

EXTENSION CONNECTIONS


Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

We hope you enjoy your copy of this free monthly resource which highlights upcoming programs and topics for better living. To stay up to date on all of our programs, visit our web page: extension.illinois.edu/hmrs and follow us on Facebook @uiextensionhmrs

Due to COVID-19, our offices are currently closed to foot traffic. Staff are working remotely but can be reached by phone or email. Visit our website for contact information or call your county office, leave a message and we will get back to you ASAP. Thank you!

Rock Island County
321 W 2nd Ave. Milan, IL
(309) 756-9978

Henry/Stark Counties
358 Front St. Galva, IL
(309) 932-3447

Mercer County
910 13th St. Viola, IL
(309) 871-5032

Taking care of our hearts, together

Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension Nutrition & Wellness Educator

Winter is a time of rest and reflection, but as the days slowly become longer, we're reminded that spring will soon usher in new beginnings and opportunities. What's in store for the New Year? It's anyone's guess but we stay hopeful that the best is yet to come!

Like the beginning of a new day, many of us set our intentions and strive to be better versions of ourselves in the New Year. You may have many aspirations or goals you want to achieve in the months ahead but I encourage you to put your self-care first. We have all been under a considerable amount of stress which puts a lot of strain on our hearts and subsequent well-being. Your heart is the most important muscle in your body. Every day your heart pumps 2,000 gallons of blood that travels about 12,000 miles through your body. That's like taking four trips across the country from coast to coast! Your heart does this and so much more.

It's time we show our hearts some love as we head into February, American Heart Month.

The fact is, our hearts are healthier together. Studies show that when we join forces with others at home or online, we stay motivated to make heart-healthy choices. Gather your friends and family and invest in your heart health.

These aren't merely suggestions, they're matters of the heart.

Eat healthy, together- Studies show that we tend to eat like our friends and family. Your healthy choices may inspire those around you. Focus on foods with heart health benefits. Foods high in fiber (fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains) and omega-3 fats (salmon, trout, flax seeds) can help lower your cholesterol and reduce inflammation.

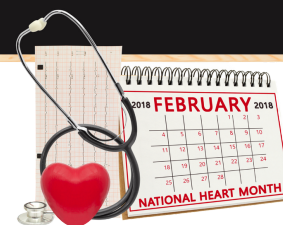
Start by filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables and limit added sugars and saturated fats.

Be active, together- People with friends or family who support their efforts to be physically active are more likely to be successful. Find ways to add more activity to your gatherings like going for a walk after dinner, playing basketball or challenging each other to a squat contest. If it's too cold or rainy, try a free online walking video or dance tutorial which could get everyone laughing. We all need to "lol" more often and not just in our texts! According to the American Heart Association, research suggests laughing can lower stress hormones, decrease inflammation in your arteries, and raise your HDL (good) cholesterol. **One minute of laughter is like ten minutes on the row machine.**

Be grateful, together- Gratitude is more than a buzzword. It's a way of living each day that can lower your blood pressure and improve immune function. Have you ever had a great day overall but found yourself ruminating on the one negative thing that happened? This "negativity bias" is a natural tendency and to counteract it, we must practice gratitude. Psychologist Rick Hansen says our brains are like Velcro for bad experiences but Teflon for good ones which means the negative experiences tend to stick better. **Get into the habit of being grateful and hold others accountable to focus more on the positive aspects of your day, your week, and your year.**

You don't have to make big changes all at once. Small steps will get you where you want to go.

For more information and upcoming nutrition & wellness programs, visit <https://extension.illinois.edu/hmrs>.



American Heart Month each February is a time to raise awareness about heart disease, the leading cause of death of men and women in the United States.

The theme this year, **Our Hearts**, is all about inspiring people to join forces to reach desired health goals. Use this chart for inspiration on daily activities you can do to keep your heart healthy.

28 Days Toward a Healthy Heart

Try one of these tips each day for a month, then keep up the momentum and make your favorites part of your regular routine.

Day 1
Call a friend and join the #OurHearts movement.

Day 2
Make a heart-healthy snack.

Day 3
Schedule your annual physical. Discuss your heart health goals with your doctor.

Day 4
Squat it out. Do 1 minute of squats.

Day 5
Sport red today for National Wear Red Day.

Day 6
Make today a salt-free day. Use herbs for flavor instead of salt.

Day 7
Visit Smokefree.gov to take the first step to quitting smoking.

Day 8
Get your blood pressure checked.

Day 9
Walk an extra 15 minutes today.

Day 10
Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity today.

Day 11
Plan your menu for the week with heart-healthy recipes.

Day 12
Reduce stress using relaxation techniques.

