

# HEALTHY MONDAY'S TOOL KIT: FEBRUARY 2026 EDITION

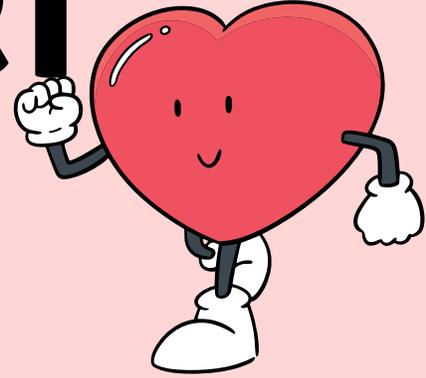


ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT



900 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, NJ 07044

# AMERICAN HEART MONTH 2026



**February is American Heart Month**, a time to raise awareness about heart disease—the leading cause of death in the United States—and to encourage heart-healthy habits for people of all ages.

Heart disease affects millions of individuals and families each year, but many risk factors are preventable. American Heart Month is an opportunity to educate our communities on how small, consistent lifestyle changes can significantly improve heart health and overall well-being.

## Why Heart Health Matters

Heart disease and stroke can be influenced by factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, physical inactivity, and poor nutrition. Disparities in access to care and healthy resources can increase risk, making education and prevention efforts especially important in our communities.

## Ways to Protect Your Heart

- **Stay Active:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.
- **Eat Heart-Healthy Foods:** Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and limit sodium and added sugars.
- **Know Your Numbers:** Monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels regularly.
- **Quit Smoking:** Smoking greatly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- **Manage Stress:** Prioritize sleep, relaxation, and mental well-being.
- **Schedule Preventive Care:** Routine checkups can help detect risk factors early.

## Take Action This February

During American Heart Month, we encourage individuals, families, and organizations to:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke
- Share heart-health education within their networks
- Participate in local wellness activities and screenings
- Commit to one heart-healthy habit that can be sustained year-round
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## Our Commitment

*We remain committed to promoting cardiovascular health through education, prevention, and equitable access to resources. By working together, we can help reduce the burden of heart disease and build healthier communities.*

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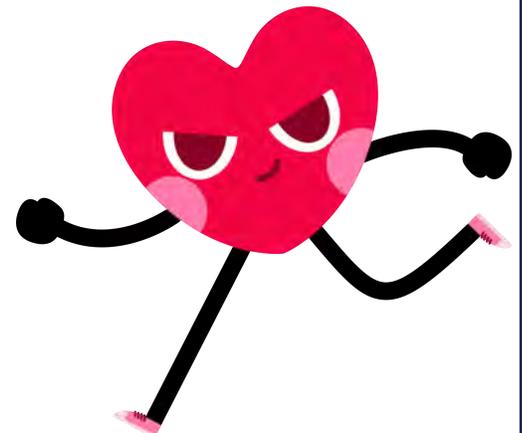
## **WHAT IS THE HEALTHY MONDAY CAMPAIGN?**

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While we are encouraged to prioritize our health every day, the Healthy Monday campaign provides a weekly reset. Healthy Monday is a public health initiative that encourages individuals and organizations to commit to healthier behaviors each Monday as a way to prevent chronic disease and build lasting habits.

In Essex County, the Healthy Monday campaign will focus on children and their parents by providing a weekly toolkit every Monday. Each month will highlight a new theme, with age-appropriate topics relevant to students in grades K–12.

Welcome to the Essex County Healthy Monday Campaign for the month of February, where the focus is heart health.



# LESSON 01: MEET YOUR HEART

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The heart is one of the most important organs in the human body and plays a central role in overall health. It is a strong muscle that pumps blood continuously throughout the body, delivering oxygen and nutrients that cells need to function and survive. Every part of the body depends on the heart, including the brain, lungs, muscles, and organs.

When the heart is working properly, the body has the energy it needs to move, learn, grow, and heal.

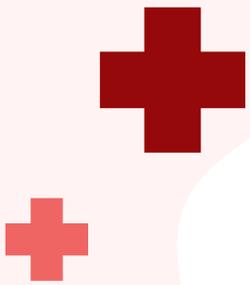
Understanding how the heart works helps students recognize why caring for it is essential at every stage of life.

As people move, rest, and experience emotions, the heart responds by adjusting its speed. During physical activity, the heart beats faster to supply more oxygen to the muscles.

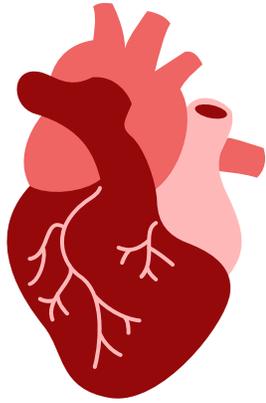
When resting or sleeping, the heart slows down while still maintaining steady blood flow. These natural changes show how the heart supports the body's needs throughout the day. Learning to notice these changes can help students develop awareness of their own bodies and understand how daily habits affect heart health.

