



American
Heart
Association.

Better U™



**A 12 Week Program To Improve
Your Overall Health**

Everybody loves a makeover.
This one is different; it can save your life.

**The American Heart Association's
Better U Challenge**

is a 12-week program that helps you
transform your overall health through small,
simple choices. Toss out fad diets and
trendy exercise regimens. We're going
to launch you on the path to a
Better U. Over the next 12 weeks,
you're going to acquire the skills
and information you need to lead your life
in ways that take better care of your heart.

**By opening this guide,
you've taken the first step.**

Welcome



Welcome to the 2020 Better U Challenge and congratulations on taking this first step toward improving your heart health.

I am thrilled you have committed to take charge of your heart health and begin this lifestyle change journey. Throughout the next 12 weeks, this book will serve as your step-by-step guide providing you with the tools and resources you need to achieve your personal health goals. Remember, you have the support

of your fellow Better U participants and your American Heart Association staff members who are here to cheer you on and help you along the way.

As a survivor, this cause is very near and dear to my heart and I've seen firsthand how making significant lifestyle changes can positively impact your heart health. As women, we are often taking care of everyone else around us, rather than ourselves. I encourage you to make time for yourself and focus on what steps you can take each week to become a "Better U."

Throughout your journey, I hope you will share what you are learning with your friends, family and colleagues to help us increase awareness of heart disease and stroke in our community. Your story will help to inspire more women to take charge of their heart health. Together, we will be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.

Best of luck!

- Sally Ross Soter

***The American Heart Association
Recommends the Following Guidelines
for a Healthy Diet:***

Fruits and Vegetables
At least 4.5 cups a day

Fish (Preferably Oily Fish)
At least two 3.5 ounce servings a week

Fiber-rich Whole Grains
At least three 1 ounce equivalent servings a day

Sodium
Less than 1,500 mg a day

Added Sugars (like Sugar-Sweetened Beverages)
No more than 450 calories (36 ounces) per week

Nuts, Legumes and Seeds
At least 4 servings a week

Processed Meats
No more than 2 servings a week

Saturated Fat
Less than 7% of total energy intake

Before You Start

What is your goal?

What is your blood pressure?

What is your cholesterol?

What is your resting heart rate?

What is your weight?



Week 1:

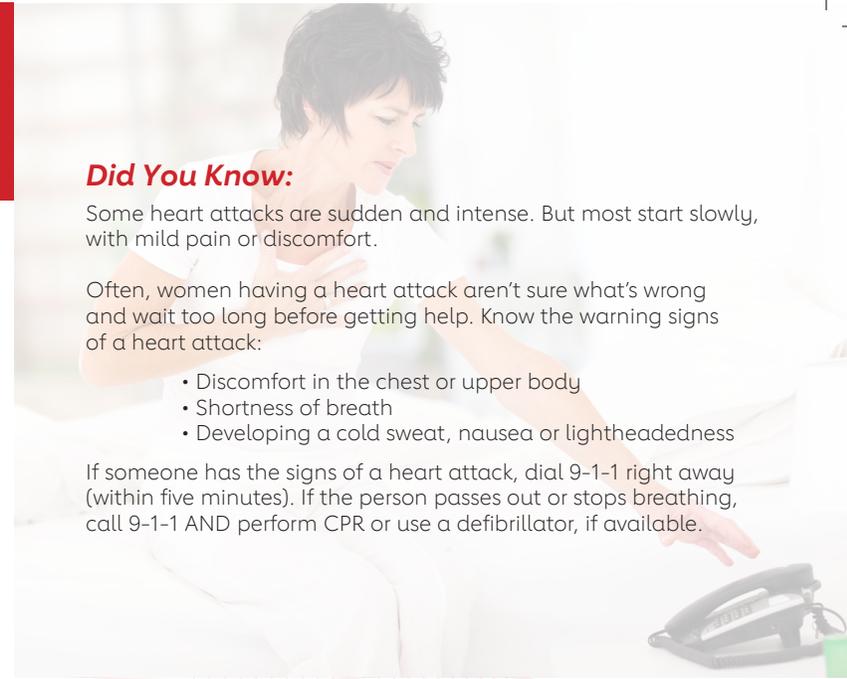
Get Started on a Better U

 **Set your Weekly Goal** _____

Top Tips:

- Set a routine
- Plan your meals and snack
- Work out an exercise regimen that works for you

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				



Did You Know:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense. But most start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort.

