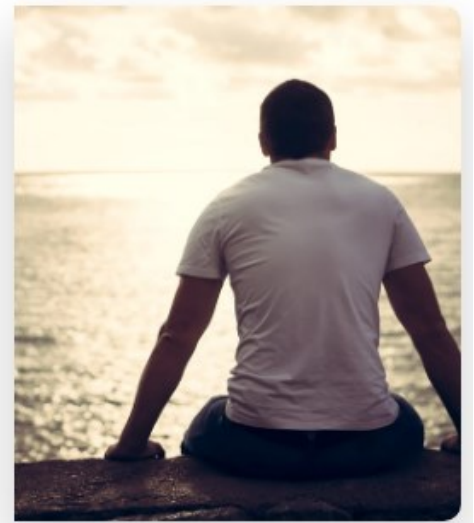


HEART & HEADLINES

American Heart Association Eastern States School Engagement

September 2023

September is Self Improvement Month



We all need to care for ourselves. We have the power to make choices to improve our lives.

How can we improve our mental, emotional and physical health? We can choose a healthier diet, exercise more, read more books, sleep more, aim to do once kind gesture every day, practice meditation and so much more.

This month's newsletter focuses on topics to improve your health (which, in turn, will positively influence our school communities, families and social circles).

Look out for special September dates in this newsletter to celebrate different forms of self improvement and [self-care](#).

September 4-10: Know Your Numbers Week (High Blood Pressure)

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	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

High blood pressure is when your blood pressure, the force of blood flowing through your blood vessels, is consistently too high. High blood pressure is known as the "silent killer" as there are no obvious symptoms most of the time.

When left untreated, the damage that high blood pressure does to your circulatory system is a significant contributing factor to heart attack, stroke and other health threats.

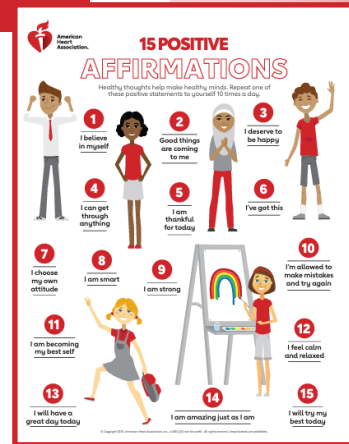
Start your self improvement journey this month by knowing your numbers. Learn more about [high blood pressure](#).

September 13: Positive Thinking Day

Healthy thoughts help make healthy minds. Improve your mindset and emotional health with positive affirmations. Affirmations are positive phrases or statements used to challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts.

Video: [4 Positive Affirmations](#)

Life Skills: [15 Positive Affirmations](#)



September 14: National Coloring Day

Take a minute to relax and color. Find a new coloring sheet of one of this year's heart heroes at the end of this newsletter.



September 16: National Dance Day

Exercise helps physical and mental well-being. Interested in learning a new hobby like dance? Improve your heart health with these fun dance routines, ["The Wave"](#) and ["Daisies"](#)!



September 18: National Respect Day

Showing respect lets others know you care about them and how they feel. Being a good active listener also shows respect. [Improve your critical communications skills](#) and [practice these actions to show respect](#).



September 21: World Gratitude Day

Recognizing what you're grateful for can have a big impact on your health and happiness.

[Simple Ways to Practice Gratitude](#)

["I'm Grateful For..." Activity](#)

Infographic: [Gratitude is Good Medicine](#)



- ♥ What makes you happy?
- ♥ Who do you appreciate in your life?
- ♥ What cheers you up on a tough day?
- ♥ What is something you are really looking forward to?

September 25: National Cooking Day

Healthy eating starts at home. Cooking more meals at home gives everyone in the family an opportunity to build better eating habits, one plate at a time. Explore more [cooking skills and resources here](#). There are even healthy recipes at the end of this newsletter!



September 29: World Heart Day

Raise awareness about cardiovascular disease (CVD), warning signs of heart attack and cardiac arrest, and steps to live healthier lives and aim to prevent CVD.

[New report details what to know about cardiovascular disease symptoms](#)

Infographic: [10 Ways to improve your heart health](#)

Another great way to celebrate World Heart Day is to join the American Heart Association's Kids Heart Challenge or American Heart Challenge and join a nation of lifesavers! Hands-Only CPR is a critical skill to save more lives. [Watch this video of Phil and his mother, Megan](#); they saved a life with Hands-Only CPR and learned this life saving skill through Phil's school and their Kids Heart Challenge program!

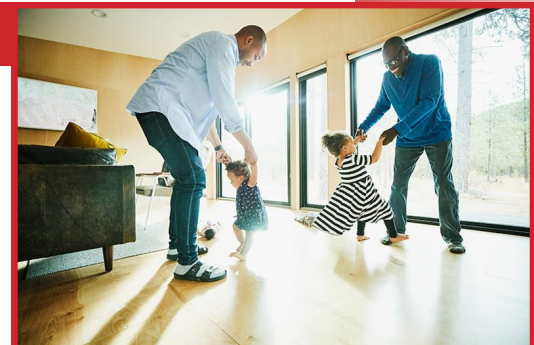


Every stage. Every age. We're with you. Click [here](#) to learn more about the American Heart Association's Kids Health Initiatives or [request more information or register your school](#) for the Kids Heart Challenge or American Heart Challenge.



