

FROM THE NUTRITIONIST

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Love Your Heart

You may think you're too young to worry about heart disease, but increasing numbers of teens and young adults have risk factors for it. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for adults in the United States, but many cases could be prevented through lifestyle changes and proper medical treatment. February has been named American Heart Month – and with all the focus on matters of the heart in February, it's a great time to think about how you can reduce your risks.

- **Improve your diet!** You don't have to give up every sweet treat or fried food you enjoy – but aim to make most of your diet heart healthy with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and fish – while limiting your intake of sodium, saturated fat, processed meats, alcohol, and sugar-sweetened drinks.
- **Exercise!** If you already do, great! If not, find new activities you enjoy – or revisit some old ones. There many options on campus to get you moving, like sports teams and clubs, fitness classes, and exercise facilities – and of course, walking or running the hills. With all these choices you're bound to find something you enjoy!
- **Decrease stress!** Sure, with so much to juggle it can be easy to get overwhelmed! But, it's important to find ways to unwind so stress doesn't get you down – try regular exercise, yoga, meditation, a hobby, or talking it out with a friend, relative, or counselor.
- **Avoid smoking and secondhand smoke!** Cigarette smoke is a known risk factor for heart disease. Keep in mind that the chemicals in e-cigarettes aren't good for your health either.
- **Know your numbers!** Talk to your healthcare provider about your BMI, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels – if any of these are high it could increase your risk of heart disease.

For more information about heart health, check out the American Heart Association website at www.heart.org

Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York state-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.