Building knowledge about the heart encourages students to see health as something they can influence through their choices. Early understanding supports lifelong habits that protect the heart and promote overall well-being.





# MEET YOUR MIGHTY HEART!



## Your heart is a muscle!

It pumps blood all around your body so you can:



Run



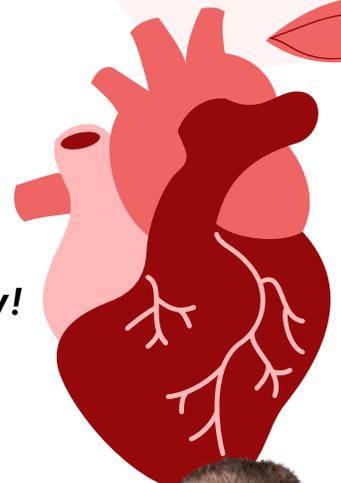
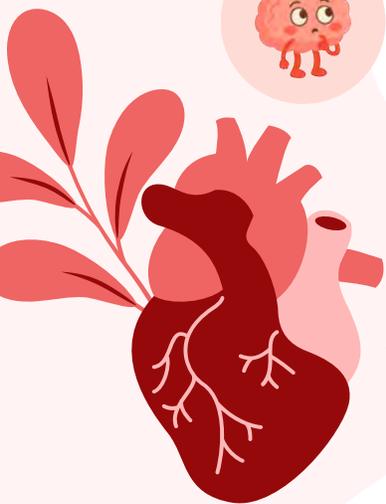
Play



Think



Grow



**Fun Fact:**

**Your heart beats over 100,000 times a day!**



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The Board of County Commissioners  
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# Know *Your* Heart

The heart is a powerful muscle that works nonstop to pump oxygen-rich blood throughout the body. This blood delivers oxygen and nutrients to your brain, muscles, and organs so they can function properly.

## Key Points:

- The heart beats faster during activity
- A strong heart supports energy and focus
- Movement strengthens heart function

### Health Tip:

- Regular physical activity supports heart health.



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# LESSON 02: FUELING THE HEART WITH HEALTHY CHOICES

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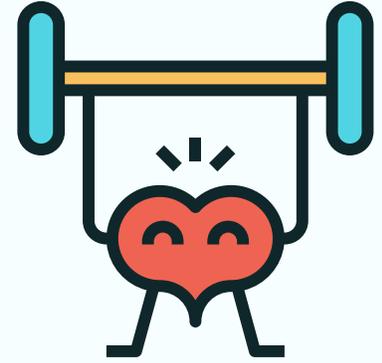
Nutrition is a key part of keeping the heart healthy and strong. The foods people eat provide the fuel the heart needs to function efficiently. Fruits, vegetables, whole foods, and balanced meals contain important nutrients that support blood circulation and help protect the heart from damage. Drinking enough water is also essential, as hydration helps blood move easily through the body, reducing strain on the heart.

Food choices can affect energy levels, mood, and concentration. Diets that include a variety of nutritious foods help support steady energy and overall physical health, while frequent consumption of foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats can place extra stress on the heart over time. Learning how food impacts the heart helps students understand the connection between nutrition and long-term health.

Developing healthy eating habits early encourages mindful decision-making and supports heart health throughout life. Understanding that small, consistent choices matter empowers students to take an active role in caring for their bodies.



# Happy Hearts Love Healthy Foods!



Healthy foods help your heart grow strong and give you energy to play.

## Key Points:



- Fruits and vegetables help your heart
- Drinking water keeps your body healthy
- Healthy foods help you feel good



Health Tip:  
Eat foods with many colors.



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# Eat for Your Heart

## Learning Message:

The foods you eat have a direct impact on heart health. Nutritious foods help your heart work efficiently and support healthy blood flow.

## Why It Matters:

Eating balanced meals can lower the risk of heart disease and support long-term health.

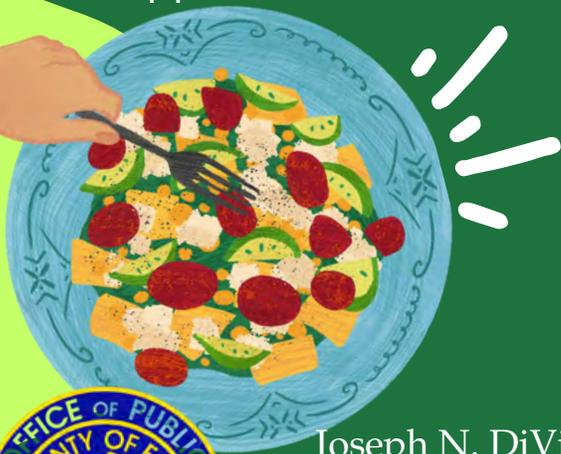
## Key Points:

- Fruits and vegetables provide fiber that supports healthy blood vessels.
- Whole grains help regulate cholesterol levels.
- Limiting foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat supports heart health.



