

**Don't
Forget**

Valentine's Day

**February
14**

Want a healthier Valentine's Day? More hugs and Kisses

By MICHAEL PRECKER
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Too much Valentine candy probably won't be good for your health. But the heart-centric holiday's hugs and kisses are a different story.

"We crave social connection and human touch," said Ashley Thompson, a social psychologist and associate professor at the University of Minnesota Duluth. "Hugging and kissing are a big part of that, and we know they're incredibly beneficial for many reasons."

First, the caveats: Both people in the equation must completely agree with the interaction. And whether in flu season or during an enduring pandemic, be careful with whom you're sharing germs.

But if all those conditions are met, said Kory Floyd, professor of communication at the University of Arizona in Tucson, "expressions of affection don't just feel good psychologically or emotionally, they're intervening in our physiology."

Besides burning a few calories a minute, kissing may be good for heart health. A 2009 study published in Western Journal of Communication divided couples into two groups, one of which was instructed to step up their romantic kissing. After six weeks, the enhanced kissers reported less stress, more satisfying relationships – and lower cholesterol. Other research shows cuddling with your significant other may lower blood pressure.

The keys to positive results, said Floyd, who studies the effects of affectionate behavior, are hormones.

"When we share affection with somebody, it lowers our stress hormones," he said. "One of them is cortisol, which comes from the adrenal glands. When we're stressed out, our cortisol level is elevated, and affection can bring them back to the baseline level. It can also lower blood pressure and heart rate if those are elevated."

Hugging and kissing get the brain involved as well. "That releases oxytocin, which helps facilitate bonding," Thompson said. "The more oxytocin, the stronger the bond we're going to have with our partner. Without the oxytocin, we can't build those connections." That's why oxytocin is commonly referred to as the cuddle chemical, she said.

Human touch and kissing also can produce higher levels of dopamine, a hormone that creates feelings of reward and pleasure. "It's like a happy drug," Thompson said.

Take away that affection, Floyd said, "and people don't sleep as well. They're in more physical pain and are more susceptible to secondary immune disorders, depression and other mood disorders."

A 2020 report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine underscored that point, noting that older adults who are isolated or lonely may have a higher risk of heart disease and depression.

Other research published in 2014 in Psychological Science assessed more than 400 adults for their stress

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Valentine's Day MENU

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VALENTINE'S DAY



Sweet strawberries are so tempting at Valentine's and any day – should you give in?

By MICHAEL MERSCHER
AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS

Whether it's their heart shape, their seductive coloring or just the fact they make such sweet company, strawberries often are associated with romance.

And if strawberries be the food of love – eat on, experts say.

Strawberries not only taste good, they come with benefits that make them easy to embrace, nutrition-

ally speaking.

Arpita Basu, an associate professor of nutrition at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has led several studies on strawberries and finds them “pretty unique from a public health nutrition perspective.”

For starters, she praises them for being low in calories and high in nutrients. Precise amounts, Basu said, vary by the fruit's variety and ripeness. But according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one cup of whole strawberries has only 46 calories. With that comes almost 85 milligrams of vitamin C. That's

more than a day's supply for an adult woman, and about 94% of what's recommended for an adult man.

Strawberries also are low in sodium and are a good source of several other vitamins and minerals, including potassium, which is important for healthy heart, nerve and kidney function, as well as muscle contraction. A cup provides 220 mg, about 8% of a woman's daily needs, or 6% of a man's.

Basu also celebrates strawberries for having high levels of phytochemicals — plant-based compounds that are believed to provide multiple health benefits.

Several studies have gone straight to the heart in support of strawberries:

— A 2007 study in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition, using data collected over 16 years from more than 34,000 overweight, postmenopausal women in the Iowa Women's Health Study, linked eating strawberries to lower risk of dying from heart disease.

— A 2020 analysis of several strawberry studies published in the British Journal of Nutrition said strawberries “significantly reduced” levels of C-reactive protein, a marker for inflammation that can be used to assess heart disease risk.

