

FEBRUARY is American Heart Month

Heart-Health Valentine's Day Tips

Your sweetheart may have the key to your heart, but eating healthy and being physically active can be the key to a healthier heart. This Valentine's Day, indulge your sweetheart with a heart-healthy gift or date.



1. Rather than tempting your beloved with sweets, consider a gift that has more permanence. Search for a poem that describes your feelings and write it on beautiful paper for a handmade Valentine.
2. Quality time is one of the most meaningful gifts. Bundle up and plan an active outing such as sledding, ice skating, gathering wood for a fire, or if you're feeling adventurous, visit an indoor rock wall.
3. If your kids are having a Valentine's Day party at their school or day care, instead of sending candies, consider raisins, grapes, whole-grain pretzels, colored pencils or stickers as tokens of their friendly affection.
4. Cooking at home is an excellent way to control what and how much you eat. Take a date to a local cooking class to practice your skills or learn a new technique.
5. Prepare a romantic candlelit dinner at home using one of our heart-healthy recipes.
6. Give to one another by giving back. Ask a date to volunteer with you at a local organization. Giving back is a healthy habit that can boost your mood and help beat stress.
7. Use this day as an opportunity to tell your loved one how important they are to you, and share ways that you can support each other's health and wellness. Get started by taking the My Life Check Assessment.

8. Craving something sweet? Gift a beautiful fresh fruit basket to your loved one instead of giving sweets with added sugars.
9. Sharing is caring - if you go out for a romantic dinner date, order one entrée to share. Many restaurant servings are enough for two - splitting will keep you from overdoing it.
10. Don't forget to love Fido, too! Give your pet a Valentine and remember to walk or exercise them daily - getting active with your pet will benefit your health and your bond with your pets.
11. Take it slow - if you receive a luxurious box of chocolates from your sweetie, stick it in the freezer and enjoy in moderation over the next several weeks.
12. Take a long, romantic walk with your beloved - and try to make it a regular habit. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderately intense physical activity each week to help keep your heart healthy. You can reach this goal by walking briskly for at least 30 minutes five days each week.
13. Check out our tips for healthier preparation methods for cooking.
14. Rekindle an old flame - try preparing one of your sweetie's favorite recipes in a healthier way. These healthy substitutions can help you cut down on saturated fats, trans fats, salt (sodium), and added sugars, while noticing little, if any, difference in taste.

American Heart Association www.heart.org

Survivor Story

Meet Carlos Bermea

My name is Carlos Bermea and I had a stroke at age 38. I was shocked but grateful to be alive!

Prior to my stroke, I was living on the edge. My job selling cars had demanding hours and I was going through a very stressful and emotional divorce. I ate most of my meals out at restaurants and was more than 100 pounds overweight. I hadn't managed my high blood pressure for over three years and was drinking way too much alcohol due to my circumstances. It was obvious to others especially my mother that I was a ticking time bomb. She prayed God would intervene but she never imagined in this way.



My intracranial hemorrhagic stroke happened at work on November 26, 2016. I was transferred to Vista Medical Center where I was in the ICU for almost a month with a tracheostomy. After my discharge, I spend months rehabbing on my walking, talking and trying to complete daily activities needed to go home.

My motivation to get better was my son and being his father again. I was so thankful to have another chance and was going to make sure I did everything I could to get better. I lost over 100 pounds which helped with my blood pressure and worked on my rehab and recovery daily.

I won't say this has been easy but I never gave up. One of my biggest challenges is making new friendships. Many of my previous friends or acquaintances couldn't relate to my stroke and disabilities. My speech is challenging and many people won't give me the time to get my words out or will talk over or for me. When people get frustrated with me and my speech, I tend to talk faster and then look to my mother to speak for me. Since I'm Hispanic many think my speech is because Spanish is my native language and I don't speak English well but the truth is that I had a stroke and now struggle with aphasia.

Although there are challenges, I won't let this keep me down. I love spending quality time with my nine year old son and watching him play soccer or go to the movies with him. I can't drive and am so thankful to my mother, who is also my caregiver, and drives everywhere. She has been by my side through one of the most difficult times in my life.

My New Year's goal was to get more involved. I joined the Vista Brain Stormers stroke support group. I found there were other younger stroke survivors like myself who could relate to my journey. I'm also hoping to get trained as a SSEE Stroke Survivor2Survivor volunteer so I can make calls to stroke survivors and guide and encourage them through their stroke.

I love the quote "***Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in getting up every time we fall.***" - Confucius

SSEE Toll-free Lunch and Learn Series
Stroke and Nutrition, Go Further with Food!

(March is National Nutrition Month)

- Which nutrients effect the risk of stroke
- Tips for a healthy diet post stroke
- Making mealtime easier
- Healthy eating campaign and finding ways to cut back on food waste



WHEN

Tuesday, March 13th, 12:00 - 1:00pm (CST)

WHERE

Right in your home, office, use as a community outreach activity or stroke support meeting.

FREE

Toll Free Number: 1-800-920-7487 Passcode: 66523867#

Teleconference Flyer: [**Stroke and Nutrition - Go Further with Food!**](#)

Special Thanks

Kirkland & Ellis, LLP

SSEE would like to thank [Kirkland & Ellis, LLP](#) for providing Pro Bono legal services since 2010. Kirkland & Ellis has helped SSEE apply for 501(c) 3 nonprofit status, trademarks and registrations. Most recently they have provided legal support with our [Stroke Survivor2Survivor](#) (SS2S) copyrights registration. A special thank you to Bonnie Jarrett for helping us through this process.



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