

**14 Gifts to Give Your Sweet"Heart"**  
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February 14th is Valentine's Day and I know there are people out there wondering what would be the perfect gift for my loved one. The greatest gift you can give your loved ones, is the gift of your time and love. I am sure that we can all think of a loved one that we wished was still here with us, but they are not due partially to the fact they did not take care of their heart. Hopefully after reading this you will all have a better idea of what you can do to take better care of your heart and be there for your loved ones.

- #1. Increase your physical activity. Exercise 20 - 30 minutes at least 3 times a week. Consult with your health care professional before starting any exercise program.**
- #2. Stop smoking and try to avoid second hand smoke.**
- #3. Eat well balanced meals. The National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute offers a free menu planner on the internet at <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/menuplanner/menu.cgi>.**
- #4. Limit your intake of caffeine.**
- #5. Limit your intake of alcohol, more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 drinks a day for men may increase your blood pressure. Some medications should never be taken with alcohol. Consult with your pharmacist if you are unsure about your medications.**
- #6. Maintain an appropriate weight. Visit <http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm> on the internet. This site has an area to determine your body mass index (BMI), which indicates if you are at your normal weight, overweight or obese. This site also has areas to give you tips on safely losing weight and is a free site. It is important to maintain a BMI that is within normal range.**
- #7. Have a regular checkup by your health care professional.**
- #8. Follow your health care professionals instructions.**
- #9. Be more positive. Do you know that most centenarians, those who live above age 100, contribute their longevity to their own positive attitudes.**
- #10. Know the warning signs of a heart attack:  
Chest discomfort, which is usually located in the center of the chest. It can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain. Many people mistake a heart attack for indigestion and this can be a deadly mistake.  
Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. This pain can be in either or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach, this is especially true in women.  
Shortness of breath, with or without chest pain or discomfort.  
Nausea, breaking out in a cold sweat or lightheadedness may also occur.**
- #11. If you or a loved one have any of the above warning signs call 911. According to the American Red Cross 250,000 deaths occur within the first hour of the onset of symptoms.**
- #12. Take a CPR class, which can usually be arranged by calling your local hospital.**
- #13. Surround yourself with people who will give you support in meeting your goals.**
- #14. When incorporating the above lifestyle changes, start with those that are easy to accomplish and as they are met move on to the more difficult changes.**

Information from this article was obtained in part from the American Red Cross website, which is located at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).