— In 2021, a small, carefully controlled study in the Journal of Nutrition suggested strawberry consumption helped blood vessels work better in people with moderately high cholesterol.

— Also in 2021, another small, carefully controlled

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VALENTINE'S DRAG BRUNCH

WEIRS BEACH

THE BIG HOUSE

WEIRS BEACH

TOWER HILL TAVERN

DRAG BRUNCH

DRAG MY HEART TO THE WEIRS

FEBRUARY 13

→ 9:30AM BRUNCH

@TOWER HILL

→ 11:30 SHOW

@THE BIG HOUSE

21+

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VALENTINE'S DAY



HUGS from page 15

levels and how often they received hugs. Then they exposed them to the cold virus. The hug-deprived people got sick more often and more seriously than those who reported lots of hugs.

While affection may be a great prescription, Floyd said, there's no recommended daily dose.

"We don't all need the same amount of sleep or to eat the same amount to be healthy," he said. "We don't all need the same amount of affection to feel fulfilled and connected. But just like with sleep and food, everybody needs some."

The pandemic, when many people have been isolated and quarantined for long periods, has reinforced the importance of physical contact.

"People went through a big with-

drawal," Thompson said. "I guess the silver lining was it forced us to get creative."

Floyd agreed. "People who already felt affection-deprived certainly suffered a great deal, but people who weren't deprived before were really missing it," he said. "At least now we have Zoom and FaceTime and all these technologies to help us keep those affectionate bonds."

Still, he said, "there's something special about tactile contact — hand-holding, kissing, hugging, putting your arms around somebody. Those are more health supportive than any others. And the one thing we couldn't do was reach through that computer screen."

If you have questions or comments about this story, please email editor@heart.org.

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study led by Basu and published in the journal *Nutrients* found that obese adults with high cholesterol who ate two and a half servings of strawberries a day saw improvements in insulin resistance.

All that, and tasty too. Which is probably why strawberries now are grown in every state and around the world. In the U.S., per-capita consumption grew from 2 pounds per person in 1980 to 8 pounds in 2013, according to the USDA.

But humans have not had such enthusiastic strawberry feels forever, possibly because the fruit we know is a relatively recent development.

Small, wild strawberries have always been around. But ancient Greek and Roman writers barely even mention them. The ancestor of the heftier berry we eat today wasn't created until the 1700s, when French farmers accidentally cross-bred varieties imported from Chile and Virginia.

A strawberry-love connection predates that. In a Cherokee creation story, a fight between the first man and woman is resolved by a heavenly gift of strawberries. In European art, strawberries have been associated with both holiness and seduction.

If you're feeling tempted to indulge in strawberries — go right ahead, Basu said.

Basu, whose research has received support from the California Strawberry Commission, said you can

choose fresh or frozen. "Frozen strawberries give you nutritional value that's very similar to the fresh fruit."

If you go for fresh, examine the containers carefully; strawberries can spoil quickly. Experts say you should look for red fruits with bright green caps. Don't cut or rinse them until you're ready to serve.

Conventionally grown strawberries can have high levels of pesticide residue, but Basu said, "I don't see that as a huge concern, because I don't think they are so absolutely loaded with pesticides that they cannot be washed off, or that's going to make somebody sick." She eats both organic and non-organic versions.

Strawberries made into jelly or jam lose a lot of nutrition and gain a lot of sugar in processing, Basu said. But for a healthy dessert, she enjoys strawberries with a little whipped cream.

And if you're thinking about chocolate-dipped strawberries for your love (or yourself), that can be OK, she said. Chocolate adds sugar, but if you choose dark chocolate, "you're going to get lots of cocoa," which is high in healthy flavonoids.

Strawberries' taste and convenience can make them an easy way to fit more fruits and vegetables into the day. "Changing behavior is always difficult," she said. "But it's relatively easier to add something that people may like to eat, rather than changing the whole diet."

If you have questions or comments about this story, please email editor@heart.org.

