

Important Telephone Numbers

Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield
RIPEA Group Health Plan
1-866-649-2041

Anthem Medicare Advantage Plan
Current members: 1-833-848-8730
More information: 1-833-848-8729

AMBA
Dental/Vision/Long Term Care/Cancer/Whole Life/
Medical Air Service Association
1-800-258-7041

HEAR in America
Hearing Plan
1-800-286-6149

INPRS/PERF
Retirement Checks & Benefits
1-844-464-6777

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RIPEA

Retired Indiana Public Employees Association

Working for Your
Retirement Today

February 2024



In this issue:

Your Voice is Needed
pg 3

Save the Date
pg 7

What Women Should Know
About Their Heart Health
pg 10

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A Message from the Executive Director



Have you ever done hurdles? Meaning real track & field hurdles. No? Well then, we have something in common. And if you said “yes”, well then, you’ve got major kudos from me!

While I did run track (long-distance) many moons ago, I cannot imagine

choosing to be a hurdler.

And yet, in my professional life, I feel like that’s exactly what I’ve chosen some days – with higher stakes.

But the thing about being a track & field hurdler is that you know the hurdles will be on the track. You know how far apart they’ll be and how tall they are. You can practice for them ahead of time, over and over, to know exactly what to expect. And fortunately, surprise hurdles are never thrown your way.

Can you imagine if there were? If someone ran onto the track and put a hurdle out for you to surmount to win? What if some people were doled out surprise hurdles and some weren’t? Well, of course that would never happen. It’s too dangerous and definitely unfair.

And yet, in the policy work we do, it can certainly feel like we’re navigating those exact unknowns at times.

What’s been hardest to accept is that we thought we’d just signed up to be sprinters. Hold the hurdles! Before 2021, the exact same 13th check legislation was introduced year after year. And year after year, it passed. Until it didn’t.

But just because hurdles have been added to the mix, we can’t just get out of the race. So, we’re having to team up better to succeed instead.

The positive news: The Indiana House is clearly on our side and did their part to unanimously hand the baton off to the Senate. Thank your Representative!

The hopeful news – even in light of potential hurdles – is: We have about 40,000 people on the team (members like you!) who can help us clear potential hurdles in the Senate. But it’s going to take some effort. Emails, letters, and calls are the way to get things done.

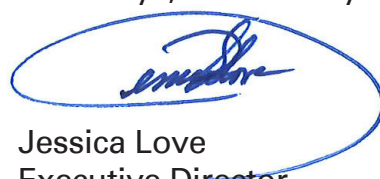
A potential hurdle we face is: The Senate is already focused on potentially establishing a long-term, automated solution to address 13th check/COLA concerns through legislation next year. While that could be great – to no longer have to request a 13th check/COLA every two years, it wouldn’t go into effect until 2025 at the earliest.

So, we must work together to message:

1) Money to fund a 13th check is sitting in the Supplemental Reserve Accounts, set aside for this purpose. So, 2) Approving a 13th check is not a budget issue. And 3) Retirees (you!) need help now.

I hope – even if you’ve never done hurdles before – you will join me and do your part to get our team over the finish line successfully this year. This requires reaching out to your Senator. Also have friends and family contact Appropriations Committee members about the 13th check (see page 9 for district map). These steps can help us get over potential hurdles in securing a 1-year 13th check for 2024.

As always, thanks for your service to our state,


Jessica Love
Executive Director

Your Voice is Needed

Legislators reconvened for the 2024 Legislative Session January 8, 2024. We need your help to “flood” our State Senators with professional and respectful emails asking for approval of a 13th check for 2024. Your email should include personal examples of how you use the money or any hardship you have faced in the years you have not received one.

You can find your senator easily by visiting Find your Legislators

The preferred method of contact is by email. Senators’ email addresses are all similar:

Senator.Lastname@iga.in.gov

An example would be:

Senator.Buchanan@iga.in.gov

To send a handwritten note, mail to:

200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Please also ask friends and family who live in the districts of Appropriations Committee members and Sen. Brian Buchanan (District 7) to contact them to request the Thirteenth Check (HB 1004) be enacted this session. Committee members:

Sen. Ryan Mishler, Chair
Sen. Eric Bassler
Sen. Liz Brown
Sen. Justin Busch
Sen. Ed Charbonneau
Sen. Michael Crider
Sen. Aaron Freeman
Sen. Chris Garten
Sen. Travis Holdman
Sen. Jeff Raatz
Sen. David Niezgodski

Sen. Fady Qaddoura
Sen. Lonnie Randolph
Sen. Shelli Yoder

Thank you for being an essential part of our advocacy efforts. Your involvement can make a significant impact on securing a pension enhancement in 2024.

