



# Heart Health



## February 2017 Better Living for Texans Newsletter

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The month of February is all about love, so let's make sure and show our hearts some extra love this month! When making healthy food choices, it's important to know which foods your heart loves, and which foods harm your heart.

Although a food splurge with your sweetheart is okay every once in a while, you should limit the amount of sugar and sodium you consume on a daily basis. Diets high in sugar can cause a tendency for diabetes and weight gain, which causes extra stress on your hearts functions. High sodium, or salt, diets cause high cholesterol and high blood pressure which can cause clogged arteries in your heart.

An easy and efficient way to ensure that you choose heart healthy foods both in the grocery store and when eating out, is to look for foods that are colorful! Colorful foods, like tomatoes and bell peppers, get their bright colors from a powerful antioxidant called lycopene which helps to fight and prevent blood clots that cause stroke or heart attack. In addition to colorful foods, your heart loves foods that are high in fiber, such as fruits, whole grains, nuts, and beans. Fish is also a great food for heart health because it contains healthy unsaturated oils that fight the risk of heart disease as well as help you maintain a healthy weight. Another way to be sure you are consuming only heart healthy oils, is to use natural olive oil when cooking compared to processed fats and oils, like Crisco or lard, that are high in sodium and artery clogging components. Avoiding saturated or trans fats all together will lower your risk for heart disease!

Show extra love to your heart this month by establishing a heart healthy lifestyle! Remember to consume heart healthy foods, say no to foods high in sugar, sodium, and saturated/trans fats, and exercise for 30 minutes a day! For an easy exercise tip, see reverse.



Source: [manipalhospitals.wordpress.com](http://manipalhospitals.wordpress.com)

# Heart Healthy Exercise

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Exercising for heart health is as easy as walking! Leading an active lifestyle is as simple as walking for 30 minutes a day. Cardiovascular exercises (such as walking, jogging, riding your bike, and any exercise that keeps your heart rate elevated for a sustained period of time) help lower your risk for heart disease by burning fatty plaque that can clog your hearts arteries. Your February exercise tip is to show love to your heart just by walking! A great way to establish a walking routine this month is to join your Brazos Valley community in participating in Walk Across Texas!



**Walk Across Texas!** is an 8-week fun and free fitness program for teams of eight people, individual walkers, or school classes!

**Event Dates:** February 18-April 15, 2017

**Registration Deadline:** February 25, 2017

### About the Program

- Teams have a friendly competition to see who can accumulate the most miles walking, jogging, biking, dancing, aerobics, or riding a stationary bike, in order to “walk” the length of Texas by reaching 833 miles of physical activity!
- Everyone’s miles are recorded online.
- Enter your miles and track your team and others online!
- Prizes are awarded to participants who walk the most miles!

### For more information:

- Visit us online at: <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu>
- Call your county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 979-823-0129.
- Like us on facebook-Walk Across Texas - Brazos Valley
- Or visit our Brazos County Walk Across Texas! Taskforce website at [www.brazoswat.com](http://www.brazoswat.com)

## Kick-Off Event

Post Oak Mall (JC Penney Entrance)

Saturday; February 18, 2017; 10:00 a.m.

*\*\* Freebies while supplies last!*



# Heart Healthy Recipes

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## Spaghetti Squash with Tomatoes, Basil, and Parmesan

Makes: 4 Servings

### Ingredients

- 1 spaghetti squash (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 teaspoons dried basil (or 1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped)
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes (thinly sliced)
- salt and pepper (to taste, optional)

### Directions

1. Place the 2 squash halves, cut side down, in glass baking dish. Add about 1/4 cup water and cover with plastic wrap. Microwave on high 12 minutes or until soft when pressed. Let stand covered for 3 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, whisk oil, basil, oregano and 2 Tablespoons of parmesan cheese. Stir in tomatoes and season lightly with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Scrape squash out with a fork, add strands to tomato mixture and toss until combined.
4. Sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon of Parmesan cheese.
5. Serve and enjoy! 😊

## Creamy Tomato Soup

Makes: 6 Servings

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup onion (chopped)
- 2 cloves garlic (chopped)
- 1 1/2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 3 cups low-sodium diced tomatoes (canned)
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

### Directions

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and cook until soft, approximately 3 minutes.
2. Add chicken broth, water, and tomatoes, bring to boil. Lower heat and cook uncovered for 25 minutes or until mixture begins to thicken.
3. Remove from heat. Blend in a blender until smooth, if you'd like. Soup can be smooth or chunky. Return to pot and heat over medium heat until soup is hot.
4. Stir in milk and black pepper to taste.
5. Serve and enjoy! 😊