## Health Tip:

Choose whole, less-processed foods whenever possible.



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# **LESSON 03: MOVING FOR A STRONGER HEART**

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Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to support heart health. When the body moves, the heart works harder to pump blood and deliver oxygen to muscles and organs. Over time, regular movement strengthens the heart, allowing it to work more efficiently and with less effort. This helps improve endurance, energy levels, and overall fitness.

Movement can take many forms, including walking, playing, dancing, stretching, or participating in organized sports. Physical activity also supports mental and emotional health by reducing stress, improving mood, and increasing focus. Even short periods of movement throughout the day can make a positive difference.

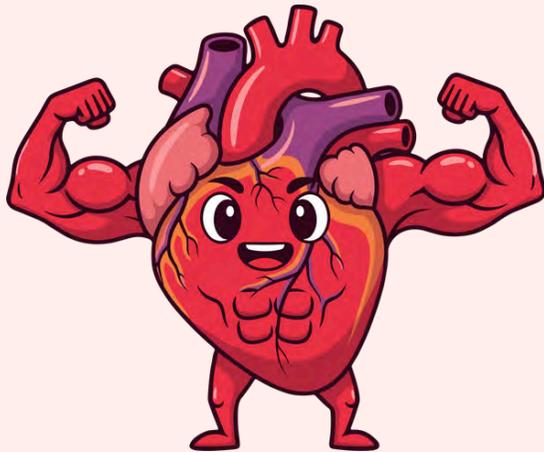
Understanding that movement does not need to be intense or competitive encourages participation at all ability levels. Making physical activity a regular part of daily routines helps build lifelong habits that protect heart health and support overall wellness.



# Let's Get Our Hearts Moving!

## Learning Message:

Moving your body makes your heart stronger and happier.



## Key Points

- Moving your body helps your heart get stronger, just like exercise helps your muscles
- When you move, your heart pumps blood to give your body energy

- Being active helps you run, jump, and play better
- Movement can help you feel happy, calm, and focused



- Playing outside, dancing, and sports all count as exercise
- Even short bursts of movement help keep your heart healthy



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# Move Your Heart!

Physical activity strengthens the heart and improves circulation. Regular movement helps your heart pump blood more efficiently and supports overall health.

**Why It Matters:**  
Movement also helps manage stress, improve sleep, and boost mood.

## 3 KEY POINTS:

Exercise helps lower the risk of heart disease.

Movement supports both physical and mental health.

Activities do not need to be intense to be effective.



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# LESSON 04: REST, EMOTIONS, AND A HEALTHY HEART

