

## February is Heart Healthy Month!

By Ashley J. Sicilia



**February, the month of love, is heart healthy month!** In an average lifetime, a heart will beat more than 2.5 billion times. That's a lot of mileage! Just like a car, maintenance and care should be a top priority to ensure your heart is healthy.

What are some things we can do to ensure we are keeping our hearts healthy? Diet is obviously important. But here is an interesting fact for you. A study conducted in Spain concluded there is no link between heart disease and fried foods. However, researchers theorize this could be due to the type of oil used. In Spain, most fried

foods are fried in olive oil or sunflower oil. **Sticking to fats that are less prone to break down into harmful trans-fats will likely reduce your risk of heart disease.**

But, what about other things outside of what we eat? What can we actually *do* to help our hearts? One source claims that too much commuter traffic can be linked to heart disease. The traffic, causes stress, which leads to increased blood pressure, which in turn can lead to heart disease. Those who commute to work every day during typical rush hours probably run into traffic. An early a.m. commute could be a breeze by getting on the road sooner than later.

**Consider leaving for work a bit earlier to avoid the panic and rush that comes with heavy traffic.** There is a philosophy that says getting to work early will make you a more successful person. Your heart will thank you later!

Remember dental health month in October? Well here is a double for you – a theory on heart disease and dental health. Surprisingly, **gum disease is linked to heart disease.** This is possibly due to bacteria from your gums traveling in your blood stream. So, listen to your dentist and floss every day! According to Health Harvard, shared risk factors, such as smoking or an unhealthy diet, could explain the association, but it is still very possible that gum disease is its own risk factor for an unhealthy heart.

According to National Sleep Foundation, **getting a good night's sleep can help reduce your stress levels which will in turn reduce your risk for heart disease.** Sleep apnea and insomnia are two of the common quoted culprits. Try sticking to a regular sleep schedule – every day. CDC.gov suggests going to sleep at the same time and waking up at the same time – even on the weekends. Most people set alarms to get up in the morning. Why not try setting an alarm to remind yourself to go to bed on time? The iPhone bedtime feature is helpful.

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**Sedentary behavior is a real killer and some say that Netflix is “the new smoking”.** The number of hours you spend watching TV has a direct correlation on your risk for heart disease. In fact, according to WebMD, “every hour you spend watching TV on a daily basis may increase your risk by almost 20%.” Some other factors linked to heart disease are smoking and alcohol.

**Tycor’s monthly wellness challenge is to get less screen time. Whether it be time away from your phone or the TV, take ONE hour out of your day, every day, and do something that warms your heart that does not involve screen time. Try turning off your phone for best results!**

**It’s time to put down the remote, put away your phones, get moving and get laughing. Stay heart healthy by doing something that makes your heart smile!**

## **Sources**

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**Tycor Benefit Administrators, Inc.®**

850 Cassatt Road, Suite 310  
Berwyn, PA 19312

[www.tycorbenefit.com](http://www.tycorbenefit.com)