Often, women having a heart attack aren't sure what's wrong and wait too long before getting help. Know the warning signs of a heart attack:

- Discomfort in the chest or upper body
- Shortness of breath
- Developing a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

If someone has the signs of a heart attack, dial 9-1-1 right away (within five minutes). If the person passes out or stops breathing, call 9-1-1 AND perform CPR or use a defibrillator, if available.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 2:

Reduce Your Risk Factors

/ Set your Weekly Goal _____

Some risk factors you cannot change, like:

- Age
- Race
- Family history

Others you can control by changing your lifestyle. For example:

- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity or being overweight

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
Tuesday				
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Make a Difference

Small steps can make a big difference.

Here Are Some Thoughts to Get Started:

- Make time to walk. Brisk walking (3–4 mph or a 15–20 minute mile) is one of the most convenient ways to be more active.
- Add healthy ingredients like fresh or frozen vegetables, beans and brown or wild rice, and frozen or fresh fruit to favorite recipes. Try to eat at least 4½ cups of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Remove or cut down on less healthy ingredients by removing skin from chicken and using less cheese, butter and sugar. Eat less than 1,500 mg of sodium each day.



How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 3: Stick to Your Plan

/ Set your Weekly Goal _____

Research shows that women who track their eating and physical activity are more successful at improving them.

Why? The more you know, the better it'll go. You can see the choices you make, determine if you're meeting your goals, and learn what — if anything — stopped you.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
Tuesday				
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Physical Activity is Everywhere

Set a goal of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity (or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity) activity every week. It is easier to sneak in 10 minutes or more of activity throughout your day. Or increase the intensity of the activities you already do.

At Home:

Clean with vigor; take your kids or pet to the park to play; dig in the garden; put on an exercise DVD instead of a movie.

At Work:

Take a brisk walk break instead of a smoke or coffee break; use the restroom, copier, or fax machine farthest from your office; take the stairs.

When You Travel:

Walk briskly around the airport instead of sitting in the waiting area; stay in a hotel with a fitness facility and pack appropriate clothes and shoes to use it.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 4:

Surround Yourself with Support

/ Set your Weekly Goal _____

Better U Motivation

- Build on past success.
- Are your goals Specific, Measurable, Appropriate and Realistic?
- Count on Team Better U.
- Commit to change.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
Tuesday				
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Healthy Activities Can be More Fun if You Do Them With Your Support Team:

- Get a walking partner or start a walking club in your neighborhood or at work.
- Play active games or go on a bike ride.
- Walk your dog (furry friends can be supporters).
- Participate in local charity walks like the American Heart Association's Start! Heart Walk.
- Organize a heart-healthy potluck lunch or dinner party.
- Go to farmers' markets to find in-season fruits and vegetables.



How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 5:

Weight Control for Your Heart

Set your Weekly Goal _____

Here's how to get on track for an improved weight.

- Know your calories. Check the Recommended Number of Daily Calories chart. To start losing weight, reduce your food intake by 250 to 500 calories per day.
- Set a weight goal. If you are overweight, a reasonable goal is to lose 5 to 10 percent of your body weight. A safe rate for weight loss is one-half to two pounds per week.
- Stay balanced; Calories in = Calories out. Weight is all about balance. To keep your weight the same, calories in should equal the calories your body uses.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
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The Power to Change: Know Your BMI

BMI indicates if your body weight is healthy for your height. It's important to know the number because obesity is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. You can find a BMI calculator online or you can calculate it manually.

Here's the formula:

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{(\text{Your weight in pounds} \times 703)}{(\text{Your height in inches})^2}$$

*One foot = 12 inches

BMI	Weight Status
18.5 or Less	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Healthy
25-30	Overweight
31 or Higher	Obese

My BMI is:

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 6:

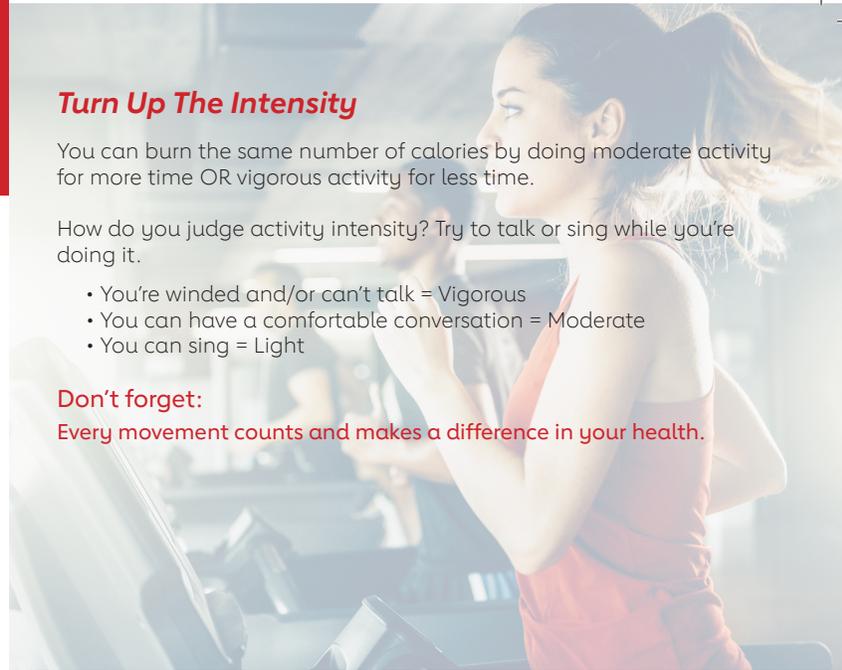
Break Through Barriers

Set your Weekly Goal _____

Tips for choosing your activities

- Get smart. Each week, try to do 150 minutes (30 minutes for five days) of moderately intense aerobic (endurance) activity. If you prefer, opt for 75 minutes of vigorous activity.
- Set goals. Consider your current fitness level, interests and lifestyle. Set reasonable goals that you can meet.
- Take a break. Break up activities into easy-to-manage bouts. For example, take three 10-minute walks throughout the day.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
Tuesday				
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Turn Up The Intensity

You can burn the same number of calories by doing moderate activity for more time OR vigorous activity for less time.

How do you judge activity intensity? Try to talk or sing while you're doing it.

- You're winded and/or can't talk = Vigorous
- You can have a comfortable conversation = Moderate
- You can sing = Light

Don't forget:

Every movement counts and makes a difference in your health.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Mid-Point Pulse Check

What is your goal?

What is your blood pressure?

What is your cholesterol?

What is your resting heart rate?

What is your weight?

MISSION STATEMENT:

To be a
relentless force
for a world
of longer,
healthier lives.



Week 7:

Learn the Truth About Cholesterol

/ Set your Weekly Goal _____

Four Steps to Change Your Cholesterol

- Step 1.** Reduce saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol in your eating plan. Follow the Fat and Cholesterol Recommendations to cut down the amounts you eat.
- Step 2.** Step up physical activity. Physical inactivity contributes to high cholesterol. Try to get 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise every week.
- Step 3.** Maintain a healthy weight by controlling calories in and out. Excess weight tends to increase LDL and reduce HDL levels. To lose weight, use more calories than you eat.
- Step 4.** Talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian about ways to control cholesterol. Fish oil supplements, plant stanols/sterols and cholesterol-lowering medications may be useful.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
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Raise Your Cholesterol IQ

Total cholesterol = Sum of fats in your blood

Less than 200 mg/dL	Desirable
200–239 mg/dL	Borderline high
240 mg/dL and above	High

LDL (bad) cholesterol

Carries cholesterol to the tissues, including the arteries. If LDL is too high, it can clog arteries and form plaque, increasing your risk for heart attack and stroke.

Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
100–129 mg/dL	Near optimal/above optimal
130–159 mg/dL	Borderline high
160–189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very high

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 8:

Increase Your Blood Pressure IQ

Set your Weekly Goal _____

Choose to Lower Your Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is reported as two numbers: systolic pressure over diastolic pressure. Systolic pressure is the force of blood in the arteries when the heart beats; diastolic pressure is the force when the heart is at rest. Everyone has — and needs — blood pressure. But too much can strain your heart and damage blood vessels, increasing your risk for heart attack and stroke. High blood pressure (or hypertension) is called the “silent killer” because many people have it for years without knowing.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
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What the Numbers Mean

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper number)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	Less than 120	&	Less than 80
ELEVATED	120-129	&	Less than 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (Hypertension) Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or Higher	or	90 or Higher
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (Hypertension) Stage 3	Higher than 180	&/or	Higher than 120

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 9:

Get the Lowdown on Diabetes

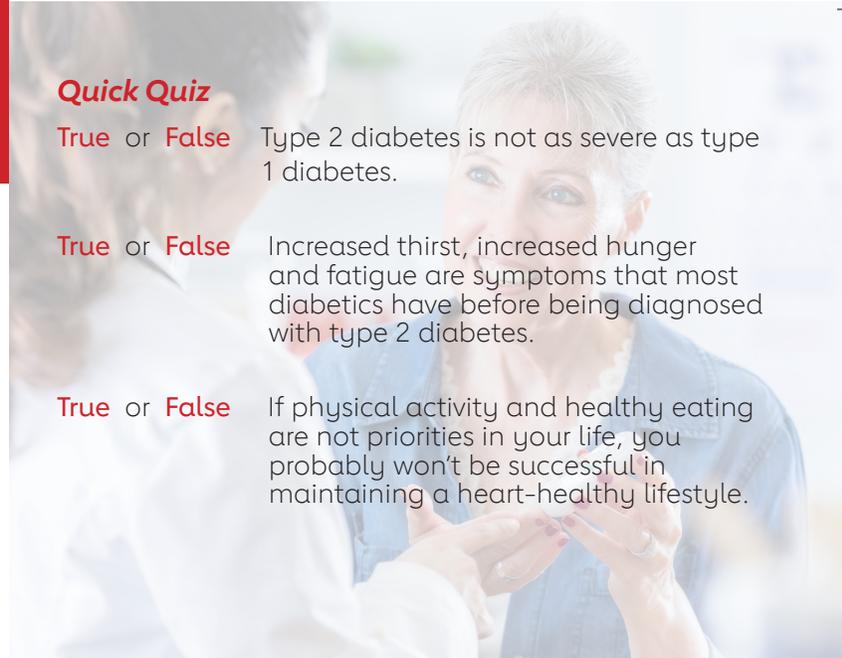
Set your Weekly Goal _____

Just the Facts

You may be asking: “Why are we talking about diabetes in a book about heart disease?” The truth is that diabetes greatly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. So it pays to understand the disease — how it is diagnosed and what to watch for.

The American Heart Association estimates that 63.2 million Americans 20 years or older have a condition called prediabetes. That’s when blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not diabetic. There may be no symptoms with prediabetes, so early checkups are a good idea.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
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Quick Quiz

True or **False** Type 2 diabetes is not as severe as type 1 diabetes.

True or **False** Increased thirst, increased hunger and fatigue are symptoms that most diabetics have before being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

True or **False** If physical activity and healthy eating are not priorities in your life, you probably won't be successful in maintaining a heart-healthy lifestyle.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 10:

It's All in the Family (History)

Set your Weekly Goal _____

Risk Factors Within Your Family and Your Race

From the color of your hair to the shape of your toes, you got lots of traits from your parents and grandparents. One of those could be an increased chance of developing heart disease and stroke. Children of parents with heart disease are more likely to develop it themselves.

Race also plays a role. In general, African-Americans have more severe high blood pressure and a greater risk of heart disease than Caucasians. Risk for heart disease is also higher among Mexican-Americans, American Indians, native Hawaiians and some Asian-Americans.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
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Make a Difference

- Put your health first. Many women say: "I have to take care of my family first. I'll take care of me later." You've got to give yourself some priority too. As flight attendants say during their safety briefings: "Put your oxygen mask on first so you can help others." You cannot take care of anyone if you don't take care of you.



- Be a role model. Like it or not, your habits influence your family and friends. When it comes to health, practice what you preach. If it's better for you, it's better for your family.

- Become a heart-healthy family. Healthy activities can be fun when you're doing them with the ones you love. Pick some new or favorite activities to do with your family.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 11:

Live Smoke Free

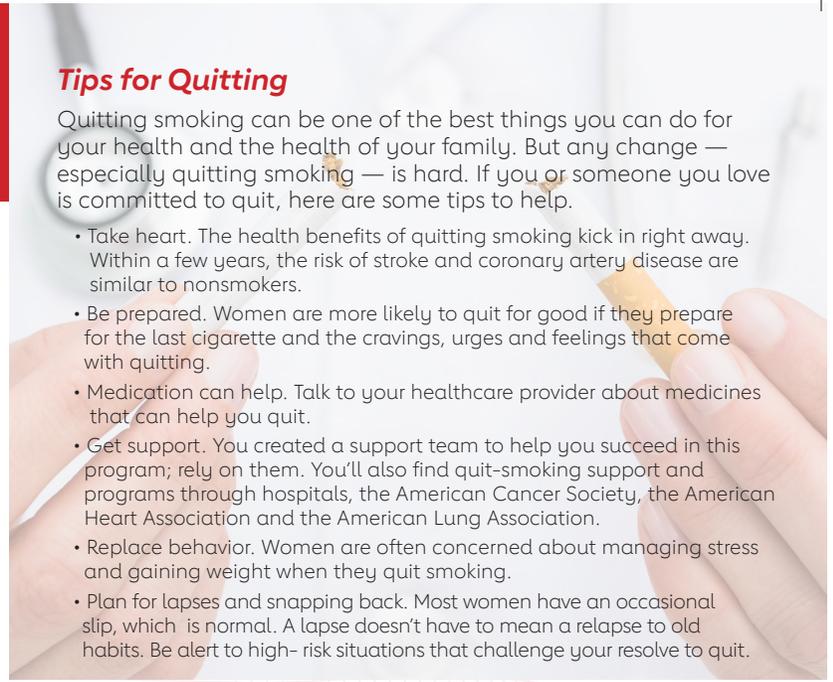
Set your Weekly Goal _____

Choose to Breathe Smoke Free

Whether you smoke or not, there are things you can do to make sure your air is smoke free.

