



HEALTHY IS STRONG

The Healthy Get-Together Planning Guide



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PLANNING GUIDE INTRODUCTION

HEALTHY IS STRONG

Turn Your Next Get-Together into a Heart-Healthy Affair!

Thank you for your interest in helping to increase awareness of heart disease among African American men in your community. *Healthy Is Strong* is part of Million Hearts[®], an initiative that aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. Your efforts can help us reach that goal.

Heart disease affects African Americans more than other racial and ethnic groups. Almost 50% of African American men and women have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke. The good news is that by taking care of your heart, you can take care of your family, friends, and future.

One way to help is by organizing a *Healthy Get-Together* that uses the power of family and community to educate people who are at risk for heart disease and stroke because of conditions such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

This planning guide provides suggestions for planning a *Healthy Get-Together* with your family, friends, or community. We hope that it will provide you with some tools and ideas to help raise awareness of heart disease and stroke as well as simple, low-cost activities to improve heart health.

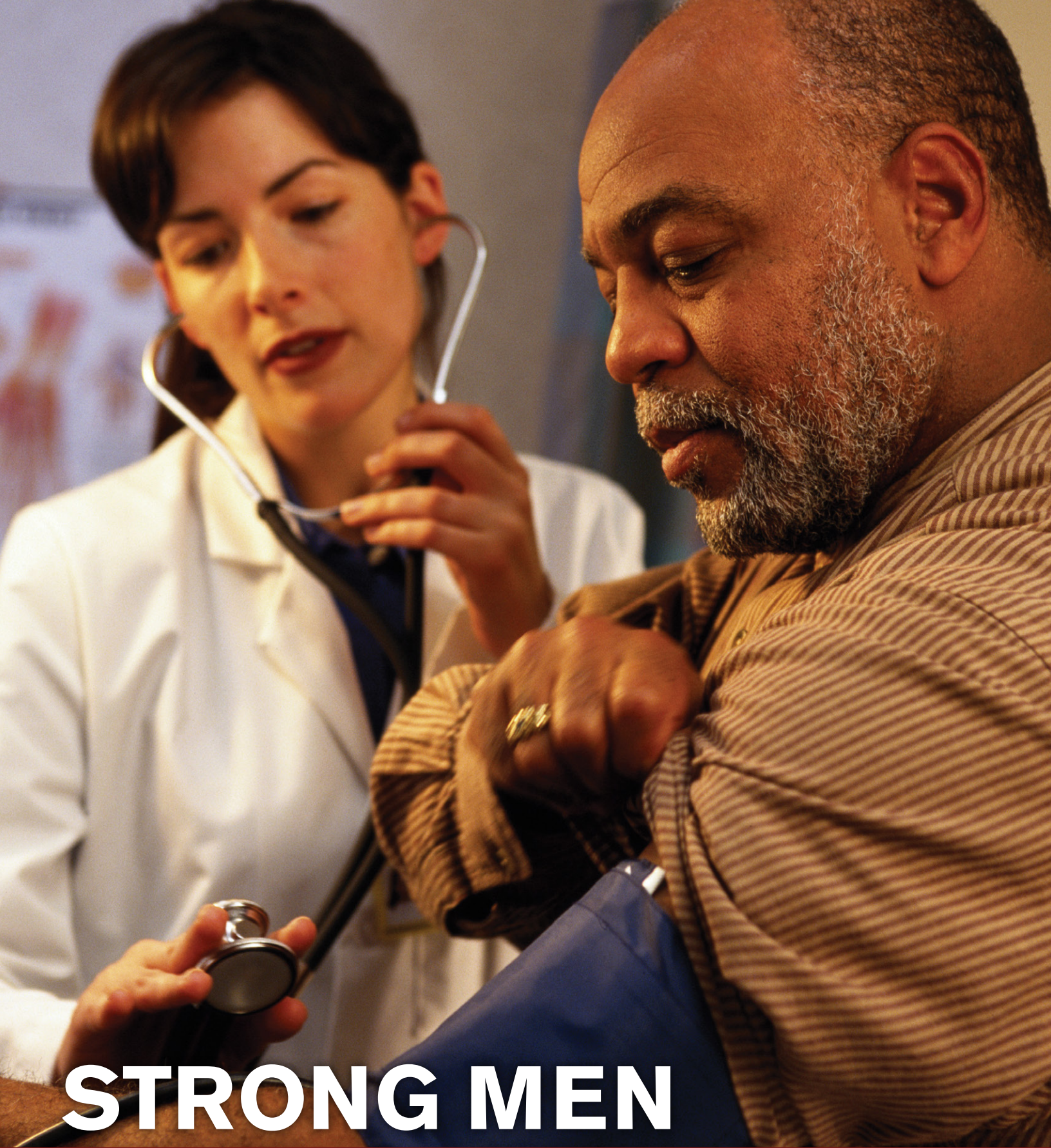


In this guide, you will find template materials and artwork that you can adapt for your event.

MATERIALS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Sample e-mail invitations and a designed invitation that you can customize and mail.
- ✓ Talking points and a guide on developing a presentation.
- ✓ Event planning tip sheet.
- ✓ Sample social media posts.
- ✓ Group activities/challenges for the event.
- ✓ Fact sheets/booklets on healthy living.
- ✓ Resources for people to track their personal health history and have an informed conversation with their doctor.

If you have any questions about these activities or materials, please contact millionhearts@cdc.gov for the contact information. Thank you for your efforts to support this initiative and for educating your community about this important topic.



STRONG MEN

PUT THEIR HEALTH FIRST.



INVITATIONS

The model email on this page should be sent by a community leader (for example, a president of a fraternal organization, or a pastor). It can be sent to local members of the target community or organization.

SUBJECT: [Insert *Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event title] on [insert date]

Dear [insert name],

Every year, Americans suffer more than 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes. Nearly 50% of African American men and women have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke. The good news is, by taking care of your heart, you can take care of your family, friends, and future. Simple changes to diet, exercise, and regular follow-up with your doctor can go a long way in improving your heart health.

[insert your organization's name] invites you to join us at our upcoming [*Healthy Get-Together* or your organization's event title]. This event will allow you to learn more about heart-healthy habits related to food, exercise, and how to live a healthier life. You'll connect with other members of the community who are also hoping to improve their heart health. Details are below:

- **Where:** [insert location]
- **When:** [insert date, time]
- **Admission:** Free
- **RSVP:** [insert name/contact information]

I look forward to seeing you.

Best,

[Insert your name/signature]



The model email invitation on this page is intended to be sent by an event organizer to family members and friends, inviting them to learn more about heart health during a family reunion, community block party, or other fun event.

INVITATIONS (CONTINUED)

SUBJECT: [Insert *Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event title] on [insert date]

Hello [insert name],

As part of this year's [insert event type-family reunion, block party, BBQ, etc.] on [insert date/time] we have decided to make heart health a priority! Every year, Americans suffer more than 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes. Nearly 50% of African American men and women have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke. But by taking care of our hearts, we can take care of our family, friends and future.

One way we can make heart health a priority is by supporting those in our [insert family or community] who have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, and encouraging them to make simple changes to benefit their health. This year's event will feature a speaker from [insert speaker's name/organization], an expert in [insert spokesperson's expertise – nutrition, physical fitness, etc.], who will discuss how simple changes to diet, exercise, and regular follow-up with a doctor can go a long way to improving heart health. We'll also think about how we can pass on our healthiest traditions to future generations.

I look forward to seeing you.

Best,

[Insert your name/signature]

@

The model email invitation on this page is intended to be sent to a community expert (for example, physician, nutritionist, personal trainer, etc.) about his/her participation as a speaker at a *Healthy Get-Together*.

INVITATIONS (CONTINUED)

SUBJECT: [Insert *Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event title] on [insert date]

Dear [insert name],

Every year, Americans suffer more than 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes. Nearly 50% of African American men and women have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke.

Based on your expertise in [insert focus area—medical care/diet/fitness, etc.] I'd like to invite you to speak at our upcoming [*Healthy Get-Together* or your organization's event title], on behalf of *Healthy Is Strong* and Million Hearts® – an initiative that aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017—with members of [insert name of your organization, as appropriate]. This event will allow attendees to learn more about heart-healthy habits related to food and exercise, and connect with other members of the community who also want to improve their heart health. The event will be held at [insert location] on [insert date] at [insert time].

Please let me know if you have any questions. If you are interested in participating, we can connect to discuss the event in more detail.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

[Insert your name/signature]

@

This model email is intended to be sent to local members of the target community/organization, as well as event speakers, to gather feedback following a *Healthy Get-Together*.

Consider handing participants an event feedback sheet while they are at the event, even if you plan to send the email shown here.

INVITATIONS (CONTINUED)

Feedback Email

Subject: Thank you! Feedback on [insert *Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event title] on [insert date]

Dear [insert name],

Thank you for participating in the [insert *Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event title] on [insert date].

In order to help [insert your organization's name/group name] and the Million Hearts® *Healthy Is Strong* initiative provide even better programming in the future, please provide feedback about the [*Healthy Get-Together* or your organization's event title]. Specifically,

- **What did you like?**
- **What do you think can be improved?**
- **What changes do you intend to make to improve your health?**

Feel free to respond directly to this e-mail, or if you prefer, I'd be happy to talk to you on the phone; I can be reached at [insert your phone number]. All comments will be confidential and will be made anonymous when shared with Million Hearts®.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any further information about the Million Hearts® *Healthy Is Strong* initiative.

Best,

[Insert your name/signature]

@

This model email is intended to be sent to a community expert—for example physician, nutritionist, personal trainer—following a *Healthy Get-Together*.

INVITATIONS (CONTINUED)

SUBJECT: Thank you

Dear [insert name],

Thank you for participating in the [insert *Healthy Get-Together* or your organization's event title] on [insert date]. The attendees enjoyed learning about [insert topic(s) based on focus of discussion – diet, fitness, etc.] and hopefully will keep the information in mind in the future.

[Insert your organization's name, family's name, etc.] looks forward to keeping in touch and hopes to work with you again. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any feedback on the event or would like to discuss anything further.

Best,

[Insert your name/signature]



HEALTHY IS STRONG: STARTING THE DISCUSSION AT YOUR EVENT

At the beginning of your event, take 15 minutes to talk to your attendees about heart health. Consider using the following to help educate attendees about the importance of a heart-healthy lifestyle. Feel free to use these message points as written or take whatever portions you think would be most relevant to your event attendees.

#1 INTRODUCE THE HEART HEALTH PORTION OF THE EVENT

Thanks for coming today and for giving me a few moments to talk about an important health issue for us all – heart health. Most of us know that **heart disease is a leading cause of death in the United States**, but it's especially important for African Americans to pay attention to this. That's why I've teamed up with the Million Hearts® *Healthy Is Strong* initiative, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to help encourage us to stay heart-healthy!

#2 SHARE THE NEWS THAT HEART ATTACKS AND STROKES CAN BE PREVENTED

So you may be thinking, why should we care about heart disease?

■ **First the good news:** Heart attacks and strokes can be prevented—and there are simple steps that we can take to help do this. We'll get into this in just a bit.



But why should you pay attention?

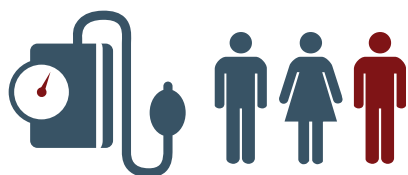
- Nearly **50% of African American men and women** have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke.
- Compared to whites, African Americans have nearly **twice the risk** of having a stroke.
- The country's highest death rates from stroke are in the **Southeast**.

HEALTHY IS STRONG: STARTING THE DISCUSSION AT YOUR EVENT (CONTINUED)

#3 TALK ABOUT RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE, LIKE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, HIGH CHOLESTEROL, AND SMOKING

Does anyone know what puts you at risk? [Ask for responses from attendees.] To start, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking put us at higher risk for heart attack and stroke. It's important to know that:

■ **High blood pressure** increases the risk of heart attack and stroke more than any other risk factor. African Americans are more likely than any other racial or ethnic group to have high blood pressure and to develop the condition earlier in life.



■ While your body needs **cholesterol**, when you have too much it can build up in your arteries and cause heart disease. High cholesterol is pretty common and affects 1 in 3 American adults.

■ **Smoking** also puts you at higher risk for heart disease—it can steal at least 1 decade off your life! The sad news is that in the United States today, about 1 in 5 African American adults still smoke cigarettes.

#4 DISCUSS SOME OF THE THINGS YOUR FRIENDS/FAMILY/COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN DO TO REDUCE THEIR RISK FOR HEART DISEASE

So, what should we do? We have the power to reduce our risk of heart disease and improve our overall heart health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that we follow the A-B-C-S:

“**A**” stands for **aspirin** for those who need it – you should always ask your doctor about this.

“**B**” stands for **blood pressure** control.

“**C**” stands for **cholesterol** management.

“**S**” stands for quitting **smoking**.

So, how do we actually follow the A-B-C-S? The most important thing is to speak with your doctor – he or she can help you create a plan to get heart-healthy.

HEALTHY IS STRONG: STARTING THE DISCUSSION AT YOUR EVENT (CONTINUED)

#5 TALK ABOUT SIMPLE BEHAVIOR CHANGES THAT YOU CAN MAKE TODAY TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR HEART HEALTH

In addition to talking to your doctor about heart health, there are a few other steps you can take for heart health. Can anyone think of a few tips? [Ask for responses from attendees.]

■ The first is **healthy eating**. When planning meals and snacks, it's easy to grab things that are fast. But next time you reach for that sugary snack, remember that simple changes to your diet can go a long way. To help control blood pressure and cholesterol, grill or bake instead of fry, eat fresh fruits and vegetables, and check nutrition labels to find foods with less than 140 mg of sodium per serving. Snacks like popcorn or sourdough pretzels are great low-sodium alternatives to consider.



■ Next, think about **exercise**. Did you know that obesity can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke? Try to fit in 20 to 30 minutes of exercise each day. This can be as simple as walking more. And think about asking a family member or friend to join you.

■ If you smoke, consider **quitting**. For some tips on how to get started, visit millionhearts.hhs.gov.

■ It's always important to **talk to your doctor**. Your doctor can help you come up with a plan to keep your heart healthy. Remember to always share your health history and get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked.

#6 INTRODUCE COMMUNITY MEMBERS/GUEST SPEAKERS

Next, I'd like to introduce [insert name of guest speaker] who is here to give us more information about how to stay heart-healthy and manage blood pressure and cholesterol. Welcome [insert name of speaker]!

#7 THANK ATTENDEES FOR COMING AND WRAP UP THE SPEAKING PORTION OF THE EVENT



Thanks again for attending and allowing us to spend some time talking about heart health. Please consider sharing the information you've learned today with the rest of your friends and family members. I'd also like to thank the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for providing us with this information as part of their Million Hearts® *Healthy Is Strong* initiative. The goal of that initiative is to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes in the U.S. by 2017.

For more information visit millionhearts.hhs.gov.



STRONG MEN

PUT THEIR HEALTH FIRST.



EVENT PLANNING TIP SHEET – HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR REGULAR GET-TOGETHER INTO A *HEALTHY GET-TOGETHER*

In an effort to make health a priority and support those in your family or the community who may be at risk for high blood pressure or high cholesterol, transform your next event into a *Healthy Get-Together*.

To make your event a success, you should first tell the people you are inviting about the change. Let your friends and family know that this event will be a little different from previous get-togethers because you will focus on improving health. Let people know about the event well in advance, encourage them to ask questions about this healthy change, and provide them with suggestions on how they can contribute to your *Healthy Get-Together*.

Other steps in the event planning process might include:

MAKE YOUR GUEST LIST



In addition to those you would normally invite, consider inviting those who may benefit from information about personal health and wellness, especially heart health. To make the planning process easier, create a worksheet with each possible attendee's name, phone number, e-mail address, attending/not attending, and number of guests. A [template invitee list](#) is included in this planning guide.

CHOOSE A DATE & TIME FOR THE EVENT



Plan your event for a weekend or evening to get more people there.

CHOOSE A PLACE FOR THE EVENT



The location should be able to accommodate everyone on the guest list.

INVITE A GUEST SPEAKER



Explain why you're holding a *Healthy Get-Together* and what you would like that person to discuss. Diet and exercise are good topics. We have included a [sample introductory outreach note](#) in this planning guide. Guest speakers could be experts in your family or from your community (an aunt who is a nurse; a healthcare professional).

EVENT PLANNING TIP SHEET (CONTINUED)

SEND OUT INVITATIONS/E-MAILS 4 WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF THE EVENT AND TRACK RESPONSES



The invitation should include the following details: what the event is, why it's being held, where and when it's being held, when you would like to receive a response about attendance, and the point of contact if guests have questions. Sample [e-mail invitation](#) language and a customizable [designed invitation](#) are included in this planning guide.

MAKE YOUR HEALTHY GET-TOGETHER INTERACTIVE



In addition to having a good time, the goal of the event is for friends and family to understand that *Healthy Is Strong* and encourage them to make small changes to improve their heart health. By planning an engaging program, you will keep their attention. Consider including [physical activities](#) in the day's plan, such as group games or walks, or possibly a healthy recipe taste test/cook-off.

DEVELOP YOUR PRESENTATION



This could include a welcome, an introduction to the Million Hearts® *Healthy Is Strong* initiative, a discussion about the importance of a healthy diet, exercise, and taking the right medicine. Also consider hosting an activity such as a cooking lesson or a group game. Sample messaging, which can be used as an outline of the event discussion, is included in this planning guide, as are suggestions of activities to organize at the event.

BUY/BORROW/PRINT SUPPLIES



These may include tables, chairs, plates, cups, napkins, utensils, paper, pens, and games. Also consider printing out several of the fact sheets that are included in the [resources page](#) of this guide, such as the "Health Résumé" and "Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Professional" for attendees to take home with them. These fact sheets can also be found at millionhearts.hhs.gov.

MAKE OR BUY REFRESHMENTS



Look for heart-healthy foods, such as vegetables and fruit platters, low-sodium snacks like popcorn, or sourdough pretzels, and make sure to have water on hand as an alternative to sweet drinks.

EVENT PLANNING TIP SHEET (CONTINUED)

DAY-OF EVENT: ENJOY!

Make sure everyone is involved in discussions and group activities. Make note of any feedback received during the event to improve future *Healthy Get-Togethers*.

FOLLOWING THE EVENT, SEND THANK-YOU NOTES TO ATTENDEES



Use the occasion to gather their feedback for planning future events and send thank-you notes for their attendance. A sample note is included in this planning guide.

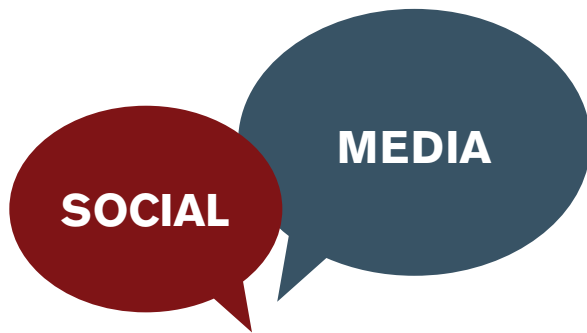
For additional tips, or if you have questions or feedback after the event, please contact [insert name, phone number, and email address of appropriate CDC contact].



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

In advance of a *Healthy Get-Together*, promote the event through a variety of channels, including social media. You'll find suggested Facebook posts and tweets below that use the hashtag **#HealthyIsStrong** and link to the existing **MillionHeartsUS** Twitter handle.

Consider posting photos following the event as a way to highlight the accomplishment of the community in taking a step toward a healthier life, and to continue driving interest and action.



TWITTER



Pre-Event Tweets

- Together we can prevent 1 million heart attacks by 2017! Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more. **#HealthyIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- Heart attacks and strokes can be prevented and there are simple steps you can take. Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more.
- Healthy Is Strong! Join us at [location] on [date] to learn how you can improve your heart health. **#HealthyIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- Join community members and healthcare providers to learn how to prevent 1 million heart attacks by 2017. **#HealthyIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- Get healthy eating and activity tips at our Million Hearts *Healthy Get-Together* on [date] at [location]! **#HealthyIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- Americans suffer 1.5M heart attacks & strokes yearly. Learn to prevent heart disease at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name] on [date] at [location].

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS (CONTINUED)

TWITTER



Pre-Event Tweets (cont')

- Nearly 50% of African American men have a risk factor for stroke. Learn more at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name].
- Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States? Help protect yourself. **#HealthIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**

Post-Event Tweets

- Our community is stronger today after transforming our event into a *Healthy Get Together!* **#HealthIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- Our family had a Healthy Get Together, and you can too! Learn more at [*Healthy Get-Together* millionhearts.hhs.gov] **#HealthIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**
- We've made the commitment to lead heart-healthy lives, and you can too! **#HealthIsStrong @MillionHeartsUS**

FACEBOOK



Pre-Event Posts

- @MillionHearts is a nationwide initiative aimed at preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2017. To learn more about the valuable resources available to help you stay heart-healthy, as well as nutrition and exercise tips, join us at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name] on [date] at [location]. See you there!
- Heart attacks and strokes can be prevented and there are simple steps you can take. Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more.
- Did you know that Americans suffer 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes each year? To learn more about how you can easily prevent heart disease, join us at a [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name] on [date] at [location].
- Did you know that nearly 50% of African American men have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke? Learn more at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name] on [date] at [location].
- Interested in improving your heart health? Join our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name] on [date] at [location], where we are bringing together communities and health professionals to share how they are fighting heart disease and stroke.
- @MillionHeartsUS is piloting *Healthy Get-Togethers* in local communities to teach residents how to stay heart-healthy by providing nutrition and exercise tips. Join us at [location] on [date] to see how you can help prevent 1 million heart attacks by 2017!
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. Join us on [date] at [location] to see how you can improve your nutrition and exercise routine and prevent heart disease.

