

# Habit Stacking for Heart Month

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Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death in our country? February is American Heart Month, which makes it a great time to focus on your heart health. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following healthy habits for preventing heart disease:



- Pick healthy foods and drinks.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active regularly.
- Do not smoke.

You can learn more about the CDC's recommendations by visiting their website at [cdc.gov/heartdisease/prevention.htm](https://cdc.gov/heartdisease/prevention.htm).

It may sound easy enough to implement these healthy habits, but adopting new habits can be easier said than done. "One of the best ways to build a new habit is to identify a current habit you already do each day and then stack your new behavior on top. This is called habit stacking," according to James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*. For example, if you want to make regular physical activity a habit that lasts long beyond Heart Month, you might consider trying habit stacking. One habit you probably already do every day is take your shoes off after work. On his website ([jamesclear.com/habit-stacking](https://jamesclear.com/habit-stacking)), Clear suggests that you can try stacking that current habit with a new behavior of immediately changing into clothes and shoes to exercise.

The American Heart Association also has helpful habit stacking recommendations. For example, they recommend stacking the daily habit of brushing your teeth with a little bit of movement (like doing five squats). They also suggest stacking the habit of going to the grocery store with parking further away so that you can get more steps in. You can learn more about their suggestions at [heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/habits/fit-bits](https://heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/habits/fit-bits).

I encourage you to join me in picking a new habit to try stacking this Heart Month! For more information, please contact me at [clarawicoff@ksu.edu](mailto:clarawicoff@ksu.edu) or 620-365-2242.