

FEBRUARY 2025

PLAN FOR HEALTH NEWSLETTER

THIS MONTH'S TOPICS:

- Heart Health
- Blood Donation
- February Recipe: Lasagna Rolls

Heart Health

Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in the U.S. for both men and women with 1 in 5 deaths being attributed to heart disease in 2023. Heart-healthy living involves understanding the risk factors of heart disease, making healthy choices, and taking steps to reduce your chances of getting heart disease. Below are some tips to ensure you are doing your part to keep your heart healthy!

Understand the Risk Factors

Risk factors are conditions or habits that make a person more likely to develop a disease. Some factors are changeable while others are not and may be different for each person. Risk factors for heart disease include:

- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Overweight or obesity
- Prediabetes or diabetes
- A history of smoking and/or excessive alcohol use
- Not getting regular physical activity
- Having a family history of heart disease
- Engaging in unhealthy eating behaviors

A crucial step in determining your risk is to see your provider for a thorough checkup and risk assessment. Your level of risk can change over time so be sure to ask your provider about your risk for heart disease each year.

Heart-Healthy Behaviors

While some risk factors like age, sex and family history are outside of our personal control, there are plenty of actions we can take that contribute to a healthier heart. These include:

- Choosing heart-healthy foods
 - Diets consisting of plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains and healthy fats are heart-healthy food choices.
- Maintaining a healthy body weight
 - While a healthy body weight will be different for each person, strive to keep your BMI within the normal range (18.5-24.9).
- Getting regular physical activity
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.
- Managing stress
 - Talking to a therapist, practicing meditation and utilizing community support groups are some healthy ways of managing stress.
- Getting enough good-quality sleep
 - Adults should aim to get 7-9 hours of sleep per night.
- Eliminating tobacco use
 - Talk with your doctor about products and programs that can help you quit using tobacco. Many hospitals, workplaces, and community groups offer classes to help people quit using tobacco.



Blood Donation

If you've ever wanted to be a part of saving someone's life, donating blood might be one of the easiest ways to do so. A single blood donation can save up to three lives, and more than 38,000 blood donations are needed every day. With the U.S. currently facing a blood donation shortage, now is one of the best times to consider donating blood. Along with saving lives, did you know that there are direct health benefits for those that donate?

These benefits include:

- A free health screening
 - Before you are allowed to donate, your vital signs will be checked to make sure you are fit enough for the procedure. You will also be checked for conditions like high blood pressure, heart arrhythmias and infectious diseases.
- A healthier heart and vascular system
 - Regular blood donation is linked to lower blood pressure and a lower risk for heart attacks. Blood donation can also help reduce the viscosity of blood which prevents blood clots, heart attacks and stroke.

- Mental health/well-being benefits
 - Donating blood is a way to engage in your community and help those who are in need whether by donating or volunteering. Altruistic actions like this have a positive impact on mental and social well-being.
- A calorie-free snack
 - After a blood donation, it takes your body about 500 calories to replace it. The cookies and juice you're offered afterwards then are essentially a zero-calorie snack.

If you're interested in learning more about blood donation, you can visit the American Red Cross at www.redcrossblood.org for more resources or to find a donation event in your area.



February Recipe: Lasagna Rolls



Total Time: 1 hour 25 minutes

Servings: 6

Ingredients:

Sauce:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 cups whole milk
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- Pinch ground nutmeg

Lasagna:

- 1 (15-ounce) container whole milk ricotta cheese
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed, squeezed dry
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons grated parmesan
- 3 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped
- 1 large egg, beaten to blend
- 3/4 teaspoon salt, plus more for salting water
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 12 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 2 cups marinara sauce
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella (about 4 ounces)

Directions:

1. To make the sauce: Melt the butter in a heavy medium saucepan over medium-low heat. Add the flour and whisk for 3 minutes. Whisk in the milk. Increase the heat to medium-high. Whisk the sauce until it comes to a simmer and is thick and smooth, about 3 minutes. Whisk the salt, pepper, and nutmeg into the béchamel sauce.
2. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F.
3. Whisk the ricotta, spinach, 1 cup Parmesan, prosciutto, egg, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl to blend.
4. Add a tablespoon or 2 of oil to a large pot of boiling salted water. Boil the noodles until just tender but still firm to bite. Drain. Arrange the noodles in a single layer on a baking sheet to prevent them from sticking.
5. Butter a 13-by-9-by-2-inch glass baking dish. Pour the béchamel sauce over the bottom of the prepared dish. Lay out 4 lasagna noodles on a work surface, then spread a large spoonful (about 3 tablespoons worth) of ricotta mixture evenly over each noodle. Starting at 1 end, roll each noodle like a jelly roll. Lay the lasagna rolls seam side down, without touching, atop the béchamel sauce in the dish. Repeat with the remaining noodles and ricotta mixture. Spoon 1 cup of marinara sauce over the lasagna rolls. Sprinkle the mozzarella and remaining 2 tablespoons of Parmesan over the lasagna rolls. Cover tightly with foil. Bake until heated through and the sauce bubbles, about 20 minutes. Uncover and bake until the cheese on top becomes golden, about 15 minutes longer. Let stand for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the remaining marinara sauce in a heavy small saucepan over medium heat until hot, and serve alongside.



**Stay tuned for March's topics:
Stress and Alcohol Awareness**