How to locate your state Representative | Senator

1. Open your camera app on your smartphone and hover over QR Code.
2. Once a web address pops up (often, in a yellow oval), click the link.
3. Once the website opens, enter your home address under Find Your Legislator.
4. Then click on the tabs above the map for: Senate | House



iga.in.gov/information/find-legislators

Legislative Update



RIPEA Executive Director Jessica Love testified for two different bills, in front of two different committees, in January: House Bill 1004 and Senate Bill 275. HB 1004 would provide a one-time 13th check, based on years of service, in 2024. SB 275 would enable changes to help the state retirement system prepare for a possible change to a hybrid 13th check/COLA model as early as 2025. (Please see the November 2023 Communicator newsletter for details on the Pensions Management and Oversight Committee (PMOC) recommendations approved in October related to a hybrid system.)

At this stage, the Senate Appropriations Committee and Sen. Brian Buchanan (District 7) could be especially helpful in ensuring the 13th Check passes for 2024. Help make sure we are not the only ones telling legislators you need this. They need to hear from you directly.

HB 1004 – 13th Check for 2024

Provides for a thirteenth check in 2024 for certain members, participants, or beneficiaries of the: (1) Indiana state teachers' retirement fund; (2) Indiana public employees' retirement fund; (3) state excise police, gaming agent, gaming control officer, and conservation enforcement officers' retirement plan; (4) state police pre-1987 benefit system; and (5) state police 1987 benefit system. Bill actions:

01/08/2024 Authored by Representative Cherry,

named a House priority bill; Co-authored by Representatives Karickhoff, Meltzer, Porter

01/08/2024 First reading: referred to Committee on Ways and Means

01/11/2024 Hearing in House Ways and Means: Testimony by Jessica Love, RIPEA Director
To View Video of Jessica's Testimony, select January 11 in Meeting Dropdown – Time Stamp: 33:20: https://iga.in.gov/session/2024/video/committee_ways_and_means_2200/

01/11/2024 HB 1004 becomes 1st bill of 2024 adopted by Ways & Means; Roll Call: yeas 23, nays 0

01/16/2024 Committee report: do pass, adopted

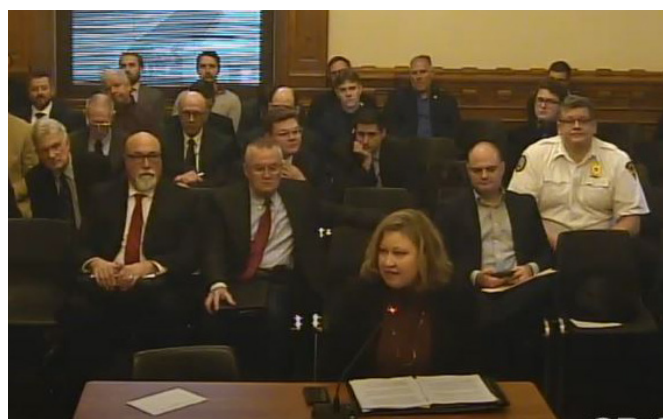
01/18/2024 Second reading: ordered engrossed

01/22/2024 Third reading: passed; Roll Call: yeas 97, nays 0

01/22/2024 Senate sponsors added: Senators Buchanan, Bray, Crider; Cosponsor: Senator Niezgodski

01/23/2024 Additional 94 Representatives added as coauthors

01/24/2024 Referred to the Senate



SB 275 – Pension Matters

Removes a provision limiting the creation of a hybrid 13th check/COLA model and requires INPRS to administratively and technologically prepare for a hybrid system, while ensuring INPRS does not lower employer surcharge rates or increase them by more than 0.1% of payroll from the prior year. Abbreviated bill actions:

01/11/2024 Authored by Senators Buchanan and Rogers

01/11/2024 First reading: referred to Committee on Pensions and Labor

01/24/2024 Hearing in Senate Pensions & Labor: Testimony by Jessica Love, RIPEA Director

To View Video of Jessica's Testimony, select January 24 in Meeting Dropdown – Time Stamp: 16:12: https://iga.in.gov/session/2024/video/committee_pensions_and_labor_4500/

02/06/2024 Third reading: passed; Roll Call: yeas 46, nays 2

02/07/2024 Referred to the House

What Every Retired Public Employee Should be Telling their Legislators



\$206M
Uncommitted

\$206M of uncommitted, available funds is sitting in the Supplemental Reserve Accounts, according to INPRS testimony on January 24, 2024. So, approving a 13th check is not a budget issue.