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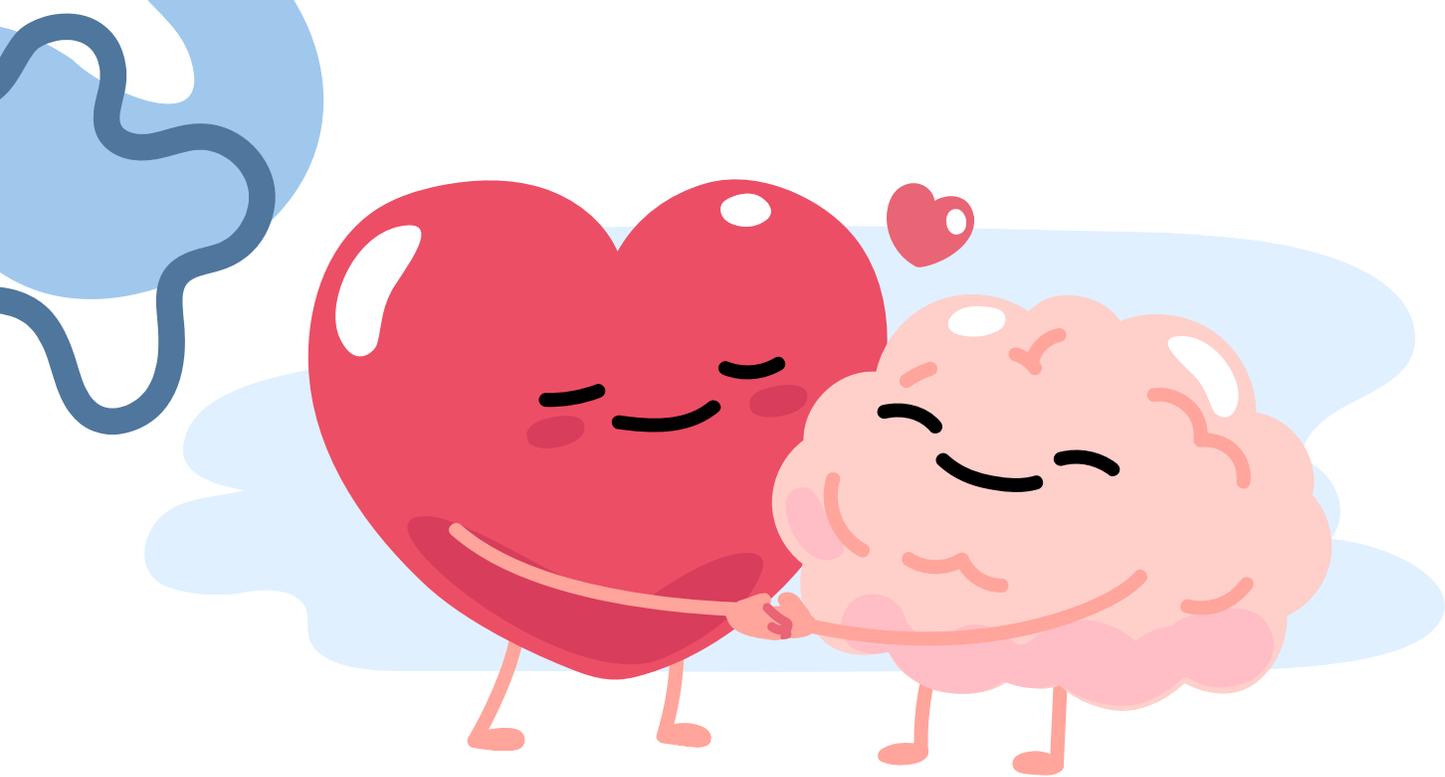
Heart health is closely connected to rest, emotional well-being, and stress management. Sleep allows the heart and body to recover, repair, and prepare for the next day. Without enough rest, the heart must work harder, which can affect energy levels, focus, and overall health. Establishing healthy sleep routines supports both physical and mental well-being.

Emotions and stress also influence how the heart functions. Strong emotions can cause changes in heart rate and breathing, while chronic stress can place additional strain on the body.

Learning healthy ways to relax, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, quiet activities, or talking about feelings, helps support a steady heart rhythm and emotional balance.

Understanding the connection between rest, emotions, and heart health encourages students to care for both their minds and bodies. Building healthy coping strategies supports long-term heart health and promotes resilience and overall wellness.





# ***CALM BODIES, HAPPY HEARTS***

**Rest and breathe to help your heart.**

**Sleep and calm feelings help keep your heart healthy.**

## **Key Points:**

- Getting enough sleep helps your heart rest and get ready for a new day
- When you feel calm, your heart can beat in a healthy, steady way
- Taking deep breaths helps your body and heart relax
- Talking about your feelings helps keep your heart and mind healthy
- Quiet activities like reading, drawing, or listening to music can help your heart feel calm



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# PROTECT YOUR HEART

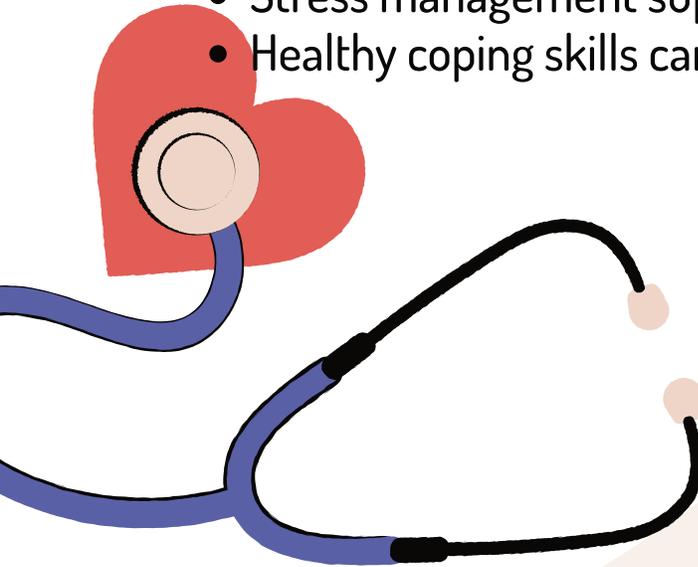
Heart health is influenced by more than diet and exercise. Sleep, stress management, and emotional health all play important roles.

## Why It Matters:

Chronic stress and lack of sleep can put extra strain on the heart over time.

## Key Points:

- Getting enough sleep helps regulate heart rate and blood pressure.
- Stress management supports heart and mental health.
- Healthy coping skills can protect your heart long-term.



## Health Tip:

Make time for rest, relaxation, and activities that help you feel calm.



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