

Heart Health: beyond eating vegetables and a brisk walk

By Lacy Wolff, ERS Health Promotion Administrator



When we hear information about heart health, we often hear the dire warnings of heart disease, the world's #1 killer. We are warned that behaviors like using tobacco, eating fried foods, and not moving enough can lead to an unhealthy heart. As a health educator and wellness coach for the past 20 years, I have learned that most of us know what

good and bad health behavior looks like. But knowing and doing are different things.



What we can't see:

For a moment, just consider this miraculous beating object in the center of your chest. You can even put your hand over it and feel it beating in there, just working day after day, breath after breath for our entire lives. For the most part, we don't even notice it's there. Behavior is key: Heart health has a genetic component, but research has shown that behavior is a much better indicator of how long our hearts will continue to work for us. The larger challenge with heart health is seeing that the tiny, day-to-day things that we do are impacting our heart. And, there is great news about heart health; the heart can heal, even if there is damage or blockage. While nutrition and physical activity are both important, there is more to consider, including healthy relationships, managing stress, sleep, and other things that contribute to strong mental health. We cannot separate the mind from the body. At ERS, we want to take a whole-person, day-by-day approach when it comes to heart health. By helping our participants build healthy habits, these habits will support a long and productive life well into retirement. The good news is, if you are interested in improving your health and well-being, you have resources to help you do that. Every person is unique and may need different things at different times. We want to support you wherever you are on your journey to good health. No shame, just a sincere desire to help you find the things you need to help you be your best self.

Here are a few resources you may find beneficial if you want to improve your heart health:

- Take an online health assessment. This is a great way to gauge your current health status, your personal health behaviors, and goals. HealthSelect participants can learn how to access the online health assessment and more through [this tutorial video](#). HMO participants can learn more through the [ERS Wellness Resources webpage](#).
- See your primary care physician for an annual physical at no cost to you. While we don't always want to go to the doctor, this is an important aspect of good health. Find out your numbers, like your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose levels.
- If you are a HealthSelect participant, enroll in a [virtual weight management program](#). There are two programs available to you that focus on small steps, week after week, that add up to lasting change over time.
- Join us for our regularly scheduled webinars that focus on the many aspects of health: mental, physical, and emotional. See what's next through our calendar: [ERS Wellness Calendar](#)



Friday, February 5th is National Wear Red Day. Show your support for women's health whether you are in the office or working from home on a Zoom call. We would love to see and share your photos! Send them to wellness@ers.texas.gov

Get heart smart with these resources from the American Heart Association

No matter how old you are—or aren't—you can start taking better care of your heart now! [Learn how.](#)

Are you following [Life's Simple 7](#) to make improvements to your heart health? In addition to learning about Life's Simple 7, the AHA offers its online test, "My Heart Score," to help you understand where you can make improvements.

[Learn more about heart disease.](#)

Getting medical care quickly can make all the difference in your recovery from a heart attack or stroke. [Know the symptoms](#) so you can get care without delay.