September 30: Family Health & Fitness Day

Get the whole family moving more at home, outdoors or just about anywhere. Being more active as a family sets a good example for kids and begins healthy habits at a younger age. Here are some [daily tips to help keep your family active](#).



American Heart Association News

For pediatrician mom, 'back to school' starts well before first day of class

Any parent knows that back-to-school season can turn into one of the busiest times of the year. As a medical professional whose many roles include being a parent to two adolescents, Dr. Natalie Muth might know more than most. Read Dr. Muth's professional advice along with personal experience [here](#).



Head back safely to school sports with this expert advice

Competing as part of a school activity can be a great way to instill the exercise habit. So, we asked experts for advice on keeping things as safe and healthy as possible. [Read more here](#).



SLEEP AND HEART HEALTH: WHAT TO KNOW



One of the keys to heart health can be found beneath the covers: The American Heart Association recently added sleep to its checklist of what's important for a healthy heart.

Sleep now joins physical activity, diet, weight, blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, and nicotine exposure in what the American Heart Association calls Life's Essential 8™.

"Sleep is something you can do on an individual level to potentially protect or improve your heart health," says Dr. Marwah Abdalla, a cardiologist at

NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Unfortunately, many people are not getting enough sleep: Almost half of all Americans say they feel sleepy during the day between three and seven days a week, according to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), which recommends between seven and nine hours of sleep a night for healthy adults and between nine and 13 hours for children, depending on their age.

"We live on the edge in terms of sleep," says Dr. Ana Krieger, director of the Center for Sleep Medicine at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and Weill Cornell Medicine.

"We need to make sleep a priority."

1 Sleep Apnea's Impact on the Heart

One of the biggest threats to sleep and heart health is a common sleep disorder, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which occurs when the muscles in the back of your throat relax too much and narrow your airways, causing you to repeatedly stop and start breathing while you sleep.

Symptoms of sleep apnea include excessive tiredness during the day; loud snoring, punctuated by gasping or choking sounds; persistent headaches in the morning; dry mouth upon waking; and restless sleep, according to the NSF.

The frequent drops in oxygen "can lead to all sorts of stress on the body, including damaging the vessels that supply blood to the heart, and can cause direct injury to the heart itself," says Dr. Abdalla.

"The heart and lungs share space in the chest wall, so as the lungs labor to breathe, the heart is also subjected to that physical stress, which can thicken the heart muscles and affect the function of the heart," says Dr. Krieger.

Sleep apnea treatments include oral guards to bring the jaw forward to open up the airway space, or a CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine, a mask that helps restore airflow while you sleep.

2 Sleep Quantity Matters

How much you sleep matters. "When you don't sleep enough, you feel on edge," says Dr. Abdalla.

Dr. Abdalla is leading research to better understand the connection between sleep and blood pressure. In a large study published in the International Journal of Cardiology Hypertension, Dr. Abdalla and her colleagues assessed the sleep habits and blood pressure of nearly 900 working adults. The study found that shorter sleep duration is associated with higher blood pressure in a 24-hour period and potential cardiovascular risk.

3 Tips to Prioritize Sleep

While there is no simple button to press to make sure you get enough good, quality sleep each night, there are steps you can take to understand and respect your body's rhythm.

Dr. Abdalla and Dr. Krieger agree that preparing for a good night's sleep starts long before you tuck yourself under the covers. That means getting light exposure throughout the day, limiting caffeine intake, and managing stress.

They also encourage creating a dark, cold environment for sleep, and avoiding stimuli late at night, like exercise or too much time on your phone or other device. "One of the most offensive things to sleep is our phones," says Dr. Abdalla, who advises people to keep phones out of the bedroom and not use them as your alarm.

Stress and worry are other culprits that keep people awake at night, say Dr. Abdalla and Dr. Krieger, who both suggest keeping a worry log to get thoughts out. Meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises are other positive ways to relax and help mitigate worry.

Postpartum Preeclampsia: Rising blood pressure after childbirth



Five days after giving birth to her second child, Lauren Lowrey woke up with a sharp pain in her upper back. She couldn't draw in a deep breath.

Read more about Lauren Lowrey's postpartum preeclampsia experience [here](#).

*TV anchor and postpartum preeclampsia survivor Lauren Lowrey.
 (Photo courtesy of Amelia Moore Photography)*

Meet Our Youth Heart Ambassadors & Advocates!

The American Heart Association highlights real student stories to inspire healthy habits in schools nationwide.

This year's 2023-2024 [national class of Youth Heart Ambassadors](#) includes local children: **Camryn, Nora and Sophia!**

- ♥ **Camryn Childs, a third-grader of Manassas, Virginia,** was only a baby when he had a stroke. Today, Cam is in good health and is excited to be a part of the Kids Heart Challenge because it helps others understand kids like him.
- ♥ **Nora Polito, a fifth-grader of Newport News, Virginia** is inspired by her grandmother's fight with heart disease to live a healthy life and encourage her classmates to do the same.
- ♥ Born with a congenital heart defect, **Sophia Anna Ferraro, an eighth-grader of Sykesville, Maryland** was an infant when she received her first of many heart catheterizations. Later, at three years old, she underwent her first of three open heart surgeries. Sophia recently had third heart surgery in April and is doing well! She feels blessed to be able to share her heart journey with students this year.



Recipes of the Month





BE KIND