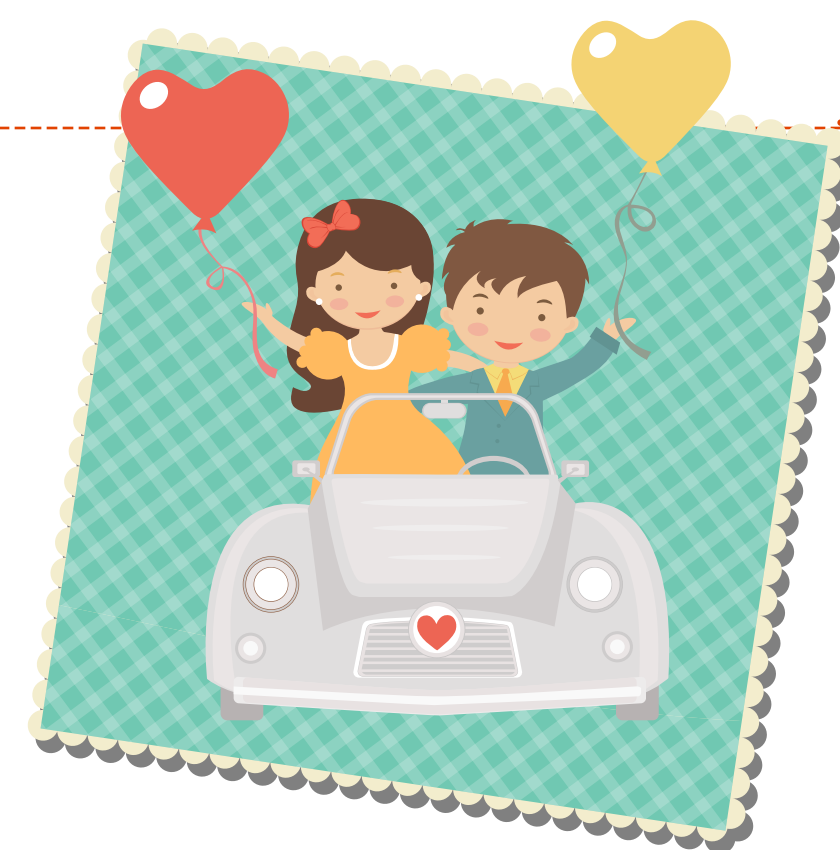


## Eat a Healthy Breakfast

Don't skip the most important meal of the day. Research has shown that men who skipped breakfast had a 27 percent higher risk of developing heart disease than men who started their day with a meal.<sup>1</sup>

## Avoid Heavy Traffic

Traffic may be more than just an irritating part of the work day. The noise and stress combined with fine particle air pollution surrounding you in heavy traffic could increase your risk for heart disease.<sup>2</sup>



## Get Plenty of Sleep

Ignoring your need to rest could have long-term consequences on heart health. Getting less than six hours of sleep per night could make you twice as likely to have a stroke or heart attack and one-and-a-half times more likely to develop congestive heart failure.<sup>3</sup>

## Think Positive

Prolonged exposure to the stress hormone cortisol can damage arterial linings, making it harder for the heart to do its job. Recent studies suggest positive thinking and happiness can boost heart health. Learning to manage stress in a positive way could lead to a healthier, happier heart.<sup>4</sup>



## Love Your Furry Friends

Pet owners, particularly dog owners, may have a reduced risk of heart disease. Walking the dog and playing fetch are a great way to incorporate physical activity into your day, while petting and cuddling your four-legged friend can help reduce stress.<sup>5</sup>

## Spend Time with Your Valentine

Ease the stress in your life and reduce your blood pressure by being close to the one you love. Hugging, touching, smiling and talking to your significant other have been shown to reduce blood pressure and minimize the effects of stressful situations on the body.<sup>6</sup>



## Have a Sweet Treat

Rich in heart protecting flavonoids and antioxidants, a daily piece of dark chocolate could protect your heart from cardiovascular disease. Be sure to indulge in just a small piece that contains 60 percent or more cocoa.<sup>7</sup>

1 Prospective Study of Breakfast Eating and Incident Coronary Heart Disease in a Cohort of Male US Health Professionals: <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/128/4/337.abstract>

2 Searching For The Culprit: Is Urban Particulate Air Pollution Or Road Traffic Noise Responsible For The Association Of Traffic Proximity With Subclinical Atherosclerosis: [http://www.atsjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2013.187.1\\_MeetingAbstracts.A3502](http://www.atsjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1164/ajrccm-conference.2013.187.1_MeetingAbstracts.A3502)

3 Associations Between Sleep Duration and Prevalence of Cardiovascular Events: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24122853>

4 The Heart's Content: The Association Between Positive Psychological Well-Being and Cardiovascular Health: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22506752>

5 Pets May Reduce Your Risk Of Heart Disease: <http://newsroom.heart.org/news/pets-may-help-reduce-your-risk-of-heart-disease>

6 Warm Partner Contact is Related to Lower Cardiovascular Reactivity: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15206831>

7 The Effectiveness and Cost Effectiveness of Dark Chocolate Consumption as Prevention Therapy on People at High Risk for Cardiovascular Disease: <http://www.bmj.com/content/344/bmj.e3657>