



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## February is American Heart Month

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE February 9, 2018

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

February is American Heart Month, which is the perfect time to start making small lifestyle changes that strengthen hearts and saves lives.

Chances are you or someone you know is battling heart disease. It is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. An estimated 103 million U.S. adults are fighting one of the biggest contributors to heart disease and stroke—and that's high blood pressure.

These are alarming statistics, but we can reverse the trend with some small lifestyle changes. As Deputy Vice Chair of the Senate Health Committee, I am encouraging people during the month of February to take steps to protect the heart health of themselves, as well as their loved ones.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends following the below tips—this month—and beyond to safeguard your health:

***Schedule a visit with your doctor to talk about heart health:*** It is important to schedule regular checkups, even if you think you are not sick. Work with with your doctor and health care provider to set goals for improving your heart health.

***Add exercise to your daily routine:*** Start the month by walking 15 minutes, three times each week. By mid-month, increase your time to 30 minutes, three times each week.

***Increase healthy eating:*** Cook heart-healthy meals at home at least three times each week and when making your favorite recipe, try to use less sodium. For example, swap out salt for fresh or dried herbs and spices. Eat less of the fatty, salty, and greasy foods while mixing in more fruits and vegetables.

***Take steps to quit smoking:*** If you currently smoke, quitting can cut your risk for heart disease and stroke. The [CDC's Smoking and Tobacco Use website](#) has more information and resources for those looking to break the habit.

***Take medication as prescribed:*** Talk with your doctor about the importance of high blood pressure and cholesterol medications—and taking them exactly as directed. If you are having trouble taking your prescriptions on time, or if you are having side effects, ask your doctor for help.

For more information on American Heart Month, go to the CDC website,

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/heartmonth/index.html>

I strongly encourage everyone to start now, and commit to healthy, active lifestyle changes this month and beyond.