

Shamong Township Schools

February 2026



Live Well, Work Well

February is Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Cardiovascular disease and the conditions that lead to it can happen at any age. Take time to learn about heart disease today.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. 1 in 5 deaths are caused by heart disease.

What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a term used to refer to several types of heart conditions. Of all the different conditions, coronary artery disease—caused by plaque buildup in the walls of the heart's arteries—is the most common. Other forms of heart disease include:

- Heart failure
- Arrhythmia
- Valvular heart disease
- Aortic aneurysms
- Congenital heart defects

Heart disease is often used interchangeably with cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease typically refers to heart conditions that involve blocked or narrowed blood vessels, which can lead to chest pains, stroke, and heart attacks.

What are the symptoms of heart disease?

The symptoms of heart disease can vary, and some

people may not even know they have a heart condition until they have a heart attack. Common signs and symptoms of heart disease include shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, heart palpitations, weakness, and fatigue.

What are the risks of developing heart disease?

Certain uncontrollable factors increase your risk of heart disease. In general, those with a family history of heart disease, men, and older people are at higher risk. Other factors that increase risk, such as [stress](#), inactivity, obesity, diabetes, smoking, and poor diet, are controllable.

Is heart disease preventable?

In many cases, heart disease can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle and properly managing health conditions. Here are some [prevention](#) tips:

- Refrain from smoking
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Limit your sodium intake
- Eat a well-balanced, healthy diet
- Exercise regularly
- Manage your stress
- Limit your alcohol intake

Where can I learn more?

For more information about heart disease, please contact your doctor ([Aetna](#) / [Horizon OMNIA](#)).

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Understanding Vitamin D Supplements

Vitamin D is especially important during the winter because reduced sunlight exposure limits the body's ability to produce it naturally, increasing the risk of deficiency. This nutrient plays a critical role in maintaining strong bones and teeth by aiding calcium absorption, supports immune function to help fight seasonal illnesses, and regulates mood.

Since shorter days and colder weather make sun exposure difficult, incorporating vitamin D-rich foods or supplements becomes essential for overall health during the winter months.

Doctors and pharmacists often recommend D₃ to individuals who need vitamin D supplements. Forms of these supplements include capsules, gummies,

liquid products, powders, and dissolving tablets. It's important to purchase high-quality supplements that have been independently tested.

While dietary supplements, including vitamin D₃, can be beneficial, they can cause harm when used unnecessarily. It's possible to get too much vitamin D. When you overdose, calcium builds up in your blood. This condition, known as hypercalcemia, can cause nausea, vomiting, weakness, decreased appetite, constipation, and frequent urination. Vitamin D toxicity also has the potential to progress to irregular heart rhythms, kidney stones, and even kidney failure. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that all consumers consult their doctor or pharmacist before taking supplements.

Winter Self-care Tips

Amid the chill of winter and shorter days during the colder months, it's crucial to prioritize self-care.

Winter brings unique challenges, but you can thrive during this season with the right self-care practices. Such rejuvenating winter habits can leave you feeling cozy, refreshed, and ready to conquer the cooler days ahead. Try these self-care tips:

- **Prioritize hydration.** The dry air can take a toll on your skin and overall well-being, so be sure to stay hydrated.
- **Nourish your body with seasonal foods.** Opt for nourishing, seasonal foods (e.g., sweet potatoes and Brussels sprouts) that support your immune system and provide comfort.
- **Move your body.** Maintaining an active lifestyle ([Aetna](#) / [Horizon OMNIA](#)) is vital to well-being, even during winter. Indoor exercises, winter sports, or even a brisk walk in the cold air can invigorate your body and mind.

Ensure sufficient rest. The longer nights of winter provide an opportunity to [prioritize sleep](#). Create a relaxing bedtime routine and strive for at least seven hours of sleep each night.

- **Create a cozy sanctuary.** Enhance your living space with elements that promote warmth and relaxation, such as soft blankets, scented candles, or diffusers.
- **Embrace outdoor activities.** Even in small doses, fresh air and sunlight can do wonders for your mental health.
- **Establish a relaxing evening routine.** A consistent evening routine can help signal to your body that it's time to wind down, promoting restful sleep.

Keep in mind that self-care is an ongoing process. Finding what works best for your mind and body is key to a fulfilling and balanced winter season. These tips are simply a starting point.

Recipe of the Month

Honey Baked Lentils

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 cups lentils (uncooked)
- 1 small bay leaf (optional)
- 5 cups water
- 1 cup carrots (chopped)
- ½ cup onions (chopped)
- 1 cup water
- ½ lb. 90% lean ground beef
- ⅓ cup honey
- 1 tsp. herbs (fresh or dried)

Nutritional Information

(per serving)

Total calories	287
Total fat	3 g
Protein	20 g
Sodium	41 mg
Carbohydrate	47 g
Dietary fiber	13 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Total sugars	17 g

Source: MyPlate

Preparations

1. Combine rinsed lentils, bay leaf, and 5 cups of water in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil. Cover tightly and reduce the heat. Simmer 30 minutes. Do not drain. After cooking, discard the bay leaf.
2. Chop the onion. Combine onions and carrots with 1 cup of water. Add to lentils and stir into a 9x13-inch baking dish.
3. Brown the ground beef. Drain and discard the fat. Add the meat to the lentil mixture.
4. Pour honey over the entire casserole.
5. Add herbs if desired.
6. Cover tightly with foil and bake it for one hour at 350 F.

Have Questions About Your Benefits?

Be sure to check out our *Benefits Online* website, dedicated solely to our District health benefits. Go to

shamongschools.org / District / Staff Resources / Benefits / Employee Benefits Online to view plan overviews, wellness info, provider searches, and more 24/7.