February marks American Heart Month, making time for self-care can keep your heart healthy

Heart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. You can do a lot to protect your heart and stay healthy. Heart-healthy living involves understanding your risk, making healthy choices, and taking steps to reduce your chance of getting heart disease. By taking preventive measures, you can lower your risk of developing heart disease that could lead to a heart attack.

Take action to protect your heart by following these tips:

- **Eat smart** – Eating smart can help you live longer, feel better, and reduce your risk of chronic disease. It's important to eat a well-rounded diet including:
  - Fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, lean protein, nuts and Legumes.
  - Limit sodium, saturated fat and added sugar. It's not only about what you eat, but how much you eat.

- **Get active** - Exercise has shown to lower blood pressure, improve cholesterol, control weight, boost your energy and improve stress. The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes a week of moderate activity, that's 30 minutes a day.
  - Sit less, take the stairs if you can.
  - Park further away.
  - Try muscle-strengthening activities.
  - Be active for at least 10 minutes a day if you don't have a lot of time.

- **Get enough quality sleep** - Sleep benefits many parts of your body. Good sleep leads to healing of tissues and blood vessels, a strong immune system, improved mood and energy and better brain function.
  - Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night.
  - Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
  - Avoid caffeine and nicotine.

Partner with your medical team to make a plan for better health - Visit your primary care doctor to monitor your blood pressure, weight, blood sugar and cholesterol. Changes in these factors can lead to worsening heart disease. If you need resources for managing stress, quitting tobacco or alcohol, be sure to ask your primary care doctor.