

# Be Heart Healthy!

February is American Heart Month and even though the month is almost over, it is never too late to talk with children about the importance of heart health. While young children may not fully understand the workings of the heart, they can learn, at a very young age, how eating healthy foods and exercising can help to keep their hearts strong and healthy. Here are a few activities you may want to do with the children as you explore this topic. The second page is a certificate you can complete with each child detailing how he/she plans to take care of his/her heart. Have the child dictate to complete the section about exercise and draw or glue pictures of healthy foods for the second section.

## How Does the Heart Work?

Add plastic water bottles to the water table along with funnels, plastic cups, spoons, etc. Invite children to problem-solve as they fill the bottles. As they do so, talk about how their heart fills with blood. Once the bottles are full, put on the squirt tops (which you kept out of reach until now) and have the children squeeze the water out of the bottles...much like the heart squeezes blood through the body.



Learn more about American Heart Month at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/>

## MY HEART BEATS (tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

My heart beats slow when I'm asleep,  
I'm asleep, I'm asleep.  
My heart beats slow when I'm asleep,  
Thump...thump...thump.  
*(Children lie down and pretend to sleep)*

My heart beats fast when I run and play,  
Run and play, run and play.  
My hearts beats fast when I run and play  
Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump!  
*(Children run and play)*

## Fast Heart Beat, Slow Heart Beat

There is no reason why children cannot explore how exercise increases heart rate. To begin, have children lie down on the floor and rest for a minute or two. Then, help each child find his/her pulse either on the neck or wrist. Count together to see how fast or slow the child's heart is beating. If desired, record this information on a chart. Next, have the children dance to recorded music with a fast beat. After about 3-5 minutes, stop the music and help them find their pulses again. What happened? As you count together, the children will quickly discover that exercise increase their heart rate. Explain that this increase is good for the heart because it strengthens it.

# I Am Going to Be Heart Healthy!

Child's Name:

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These are the exercises I am going to do to keep my heart healthy:

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Here are healthy foods I am going to eat to keep my heart healthy:

