

HEARTS NEED LOVE

Workbook

February 2026 | Healthy Heart Month

Daniel Beckles, MD, PhD.



February Heart Health Month 2026

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

February 2026 American Heart Month Workbook

A Practical Guide to Protecting Your Heart in 2026 and Beyond

By Daniel L. Beckles, MD. PhD



HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Why This Workbook Matters

Heart disease and stroke are the **leading causes of preventable death worldwide** — yet most heart disease begins decades before symptoms appear.

This workbook is designed to:

- Help you **understand your risk**
- Guide you to **know your numbers**
- Turn education into **daily action**
- Support **long-term heart health**, not quick fixes

How to Use This Workbook

- ✓ Check boxes
- ✓ Write your numbers
- ✓ Track progress monthly
- ✓ Bring this to your doctor visits

- I commit to using this workbook honestly
- I commit to knowing my heart health numbers
- I commit to small, sustainable changes

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

A Message to Our Community

February is both **American Heart Month and Black History Month** — a time to honor resilience while addressing realities.

Black and Caribbean communities experience higher rates of:

- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Stroke and coronary artery disease

These conditions do not happen overnight. They are shaped by **access, environment, food systems, stress, and early missed screenings.**

The good news:

Heart disease is largely preventable when we act early.

This workbook is your tool too:

- Take ownership of your health
- Understand your numbers
- Build habits that protect your heart for decades

Your heart health is not just personal — it's generational.

— TPA, *Chief Medical Officer*

STARTING POINT: KNOW YOUR ABCS—The NUMBERS That Shape Your Heart

A — A1C (Blood Sugar)

- Normal: < 5.7%
- Prediabetes: 5.7–6.4%
- Diabetes: $\geq 6.5\%$

My last A1C: _____ Date: _____

B — Blood Pressure

- Goal: < 120/80
- Hypertension often begins in the **20s–30s**

My BP: / Date: _____

C — Cholesterol

- LDL (“bad”): _____
- HDL (“good”): _____
- Triglycerides: _____

S — Screenings

Unchecked ABCs → Coronary artery disease, stroke & Cancer screenings

I know all my ABCS

I need to update my labs (A1c, Cholesterol Panel, Thyroid function tests, kidney function tests, Liver function tests, cancer screening for my decade of life)

Heart Disease by the Numbers

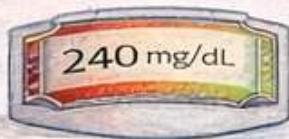
1 in 3

Adults has
high blood pressure



1 in 5

Adults has
high cholesterol



800K/year

Americans die of
heart disease.



Silent Heart Risks

Feel fine? Some risks are hidden.