13th checks cost state and local government \$175M less than an annual 1% COLA over two years, but they make a greater personal impact for most PERF retirees.*

\$175M
Less

The need for a 13th check is significant when you consider that 7 out of 10, approximately 70,000, retired public employees receive a pension of \$800 or less, and 90% of retirees' retirement income comes from Social Security and PERF.

90%

All data from RIPEA 2023 Member Survey; RIPEA 2021 Actuarial Analysis; and INPRS annual reporting and testimony. *LSA calculated a total cost of \$118.7M for the typical 13th check for 2023/24 (\$118.4M for 2021/22 when the 1-yr 2022 COLA created a \$206M+ liability for the SRAs).



Are You Really Going to Outlive Your Assets?

It is often said that the number one fear of retirees is outliving their assets or, in other words, running out of money. Financial services companies and planners often play on this theme to market their services or products. But does it really happen that often? According to a recent study by Blackrock and the Employee Benefit Research Institute, not really.

In fact, according to the study, most retirees maintain an accumulation mindset rather than a liquidation mindset. Spending remains pretty consistent for most retirees with small increases for inflation. Not surprisingly, those retirees with pension income (the kind that pays you for life) tend to spend down assets at a lower rate.

But the big news from the study is that 80% of the 1,510 retirees surveyed had at least as much left as they had when they retired after 20 years!

Remember, though, no one knows what the future holds and investors and planners alike can only look to the past to predict the future. And, also according to the study, people that are retiring now are much less optimistic than those

that have been retired for a while.

A final point for all of us to keep in mind is that retirement – like investing in general – is not a straight line. There will be up years (like 2023) and down years (like 2022). Keeping faith and staying on your planned retirement course is the key to having a great financial retirement.

Tom Faulconer, JD, CFP®
tom@transitionsfinancialindiana.com

The opinions contained herein are not intended to be investment advice or a solicitation to buy or sell any securities.

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Is this true for you? Complete our quick survey!



Why I Give

To begin, I want to thank all of you who have contributed to the RIPEA/Murphy Foundation. You have provided much-needed assistance to retirees who are having financial difficulties.

The contributions received each year are directly tied to the amount of funds the Foundation grants to members in need, which is the primary purpose of the RIPEA Foundation.

In 2023, 105 retirees received financial assistance from the Foundation. Requests from retirees expressed the need for help with medical bills, utilities, glasses, hearing aids, food, and other important needs. The annual requests for assistance far exceed the funds available to help. In 2023, RIPEA funded 39% of members' total requests for assistance.

I support the Foundation because I want to help those retired public employees who

find themselves in need of additional financial resources. As a member of the Board of Directors, I know the need.

I encourage you to join me and others in supporting the Foundation.

If you already contribute, I hope you can increase your support – even if only by a few dollars. If you have not previously contributed, please consider making a contribution in 2024. Contributions are tax-deductible.

The RIPEA/Murphy Foundation is an important part of the role of RIPEA to serve you, Indiana's active and retired public employees.

