

Protecting Our Hearts. Honoring Black History. Celebrating Progress.

February is a time to reflect on what sustains us - our health, history, and our continued progress as a community. As we recognize American Heart Month, we are reminded that caring for our heart through healthy choices, movement, and stress management is an act of self-love and prevention. At the same time, Black History Month calls us to honor the trailblazers who paved the way and the local leaders whose courage, service, and resilience shaped Youngstown and opened doors for future generations. This month, we celebrate progress, acknowledging how far we've come, uplifting today's leaders, and recommitting ourselves to building healthier, stronger, and more empowered communities for the future.

American Heart Month: Let's Talk About Heart Health - For Real Life

Heart health isn't just about doctors' visits or scary statistics—it's about the everyday choices we make and how our bodies feel when something isn't right. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, and it impacts many families in our community. The good news? Small, consistent changes can make a big difference.

Who Is Most Affected by Heart Disease?

Heart disease can affect anyone, but it disproportionately impacts Black and Brown communities, women, older adults, and individuals with conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, or high cholesterol. Stress, limited access to healthy foods, lack of physical activity, and untreated medical conditions all play a role—but many of these risks can be reduced.

Everyday Tips to keep Your Heart Healthy:

You don't have to do everything at once, start where you are.

- Move your body: Aim for at least 30 minutes of movement most days (walking, dancing, cleaning, stretching, it all counts).
- Eat with intention: Add more fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. Cut back on fried foods, sugary drinks, and salty snacks.
- Watch your stress: Chronic stress affects your heart. Try deep breathing, prayer, meditation, journaling, or simply resting when you need to.
- Quit smoking & limit alcohol: These changes can dramatically reduce heart risk.
- Take care of your mouth: Gum disease can increase inflammation and has been linked to heart disease—brush, floss, and see a dentist regularly.
- Know your numbers: Blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and weight matter, don't ignore them.

Warning Signs to Look Out For:

Heart Symptoms don't always look the same, especially for women.

Common warning signs include:

- Chest pain, pressure, or tightness
- Shortness of breath
- Unusual fatigue
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Pain in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Nausea or sweating without cause

 Women may experience more subtle symptoms, such as extreme tiredness, indigestion-like pain, or discomfort without chest pain.

When to Call the Doctor vs. Go to the ER

Call your doctor if you notice:

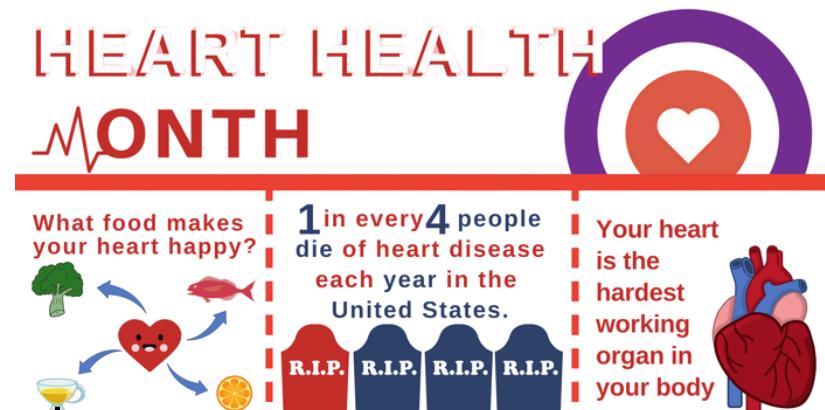
- Ongoing high blood pressure readings
- New or worsening fatigue
- Shortness of breath during normal activities
- Swelling in your legs, feet, or ankles
- Call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately if you experience:
 - Chest pain lasting more than a few minutes
 - Sudden shortness of breath
 - Fainting or sudden weakness
 - Pain spreading to your arm, jaw, or back

 **Do not wait it out. Trust your body. It's better to be safe than sorry.**

Making Heart Health a Lifestyle—not a Season

Becoming healthier doesn't mean being perfect. It means making better choices more often, asking for help when needed, and listening to your body. Whether it's swapping one meal, taking a short walk, or scheduling that overdue appointment, each step matters.

Your heart works hard for you every day. This month let's show it some love. 



Director's Corner: My Fitness & Wellness Journey

I want to share a little personal update with you. ❤️

Over the past few weeks, I've made intentional changes to my diet, cutting back on fried foods, sweets, and processed snacks—and I'm proud to say I've lost 6 pounds so far.

I've also been intentional about staying active by using my membership at the Richard W. & Eugenia C. Atkinson Recreation Center, where I've been participating in YO Boxing, Fitness Remix, and Bible Bootcamp classes. These workouts have helped me stay consistent, get my heart rate up, and stay grounded, supporting both my physical health and overall wellness as I continue this weight-loss and healthy lifestyle journey.

The biggest difference I've noticed.

🌟 Fewer hot flashes and night sweats since changing how I eat.

This journey isn't about perfection—it's about progress. If you're on your own wellness journey, know that small, consistent steps truly add up.