High
Blood Pressure



Diabetes



High
Cholesterol

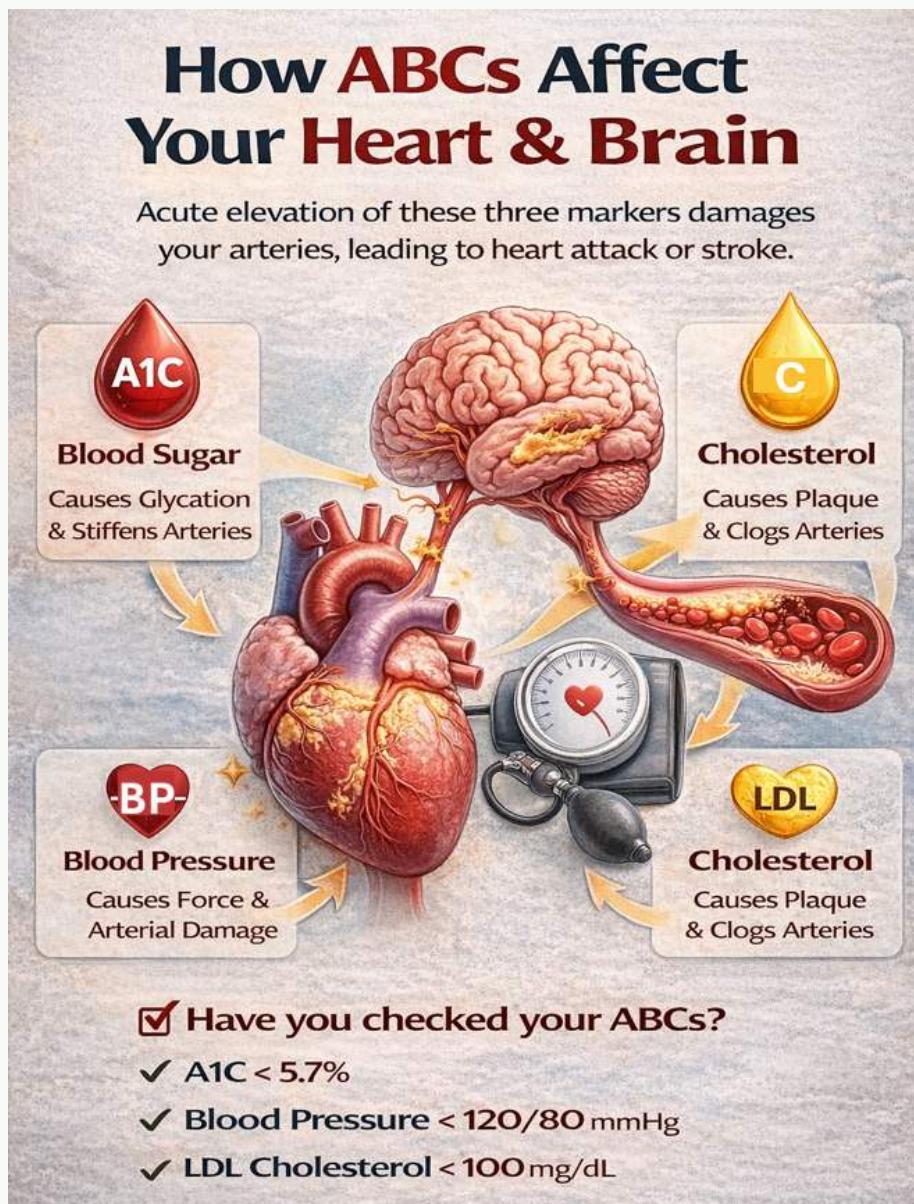


Family History

HOW THE ABCS AFFECT THE HEART & BRAIN- Downstream Effects of Uncontrolled ABCs

From Silent Risk to Disease

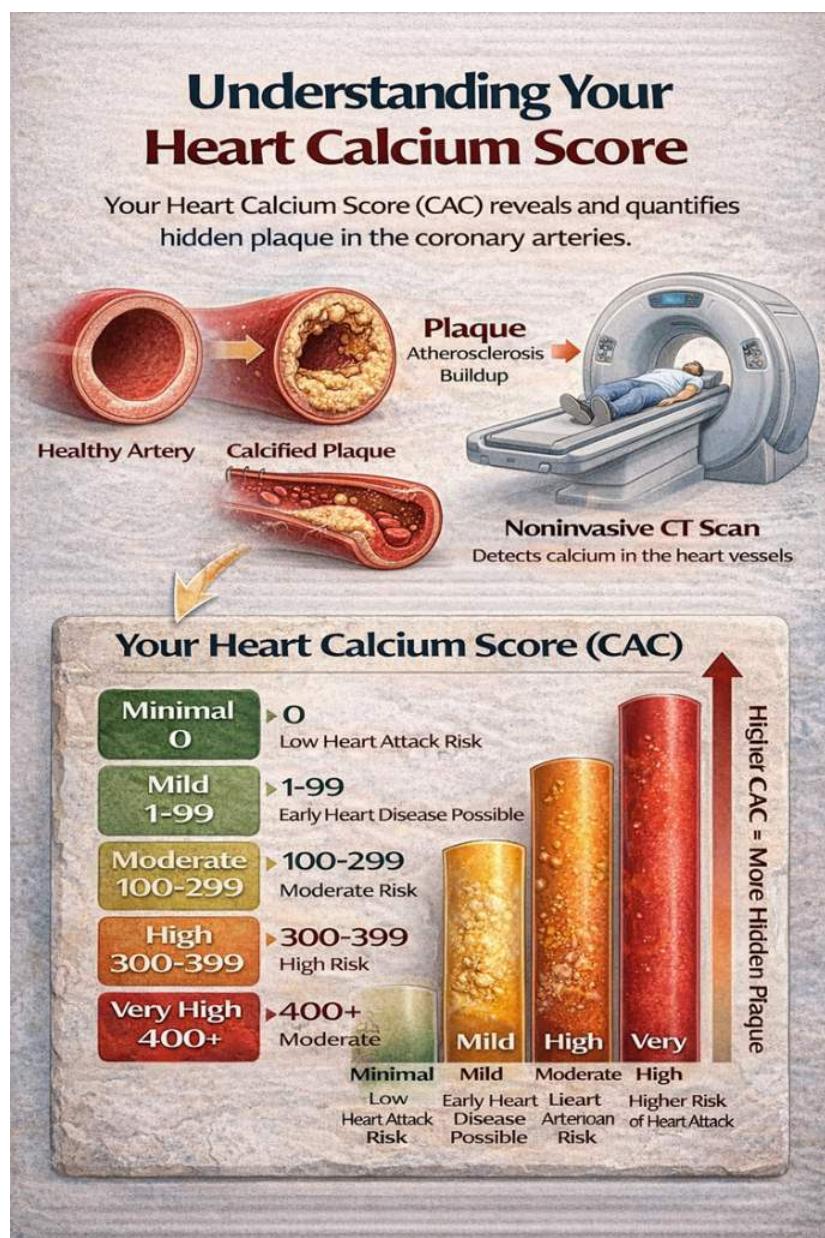
- Coronary artery plaque → Heart attack
- Carotid artery plaque → Stroke
- Kidney damage → Dialysis
- Diabetes complications → Amputations



Heart Calcium Score (CAC Scan)- Seeing Risk Before Symptoms

- I know what a heart calcium scan is
- I've discussed CAC screening with my provider

My CAC score (if known): _____



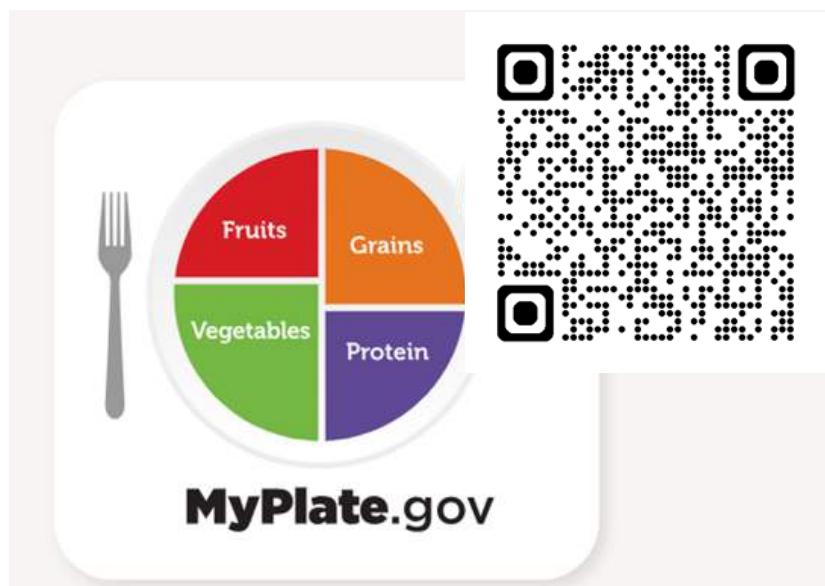
FOOD AS MEDICINE: WHAT'S ON YOUR PLATE- What's on the Plate Becomes What's in the Arteries

Too Much of These Increases Risk

- Added sugar
- Salt/sodium
- Fried foods
- Processed foods
- Sugary drinks

Too Little of These (needed to protect the Heart)

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Beans/legumes
- Nuts & seeds
- Omega-3 fish
- Water



Reflection

What do I eat most days?