- Quit smoking. It's an important step to a Better U.
- Set clean indoor air standards. Don't let people smoke in your house or your car.
- Choose smoke-free restaurants and businesses.
- Support others as they quit. Be understanding about how hard it is to stop. Give encouragement and support. Avoid nagging or being a watchdog. Encourage people to recover from a slip. Keep smoking cues away from ex-smokers.

	30 Mins Exercise	Fruits & Veggies	30 Mins for Yourself	Healthy Eating
Monday				
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Tips for Quitting

Quitting smoking can be one of the best things you can do for your health and the health of your family. But any change — especially quitting smoking — is hard. If you or someone you love is committed to quit, here are some tips to help.

- Take heart. The health benefits of quitting smoking kick in right away. Within a few years, the risk of stroke and coronary artery disease are similar to nonsmokers.
- Be prepared. Women are more likely to quit for good if they prepare for the last cigarette and the cravings, urges and feelings that come with quitting.
- Medication can help. Talk to your healthcare provider about medicines that can help you quit.
- Get support. You created a support team to help you succeed in this program; rely on them. You'll also find quit-smoking support and programs through hospitals, the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association.
- Replace behavior. Women are often concerned about managing stress and gaining weight when they quit smoking.
- Plan for lapses and snapping back. Most women have an occasional slip, which is normal. A lapse doesn't have to mean a relapse to old habits. Be alert to high-risk situations that challenge your resolve to quit.

How Did You Achieve Your Weekly Goal?

What Will You Do Differently Next Week?

Week 12: *Pledge For a Healthy Future*

Congratulations! You have made it your Mission To Fight Heart Disease by taking meaningful steps to make over your heart. Celebrate your successes.

But don't stop here. To be the best you, you need to remember the principles of Better U. In the event of a relapse (it happens!), take out your Better U Guide and look at some of the things that helped you make healthy choices during this program.

What worked for you? You probably didn't use every one of the strategies, skills and resources. Keep using the ones that worked.

Give Yourself Extra Power with STC (Stop, Think, Choose)

There are going to be many decisions ahead. As you continue on your journey, pause and take a deep breath before you make a choice that doesn't support your commitment to heart health. When you find yourself at a decision point, follow this simple plan.

- Stop** if you're tempted to make a choice that doesn't support an active lifestyle and healthy eating.
- Think** about the benefits you are enjoying from new, healthy habits. Remind yourself why your eating and physical activity choices are important.
- Choose** the best solution. Whether you're having a high-fat-snack attack or you want to skip exercise after a long day — you'll feel better if you choose the healthier option.

How Will You Continue Your Heart Healthy Journey?

You're Now a Role Model and Advocate

Now that you're on the path to a heart-healthy lifestyle, reach out and help others do the same. There are many ways that you can save lives.

1. Advocacy is the process of supporting a cause. If women's heart health is important to you, raise awareness and get involved in Go Red For Women®. Donate time. Send a letter to your congressperson to encourage him/her to cosponsor the HEART for Women Act to raise awareness among women and their healthcare providers.
2. Tell five women in your workplace, your family and your community about Go Red For Women.
3. Raise money. Get involved in the American Heart Association's fundraising activities for education and research related to heart disease and stroke. Visit GoRedForWomen.org for information and ideas on ways to get started.
4. Wear red on National Wear Red Day® in February and raise funds for American Heart Association efforts to help women by offering educational programs, advancing their understanding about their risk factors for heart disease, and providing tools and motivation to reduce their risk and protect their health.
5. Share your stories from the heart. Visit GoRedForWomen.org and tell people about your accomplishments. Connect with others who choose to be heart healthy. Learn from other women's experiences.

What was your goal(s)?

Did you achieve it?

How have your numbers changed?

What is your blood pressure?

What is your cholesterol?

What is your resting heart rate?

What is your weight?



American
Heart
Association.

Better U™

For heart, stroke or risk-related information call **1-888-MY-HEART**
or contact your nearest American Heart Association Office.
You can also visit us online at heart.org or GoRedForWomen.org.