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS (CONTINUED)

FACEBOOK



Post-Event Posts

■ On [date] we transformed our [insert event—family reunion, block party, BBQ, etc.] into a [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name]. We learned about making simple changes to our daily lives—from diet to exercise—to improve our heart health. It was a lot of fun and we're excited to share our new knowledge with friends and family! Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more!

■ Do you want to lead a healthier life? We do! This past [day of event] we committed to making small changes to our daily lives to help prevent heart disease at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name]. Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more!

■ Did you know that nearly 50% of African American men have a risk factor that can lead to heart attack or stroke? In an effort to avoid becoming included in this scary statistic we learned how to lead healthier lives by making small changes to our daily routines at our [*Healthy Get-Together* or organization's event name]. Healthy Is Strong! Visit millionhearts.hhs.gov to learn more!



HEALTHY GET-TOGETHER ACTIVITIES

Following are examples of group activities that can be organized in advance of, and conducted (or recognized) at your *Healthy Get-Together*. Feel free to be creative and think of a unique challenge for your guests!

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Physical activity has proven health benefits, including lowering the risk of heart attack and stroke. Engaging in exercise or body movement that uses energy—from daily life activities like doing chores around the house or yard work, to playing sports such as basketball, baseball, or football—is a great way to help prevent heart disease. Some group-based physical challenges you might want to incorporate to your *Healthy Get-Together* include:

Dancing

Get out and move! Dancing is a great way to get some exercise and have fun in the process. Play crowd-pleasing music or consider an instructor-guided dance/exercise activity such as Zumba—a dance fitness program that combines Latin and international music.

Relay races

During a relay race, members of a team take turns running, swimming, skating (or a combination of such activities) until one group finishes first. Often, a baton is passed between members as each leg of the race is complete. This game can involve a large number of people and is a great way to get your heart rate up.

Dodgeball

A form of interval training, dodgeball can be played by many people and conditions muscles as participants sprint and stop. By moving quickly and repeatedly changing direction, players can build balance. Remember to always play safe! Use soft, lightweight balls instead of soccer or volleyballs and aim for players' legs, not their heads.

Jump rope

Jumping rope can be a heart-healthy activity. Most people burn about 100 calories for every 10 minutes of steady two-foot jumping, but the activity can be expanded to include more than one person in games like Double-Dutch.

HEALTHY GET-TOGETHER ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

HEALTHY EATING

Eating healthy is an important way to manage high blood pressure and cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. To encourage guests to make simple changes to their diet, including eating less fried foods, you can try the following activities:

Team Taste Test

Have guests prepare healthy versions of their favorite foods using the Million Hearts® Eating Well website available at [recipes.millionhearts.hhs.gov](https://www.recipes.millionhearts.hhs.gov). Then, hold a taste test of each item at the *Healthy Get-Together* and vote on the best dish.

Recipe Swap

Encourage each guest to come with a favorite healthy recipe in hand. Once at the event, have guests swap their recipes. This is a great way to increase their collection of heart-healthy meal options. For healthy recipe ideas, visit [recipes.millionhearts.hhs.gov](https://www.recipes.millionhearts.hhs.gov).

GENERAL HEART HEALTH AWARENESS

Using social media like Facebook and Twitter is a great way to encourage others to take action to reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke. Use the hashtag **#HealthyIsStrong** and your tweet could be retweeted by **@MillionHearts**. Consider taking on the following challenges:

Quit Smoking Challenge

Encourage family, friends and community members to quit smoking and make their commitment public by posting a photo online using the hashtag **#HealthyIsStrong**.

Healthy Is Strong Challenge

Every little step counts! Tell family, friends, and/or community members to share the progress they're making to lead a healthier life by posting photos of themselves exercising or cooking healthy by using the hashtag **#HealthyIsStrong**.



DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES

For more information, visit millionhearts.hhs.gov

EVENT RESOURCES

PERSONAL HEALTH FORMS

For more information, visit millionhearts.hhs.gov

FACT SHEETS ON HEART DISEASE

[Click here](#) for information about heart disease and stroke in African Americans.

[Click here](#) for information about supporting a loved one with high blood pressure.