Day 13
Give the elevator a day off and take the stairs.

Day 14
Protect your sweetheart's heart: Plan a heart-healthy date.

Day 15
Swap the sweets for a piece of fruit for dessert.

Day 16
Stress less. Practice mindful meditation for 10 minutes.

Day 17
Head to bed with enough time to get a full 7-8 hours of sleep.

Day 18
Add a stretch break to your calendar to increase your flexibility.

Day 19
Eat vegetarian for a day.

Day 20
Share a funny video or joke that makes you laugh.

Day 21
Dance for 15 minutes to your favorite music.

Day 22
Call a relative and ask about your family health history.

Day 23
March in place during commercial breaks to get your heart going.

Day 24
Get a tape measure and find out the size of your waist.

Day 25
Ask a family member or neighbor to join you for a walk.

Day 26
Fill half of your lunch and dinner plates with vegetables.

Day 27
See how many push-ups you can do in 1 minute.

Day 28
Pay it forward and tell a friend about *The Heart Truth*.

nhlbi.nih.gov/heartmonth

Physical activity is good for your health and mind!

Plus, it is a great way to spend time together with family and friends. You do not need a gym membership or pricy equipment to be active. You can be active right at home! Remember, every little bit counts. If you are new to starting out with physical activity, start small and make sure to follow our safety tips.

How Much Activity is Right for Me?

Adults (18-64 years old): Aim for 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) each week of moderate activity, such as walking, bike riding, light yard work and chores, or dancing.

Children (6-17 years old): Kids should aim for 60 or more minutes each day of physical activity. Make sure it's fun for them!

Young Children (2-5 years old): Young children do not have a recommended activity level for them. If you have children this age, have them play actively at least a few times each day.

For more information about Physical Activity, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov.



Sign-Up for the EAT.MOVE.SAVE. Healthy Text Program!

**EAT.
MOVE.
SAVE.**

Choose ONE of three ways to sign up to get 1-2 text messages per week! *Text message and data rates may apply. Text STOP to unsubscribe at any time.*

Use a smartphone camera to scan and sign-up with an online form.



OR

If you live in Rock Island or Mercer County:
Text "rockisland7" to (833) 369-2916

If you live in Henry or Stark Counties
Text "henry7" to (833) 369-2916

Check out these FREE online workshops

Health at Home: Healthy Eats for a Healthy Beat Thursdays at 11 am, Feb 18–March 11



Join University of Illinois Extension as we provide tools and resources for making heart-healthy decisions about what goes on your plate! Each 30-minute class will explore key nutrients for improving heart health, followed by a live food demonstration showing how to prepare a heart-healthy meal. Register at go.illinois.edu/healthybeats.

Here's the line up:

February 18 | Get the Scoop on Sodium Learn what sodium is and how to identify high-sodium foods. Watch us prepare an easy recipe that can help you cut back on sodium. After, stay on for Q&A.

February 25 | Facts on Fats Fats provide body fuel, help absorb some nutrients, and add flavors to foods. Learn types of fats and their roles in heart health and explore ways to adapt recipes to be lower in fat or use more heart-healthy fats.

March 04 | Focus on Fiber Not only does a high-fiber diet promote heart health, but it also supports a healthy gut microbiome and reduces your risk for diabetes. This session will cover the different types of fiber, the best sources, and simple ways to make your meals and snacks fiber-rich.

March 11 | Life is Sweet: Sugar is so delectably good, undeniably satisfying, and lusciously sweet. However, when it comes to health, sugar has a bittersweet reputation. Learn how to identify added and natural sugars in your diet, increase your knowledge of the nutrition facts label, and gain helpful tips in limiting added sugar to keep your heart beating strong.

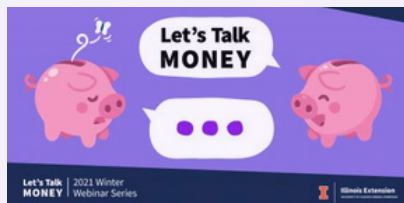
If you need an accommodation to participate, please email dreinhof@illinois.edu. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your access needs.

Let's Talk Money | Tues., Feb 2 – March 23, 6:30 p.m.

Learn strategies to help understand spending habits, manage debt responsibly, understand credit scores, and save money for retirement and other important life events. Register at go.illinois.edu/TalkMoney for one or more sessions held on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. (CT).