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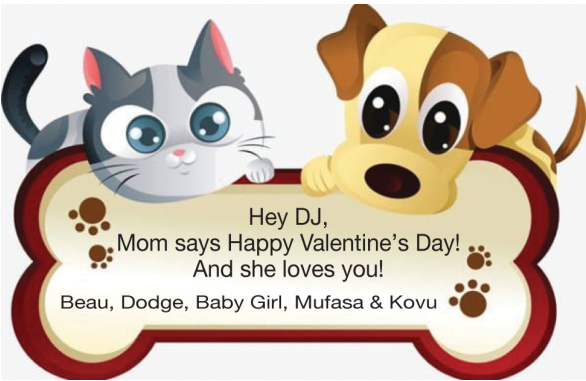
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VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY

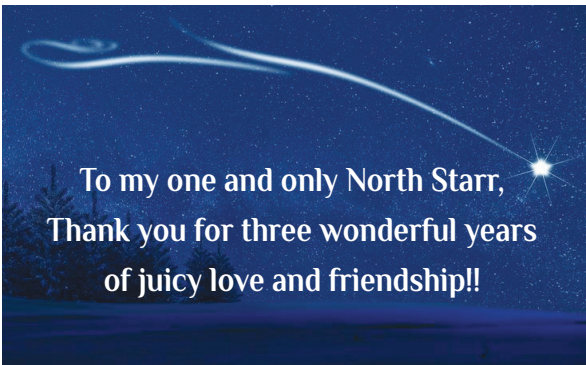
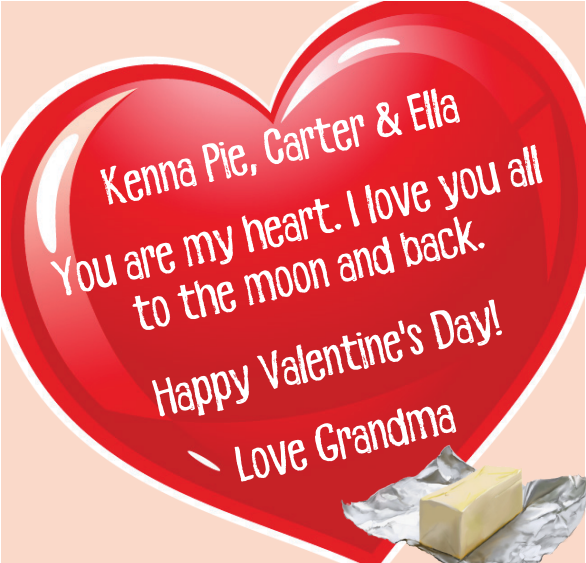
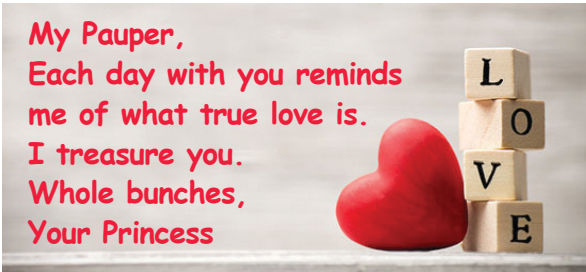
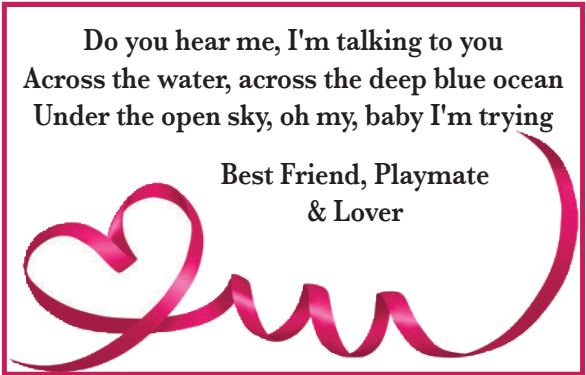
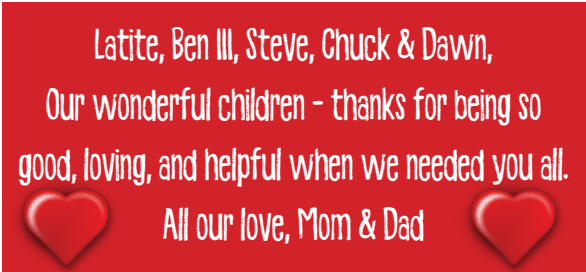
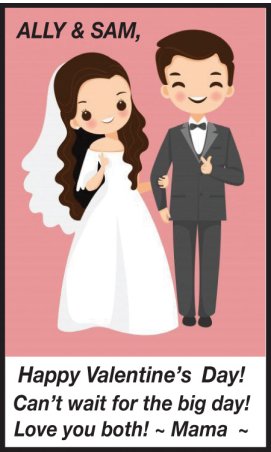
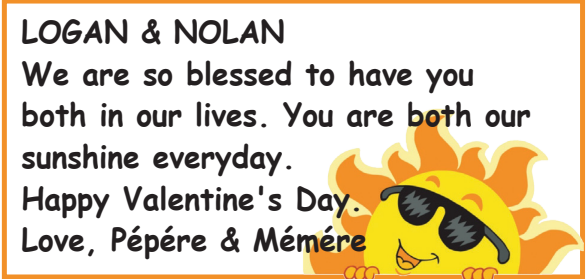
Saturday Night
February 12