- List items: _____

What is ONE food swap I can start this week?

Caribbean Food Swaps

(January Edition)

INSTEAD OF



Fried chicken



Grilled chicken



Macaroni and cheese



Roasted vegetables



White rice



Brown rice



Soda

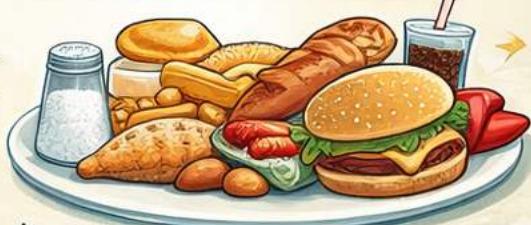


Water

Food as Medicine

Too much...

- ✓ Added sugar
- ✓ Salt/sodium
- ✓ Fried foods
- ✓ Processed foods



Too Little...

- ✓ Grains
- ✓ Fruits
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Beans/legumes



Too little...

- ✓ Nuts & seeds



Action Checklist: THIS MONTH

- Schedule annual physical
- Get blood work (A1C, cholesterol)
- Check BP at home or pharmacy
- Ask about heart calcium scan
- Review results with provider
- Share family history



Disease connected to our behavior

MOVEMENT: YOUR HEART IS A MUSCLE -

The Heart Is a Muscle — Train It

Exercise Strengthens the Heart

Benefits:

- ✓ Lowers BP
- ✓ Improves cholesterol
- ✓ Reduces insulin resistance
- ✓ Improves mood & sleep

- I move at least 30 minutes/day
- I want to increase my activity

My weekly movement plan:

- Days: _____
- Type: _____

MOVE YOUR WAY

Adults need a mix of physical activity to stay healthy.

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity*
Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.

at least 150 minutes a week

Muscle-strengthening activity
Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.

at least 2 days a week

* If you prefer vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (like running), aim for at least 75 minutes a week.

If that's more than you can do right now, **do what you can**. Even 5 minutes of physical activity has real health benefits.

Walk. Run. Dance. Play. **What's your move?**



STRESS, SLEEP & COMMUNITY

Heart Health Is More Than Diet

- Chronic stress raises BP, blood sugar, and may cause some cancers
- Poor sleep increases heart risk
- Community support improves outcomes

- I get 7–8 hours of sleep most nights
- I practice stress relief (breathing, prayer, meditation, walking)
- I feel socially supported

One stressor I can address this month:



ACTION CHECKLIST (THIS MONTH- FEBRUARY 2026)

- CALL & Schedule annual physical (ASAP-priority)
- Get blood work (A1C, cholesterol, vitamin D, TFTs, kidney function, liver function tests)
- Check BP at home or pharmacy
- Ask about heart calcium scan and lung scan
- Review results with provider
- Share family history

Screening Action Checklist



Screening Action Checklist

- Talk with your provider
- Schedule screenings
- Get lab work



- Talk with your provider
- Schedule screenings
- Get lab work
- Review results
- Discuss family history
- Address stress intentionally



Doctor/Clinic Name: _____

Appointment Date: _____

HEART HEALTH TRACKER LOG

Track Your Numbers Over Time

I will update this every 3–6 months

2026 HEALTH ACTION CHECKLIST

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
 Sleep 7-8 Hours	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 Walk 30 Min	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 2 Fruits & 3 Veggies	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 Whole Grains	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 Nuts & Seeds	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 Omega-3s	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 6-8 Glasses of Water	<input type="checkbox"/>						
 Stress Care	<input type="checkbox"/>						



COMMITMENT & COMMUNITY CALL

My Heart Health Commitment

- I commit to knowing my numbers
- I commit to small daily habits
- I commit to follow-up and prevention
- I commit to putting HEALTH as a #1 priority this year

One action I will take this week:



The Heart of the Matter

Protecting your heart protects your future — and your family's future. Lead by example.