Weekly topics include:

- Who are You with Money? (Feb. 2)
- How Much is Too Much Debt (Feb. 9)
- Fair Access to Credit (Feb. 16)
- Debt Repayment Strategies (Feb. 23)
- Credit Scores Revealed (March 2)
- Secrets for Financial Success (March 9)
- Framing Biases, Overcoming Hurdles (March 16)
- Make Your Savings Grow (March 23)



Four Seasons of Gardening: Therapeutic Value of Nature Feb 16, 1:30 p.m. Register at: go.illinois.edu/fourseasons

Are you stressed from having to practice social distancing? Can't go anywhere? Do anything? Spending time in Nature can help soothe and heal. Join University of Illinois Extension horticulture educator, Mary M. Fischer, as she presents research-based studies to support the healing powers of Nature.



Dare to Dream Virtual Series Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. February 16 – March 23

The year 2020 brought many challenges to everyone, and we are still struggling with our loss of normal. As we move into 2021, what is your plan to remain hopeful? Do you have goals or dreams you have forgotten about?

“Now is the perfect time to reconnect with your passions, interests, dreams and goals,” says Community and Economic Development Educator Tiffany Macke with University of Illinois Extension.

The virtual Dare to Dream class offers a unique approach to life planning where participants will actively visualize their personal and professional lives, and creatively strategize how to move toward realizing their dreams.

Macke will be leading the six week consecutive program which will meet virtually on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. starting February 16. Sessions are free, fun, and interactive with group support, honest introspection, and creative expression encouraged. Register online at go.illinois.edu/DareToDream

For the love of mashed foods

Jenna Smith, Illinois Extension Nutrition & Wellness Educator



Squish it. Smash it. Smoosh it. Our very first taste of solid food most likely came in a mashed or pureed form. However, as we have aged into adults, we must not forget that we can still enjoy our inner-baby's love of mush. Here are four mashed foods that shouldn't be stopped when the high chair gets put away.

Potatoes. That's no surprise, right? Mashed potatoes and gravy remains a beloved food. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, needs to be used for more than the sweet potato casserole at Thanksgiving. Treat it as oatmeal, and microwave mashed sweet potatoes with milk and cinnamon; top with vanilla yogurt, nuts, and granola. This bowl will fill the tummy with fiber, protein, vitamin A and potassium.

Berries. Berries are delicious in their whole form, but heating and mashing them brings out their juices and intensifies their sweetness. Make a topping for whole-grain waffles, and not only will you get in a helping of antioxidant-rich fruit, but there will be no need for maple syrup! Simply place 2-3 cups of berries in a microwave-safe bowl, cover, and heat for 3-4 minutes; mash with the back of a fork or potato masher if desired.

Avocado. Guacamole is the most obvious use of mashed avocado, but avocado toast with egg is nothing short of genius. Spread mashed avocado over whole-grain toast, and top with either a sunnyside egg or sliced hardboiled egg. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and it's the perfect start to the morning.

Beans and Lentils. Open a can of beans or lentils, rinse with water and mash with a potato masher. Spread mashed pinto or black beans, sprinkled with seasonings, on a crisp tortilla for a yummy tostada. Mash chickpeas for a quick hummus spread, or mash lentils for an easy side dish. It's an inexpensive, quick, and protein-rich alternative to a main dish meat.

RECIPE

Sweet Potato Breakfast Bowl

1 medium sweet potato
2-3 Tablespoons nonfat milk
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Optional toppings: pecans, granola, raisins



Wash sweet potato and pierce with a fork. Place potato on microwave-safe plate and microwave 5 minutes or until it's fork tender. Remove skin, and mash sweet potatoes with milk and cinnamon in bowl. Serve with desired toppings.

Protection with Vaccination

Sonia Lopez, Illinois Extension Community Health Educator



Immunizations work by training our body to fight against infectious diseases. Vaccines are made using a weak form of the virus or bacteria that causes the disease, toxins created by microorganisms, or proteiproducs made in a lab. Vaccines are administered to help the body develop antibodies against a specific illness. After being vaccinated, the person's new antibodies can practice fighting the disease. In the future, the trained antibodies will protect the vaccinated person when they come in contact with the illness.

Most vaccines are injected but some can be administered by mouth or sprayed into the nose. Common side effects of vaccines are pain and redness at the injection site and fever. Serious reactions are rare and less common than the disease itself.

Vaccines are not just for children; we need vaccines throughout our lives! Every year we need a seasonal flu vaccine. Adults may need a tetanus booster vaccine every ten years. Vaccines are also important when living in close quarters with others, for example college students. Vaccine needs vary by region so check with your doctor before moving or traveling abroad. During the reproductive years, it is important to be up to date on vaccines before conceiving since some vaccines can't be administered during pregnancy.

Vaccines offer protection against many infectious diseases and are especially important for people with chronic conditions. Immunizations allow us to protect others who may be unable to get vaccinated. Ask if you are up to date on vaccines at your next wellness visit. To learn more about vaccines visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.