

February 25, 2022

# THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION

Your Health Begins Here

## A Healthy Heart to Heart

### **Amanda Burnette, MD**

*Family Medicine, HopeHealth*

February is American Heart Month and a time to spread awareness for cardiovascular wellness. Here are some heart-healthy recommendations to ensure that you are here for your partner and loved ones for many years to come.



### **Enjoy a heart-healthy wine and dine.**

Red wine in moderation has been shown to benefit heart health thanks to the presence of antioxidants called polyphenols. Polyphenols have anti-inflammatory effects on the body, can lower blood pressure, and enhance blood flow, lowering risk for cardiovascular disease. Pair a glass of red wine (5 ounces) with a meal containing lean protein, vegetables, whole grains, and fruit for dessert.

**Indulge in some dark chocolate.** If you and your partner have a weakness for chocolate, 1-2 ounces of dark chocolate daily can help to satisfy your sweet tooth, while providing health benefits for your heart. That's right, chocolate can be good for you! Studies show dark chocolate can reduce inflammation throughout the body and prevent blood clots, as well as decrease blood pressure. Dark chocolate can also improve blood vessel flexibility, lowering the risk of atherosclerosis caused by deposits of plaque and fats that impede blood flow.

**Get your heart rate up together.** Do physical activities with your partner that raise your heart rate for at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) per week, or 30 minutes daily for five days. You can go for walks together (bonus points for romance if they are long walks on the beach), go dancing, ride bicycles, take a hike, kayak, and more. Be as creative as you want! As long as you are active and limit the amount of time you are sedentary each week, your heart will enjoy the benefits of exercise, including reduced risks for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension. An added benefit of exercising with your significant other is you can act as each other's accountability partner, providing additional encouragement and support when adding activity to your daily routine.

**Be affectionate.** Researchers have found that when you engage in physical touch with your partner or loved one, the "love hormone" and neurotransmitter oxytocin is released. Associated with childbirth and pair-bonding between mothers and newborns, oxytocin is also released with hugs, cuddling, and other forms of physical intimacy, and can reduce blood pressure, anxiety, and stress, which put strain on the heart. Affection doesn't have to be limited to your partner, or even people. Regularly embracing friends, your children, and even your pets (more belly rubs for the puppies) can increase oxytocin levels for a more positive wellbeing. Not a hugger? You can also produce oxytocin with good conversations, acts of kindness, regular movement, and listening to music.

*Amanda Burnette, MD, is a physician serving patients at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence. Dr. Burnette is originally from Florence and is a member of the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians.*

## Affordable Connectivity Program



### Emergency Broadband Benefit program extension

On December 31, 2021, the Federal Communications Commission launched the Affordable Connectivity Program. Those currently enrolled in the Emergency Broadband Benefit program as of this date will automatically continue to receive their current monthly benefit until March 1, 2022. You can learn more about the program transition and steps you may need to take to stay enrolled after March 1st, by

visiting [fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](https://fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit).

If you need further assistance, the HopeHealth care team is available to you by calling 843-667-9414.

## Black History Month Spotlight

### Honoring the past. Inspiring the future.

"Throughout the years, Black History Month has been a time to celebrate the achievements of black leaders all over the world. It is often an opportunity to focus on historical accomplishments as opposed to negative disparities. Unfortunately, data from entities such as the CDC show that African-Americans suffer from hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes at a much higher rate than their white counterparts. This puts a unique twist on utilizing Black History Month as a time to create a platform for preventive health in the black community."



[Read full article here.](#)



"As we move into a New Year and prepare to commemorate National Black History Month, HopeHealth's behavioral health consultant manager, Sharon Black, LICSW and the director of preventive medicine, Dr. Heather Leisy contributed to this important discussion about health and health care disparities in the African-American community."

[Read full article in Diversity Works Magazine.](#)

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