

## Small Steps to a Healthy Heart

February is American Heart Month. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States which is why it's so important to take the small steps to a healthy heart.

Learn about risks you can control, such as knowing your numbers, eating healthy, and being active, versus those you can't control, age, gender, and family history.



### Activity #1 – Wear Red Day, Friday, February 4, 2022

National Wear Red Day is Friday, February 4. Show your support by wearing red and encourage others to do the same to bring awareness and education about heart disease.

### Activity #2 – Move with a Doc, Tuesday, February 8 at 12 pm

Join Dr. Shah in our Move with a Doc series to learn more about the impact sodium can have on your body. Participants are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to learn and move your body in any way of your choosing while you listen! Click [here](#) to register. Missed the live webinar? Check out the [video library](#) and scroll to the Move with a Doc section.

### Activity #3 – Test your Blood Pressure & Cholesterol Knowledge

How much do you know about blood pressure and cholesterol and the steps you can take to lower your risk? For each statement, select if blood pressure or cholesterol applies, then read more information on the following page to find your answers.

### Activity #4 – Give your Heart Some Love

Give your heart some extra love and build heart-healthy activities into your daily self-care routine. Throughout the month of February, complete things that are both good for you and important to you. Color in a puzzle piece after completing activities in each category.

For questions or more information, please email [wellness@wellfirstbenefits.com](mailto:wellness@wellfirstbenefits.com)

## Test Your Blood Pressure & Cholesterol Knowledge

Do you know the difference between blood pressure & cholesterol? Better yet, do you know your numbers? For each statement, select if blood pressure or cholesterol applies, then read more information on the following page to find your answers.

|  | Blood Pressure           | Cholesterol              |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. High _____ is often called the “silent killer” because it doesn’t show symptoms.          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. _____ changes throughout the day to match your activity level.                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. HDL is a “Healthy” type of _____.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. _____ is a waxy substance found in your cells.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Salt is a major contributor to increased _____.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. A surplus of this can build up and form plaque in your arteries (called atherosclerosis). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Your liver creates _____ and makes all that you need.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. _____ is needed to make hormones and vitamins.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. _____ is also known as hypertension.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. LDL, the “Lousy” _____ may lead to the buildup of plaque in your arteries.               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. Stress can contribute to high _____.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. For _____, a healthy value is <i>under</i> 120 and <i>under</i> 80.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Some _____ comes from your diet; meats, poultry, and dairy.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. A blood test is needed to know _____.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. _____ has a top number and a bottom number.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

# What's the Difference Between Cholesterol & Blood Pressure?

**Blood pressure** is the amount of pressure pushing against the walls of your arteries as your heart pumps and rests. Arteries are blood vessels that carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body. Blood pressure changes throughout the day based on your activities. Having blood pressure that measures higher than normal consistently may result in a diagnosis of high blood pressure (or *hypertension*). High blood pressure is often known as the “silent killer” because it shows no symptoms. The blood pressure reading is recorded as two numbers:

- **Systolic** (top number) is the amount of pressure exerted each time your heartbeats.
- **Diastolic** (bottom number) is the amount of pressure in arteries when your heart is resting between beats.

| Blood pressure category                               | Systolic mm Hg (top #) | and/or | Diastolic mm Hg (bottom #) |
|---|------------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| Normal (healthy blood pressure)                       | Less than 120          | and    | Less than 80               |
| Elevated  | 120-129                | and    | Less than 80               |
| High blood pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1            | 130-139                | or     | 80-89                      |
| High blood pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2            | 140 or higher          | or     | 90 or higher               |
| Hypertensive crisis (consult your doctor immediately) | Higher than 180        | and/or | Higher than 120            |

Source: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/understanding-blood-pressure-readings>

A few years ago, medical experts changed how we think about blood pressure levels. Stage one high blood pressure is now classified as above 130/80, not 140/90 like before. This change was made because blood pressures in the 130s/80s are now understood to bring twice the risk of cardiovascular complications as people with normal blood pressures. However, most people in this category won't require medication unless they already have had a heart attack, stroke, or kidney complications.

**Cholesterol** is a waxy substance that your body needs to build cells and make vitamins and other hormones. Cholesterol comes from two sources: your liver, which makes all the cholesterol you need, and from your diet: meat, poultry, and dairy products. These foods are high in saturated and trans fats and cause your liver to make more cholesterol than it otherwise would and may lead to an unhealthy level. A blood test is needed to measure cholesterol. Two types of cholesterol are:

- Low-density lipoprotein or LDL cholesterol (also called the “lousy” or “bad”) may cause plaque (fatty deposits) to build up in your blood vessels (atherosclerosis).
- High-density lipoprotein or HDL (also called the “healthy” or “good”) carries the LDL(bad) cholesterol away from the arteries and back to the liver where it is broken down and passed from the body.

**Cholesterol and High Blood Pressure and their impact on Heart Disease:** When there is too much plaque build-up in your arteries, it starts narrowing blood flow, and/or an area of plaque can rupture. If that happens, your body creates a clot to fix the rupture which blocks blood from flowing through a critical artery, ultimately causing a heart attack. The plaque can also cause your blood vessels to harden and narrow, increasing blood pressure, which causes more strain on your heart and body overall. High blood pressure also increases the risk for plaque ruptures. Both are important in lowering your risk for heart disease and stroke.

**Get regular health screenings!** It is important to have regularly scheduled preventive health visits to know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers. Work with your Primary Care Provider to make a heart-healthy lifestyle plan and discuss health history and uncontrollable risks.

## You can improve both your cholesterol & blood pressure by:

- Eating a heart-healthy diet; specifically reducing sodium (salt) for blood pressure; reducing cholesterol and saturated/trans fats for cholesterol
- Reducing or quitting tobacco and substance use
- Creating and maintaining healthy relationships
- Getting adequate sleep
- Getting regular physical activity (increases HDL and lowers LDL, and reduces blood pressure)
- Reducing stress (can significantly help to improve blood pressure)
- Maintain a healthy weight

# Give Your Heart Some Love

Throughout the month of February, color in a puzzle piece after completing an activity in each category.

## Your Area of Choice:

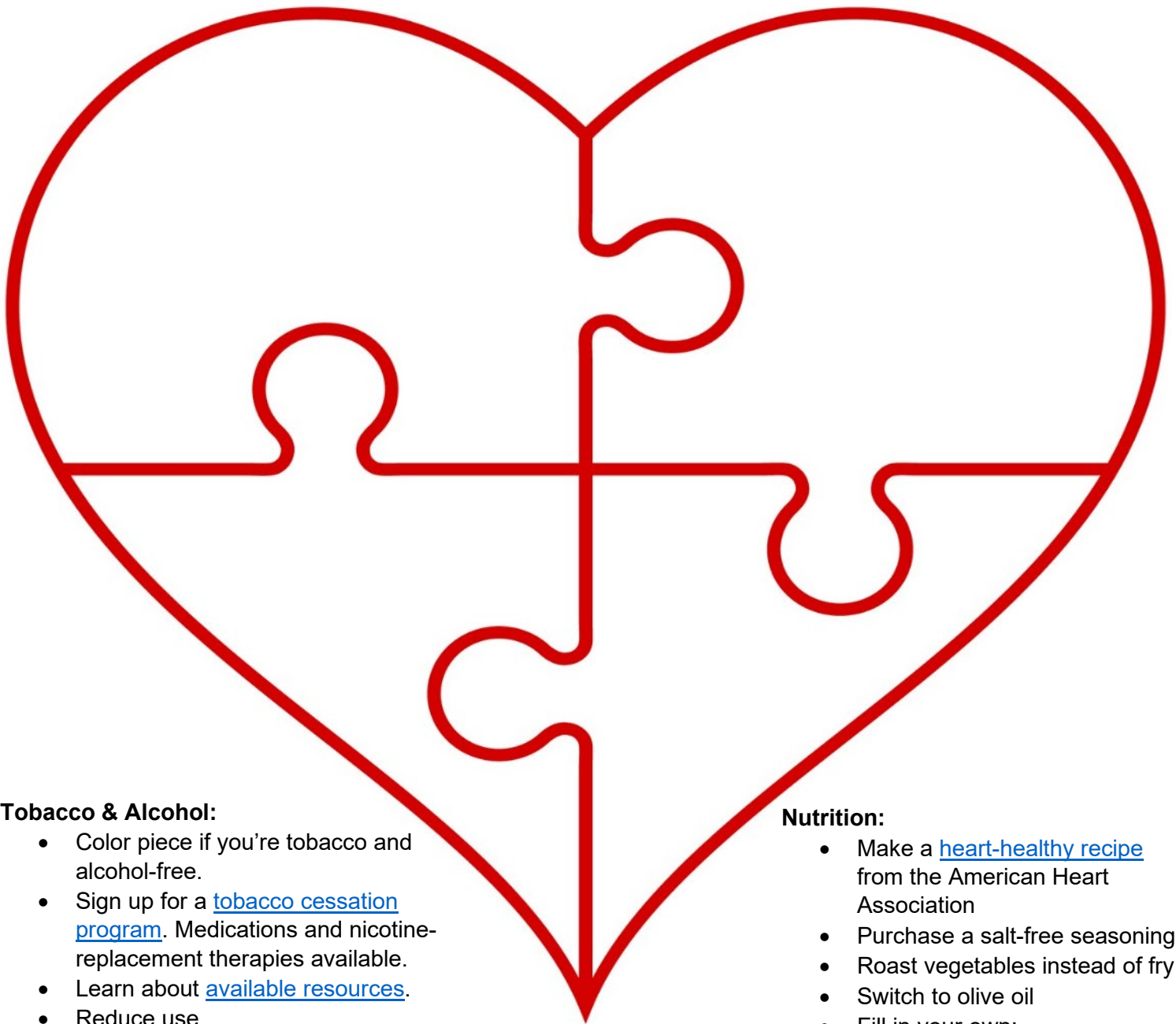
- Find a [program](#) to join to increase your physical activity, reduce stress, make a social connection, or increase positivity.
- Select a [REAL Goal](#) (realistic, easy, attainable life goal) to work toward.
- Fill in your own: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Know Your Numbers:

- Check your medical record to see what you are due for.
- Schedule your annual preventive exam
- Ask your family members about conditions that may run in your family.
- Fill in your own: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Tobacco & Alcohol:

- Color piece if you're tobacco and alcohol-free.
- Sign up for a [tobacco cessation program](#). Medications and nicotine-replacement therapies available.
- Learn about [available resources](#).
- Reduce use.
- Fill in your own: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Nutrition:

- Make a [heart-healthy recipe](#) from the American Heart Association
- Purchase a salt-free seasoning
- Roast vegetables instead of fry
- Switch to olive oil
- Fill in your own: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_