SIDE CAR BAR





You said it with *Love*



Penny, Bruce,
Garrett, Andrew & Jane,
We appreciate and care
for you all so much!
Many thanks,
Ben & Alexina



Ashley, No matter
where we are or what
we're doing, you'll
always have my heart!
Happy
Valentine's Day
Love always, Griffin

Dear Jason,
I love you with all
my heart!
You are the
best thing that
happened in my life
and my kids.
1-4-3 Dawn

Happy
Valentine's Day
to Peggy Day!
to a lovely lady who
never lets the dust
settle under her feet!
Have a Wonderful Day!

Crystal,
I am so proud of you!
I love you more than I can
put into words!
You are an amazing person.
Love, Mom

Emilia,
Happy Valentine's Day
With Our Love and Kisses
Grammy & Papa



Mike L.,
Your wry
humor is a gift.
Stay well.
Love,
Lynn & Rob

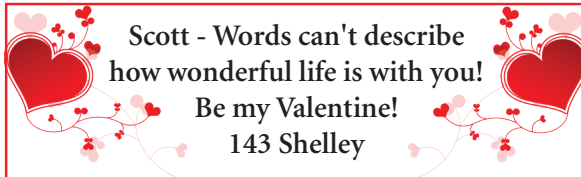


TO HIM
MISS YOU
HAPPY
VALENTINE'S
DAY
LOVE, ME

Dear Rob,
We look at the bright side and laugh!
Love, Lynn



Scott - Words can't describe
how wonderful life is with you!
Be my Valentine!
143 Shelley



**MOTHER BAER
LOVE YOU
Rob - Dee
Brenda Lee - John**



ERIN,
The countdown is on til
we reach our "Destin"ation!
Happy Valentine's Day!

Love You!

Momma



Esther,
I've loved you
for over 50 years.
Thank you
for doing the same.
Happy 50th
Anniversary!
Love Bob



Shane, Sadie,
Aubrey & Luke,
My heart is so full of love
for all of you.
Happy Valentine's Day!
XO Gamma



Dave,
I love you
more than pizza, filet,
Luke & Looch combined.
That's a lot of love!!
Forever yours, Julie



Jeffrey My Love,
You are my Rock and
Knight in Shining Armour.
I would be lost without you!
Love your Wifey for Always,
Kristal Lovee



Suzan,
To the most wonderful girl
in the world. Life has been
a breeze since we met. We
have had our heartaches and
our love helps us through.
LOVE ALWAYS, BOB



Jeremy, I'm so looking forward to sharing
this new adventure with you. Love, Julie



Happy
Valentine's Day
Smoky and Diamond
from your friends at

