

### Heart Health 101

Your heart is one of the most important organs in your body. It beats over 100,000 times a day, pumping blood and oxygen to every part of you. But are you doing enough to keep it strong? Heart disease is often thought of as something that affects older adults, but the habits you build now will shape your heart health for life. The good news is that small changes can make a big impact. By focusing on movement, nutrition, stress management, and sleep, you can strengthen your heart and set yourself up for long-term health.

#### Ways to Keep Your Heart Strong:

**Stay Active** – Regular physical activity strengthens your heart and keeps your blood flowing smoothly. You don't need to spend hours at the gym to be active. Walking, biking, dancing, playing sports, or even just stretching can help. Aim for at least 30 minutes of movement every day.

**Eat Smart** – The food you eat plays a huge role in heart health. Processed foods, fast food, and sugary drinks can lead to long-term health problems. Instead, focus on whole foods that provide essential nutrients. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains in your meals. Swap out sugary drinks for water or herbal tea and try to limit your intake of salty snacks and fried foods.

**Drink More Water** – Your heart works hard to pump blood through your body, and staying hydrated helps it do its job efficiently. Dehydration can make your heart work harder, leading to fatigue and headaches. Carry a water bottle with you and set reminders to drink throughout the day.

### School Nurse Expertise

From Shelly Tofte,  
School Nurse of Milton  
School District:

"Practicing kindness to others (and yourself) has been linked to better stress management, improved heart health and even living longer! By taking time to be kind, we benefit in so many ways.

Kindness not only benefits the heart physically but also improves mental well-being by reducing anxiety and depression which further contributes to our overall health. Practice random acts of kindness, volunteer and don't forget to be kind to yourself, too.

No matter how big or small, kindness matters!"

### National Pizza Day: February 9th

Did you know pizza can be made heart-healthy? Celebrate National Pizza Day by making your own pizza at home! Use a whole-grain crust, top it with tomato sauce, and load it up with colorful veggies like spinach, peppers, and mushrooms. Sprinkle some low-fat cheese on top and bake for a delicious, healthy treat. Turn it into a family event and let everyone pick their favorite toppings. Yum!

### The Power of Friendship

Good friends make life better. They help you laugh, support you through tough times, and even improve your health. Strong friendships can lower stress, boost confidence, and make everyday life more enjoyable. But real friendships take effort—so how can you build and maintain them?

#### How to Be a Great Friend

**Listen and Be Present** – Put down your phone, make eye contact, and really listen when your friends talk. Being there for them, even in small moments, strengthens your bond.

**Stay Connected** – Friendships don't last without effort. Send a quick text, make plans to hang out, or check in just to say hi.

**Be Supportive** – Cheer on your friends' successes and be there when they need encouragement. A simple "You got this" can mean a lot.

**Handle Conflict Maturely** – Disagreements happen. Instead of ghosting or arguing, talk it out with respect and understanding.

**Make Time for Fun** – Whether it's a movie night, a game, or just hanging out, spending time together creates stronger connections.

**Building a Strong Friend Group** Be inclusive. Introduce friends to each other, invite someone new to join, and create a positive, supportive circle. A great friend group lifts each other up and makes life more fun.