With my best regards,

Senator Patricia Miller, retired

RIPEA's 32nd Annual Convention

**AUGUST
27
2024**

Primo Banquet & Conference Center
2615 National Avenue
Indianapolis 46227

VENUE IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

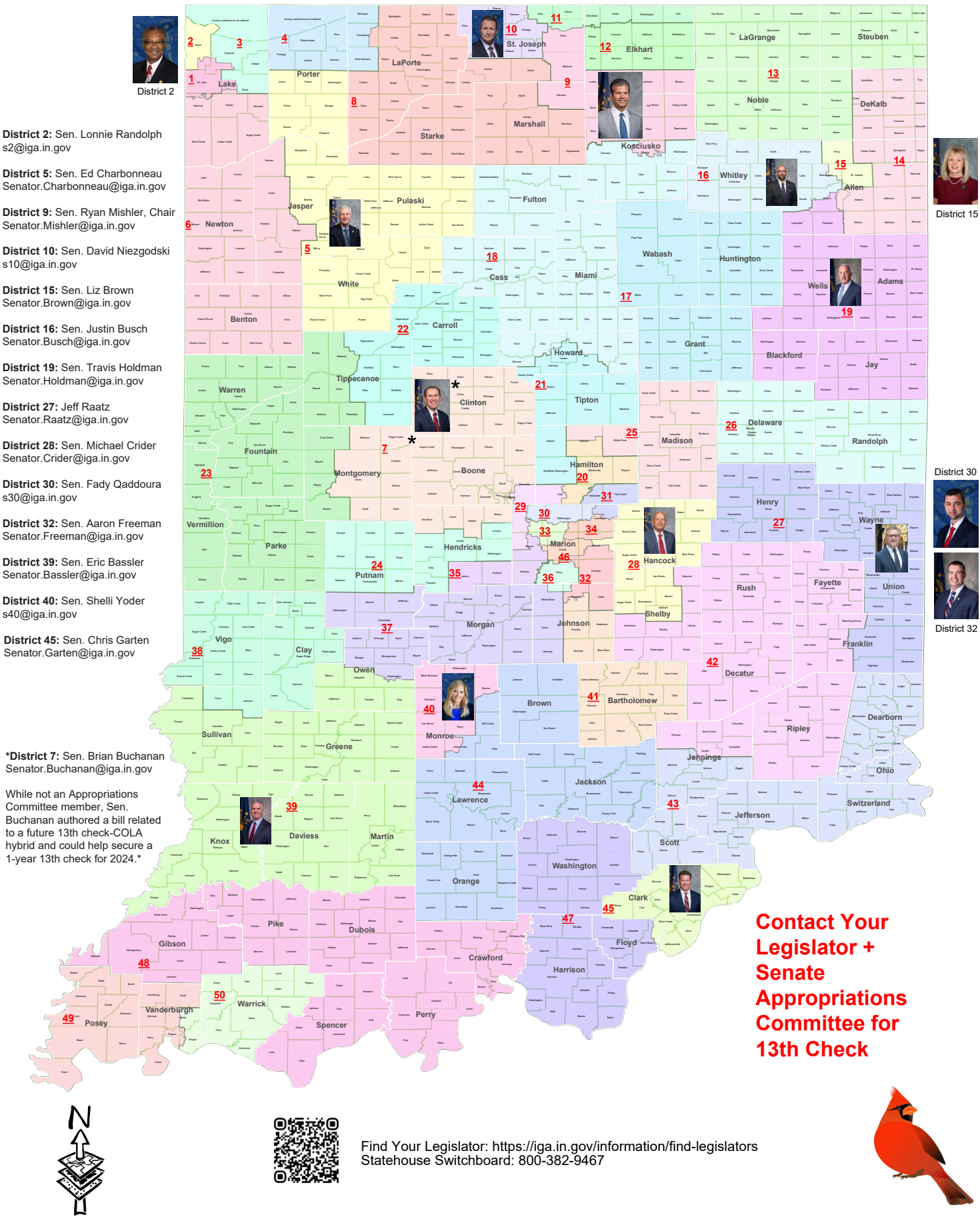
The Surprising Ways Activism Benefits Retirees’ Health and Well-Being

Activism in retirement can be important for various reasons, as it allows individuals to continue making a positive impact on society, contribute to causes they care about, and maintain a sense of purpose. Here are several reasons why activism in retirement can be significant:

- 1. Experience and Wisdom: Retirees often bring a wealth of experience, knowledge, and wisdom to the table. Their life experiences can provide valuable insights and perspectives that can be beneficial in addressing social issues and advocating for positive change.
- 2. Time Availability: Retirement usually provides individuals with more free time. This extra time can be channeled into activism, allowing retirees to engage in meaningful activities, participate in campaigns, and dedicate themselves to passionate causes.
- 3. Social Impact: Activism enables retirees to continue contributing to the well-being of society. Whether it’s advocating for environmental issues, social justice, healthcare, education, or other issues, retirees can play a crucial role in creating positive social change.
- 4. Mental and Emotional Well-being: Staying active and engaged in social causes during retirement can have positive effects on mental and emotional well-being. It provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment, reducing the risk of isolation and depression that can sometimes accompany retirement.
- 5. Legacy Building: Engaging in activism allows retirees to leave a lasting legacy. By actively

- participating in causes that matter to them, individuals can make a positive impact on future generations and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.
- 6. Networking and Social Connections: Activism provides opportunities for retirees to connect with like-minded individuals who share similar values and concerns. Building and maintaining social connections during retirement can enhance one’s overall quality of life.
 - 7. Continued Learning: Activism often involves staying informed about current events, social issues, and policy changes. Retirees can continue to learn and grow intellectually, staying mentally active and stimulated.
 - 8. Advocacy for Personal Interests: Retirement is a time for individuals to pursue their passions. Activism allows retirees to advocate for causes that align with their personal values and interests, providing a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment.
 - 9. Influence on Public Policy: Retirees can use their collective voice and influence to advocate for changes in public policy. Whether it’s through writing letters, attending meetings, or participating in advocacy groups, retirees can play a crucial role in shaping the policies that affect society.
 - 10. Promotion of Civic Engagement: Retirees engaged in activism can serve as role models for younger generations, promoting the importance of civic engagement and social responsibility. This intergenerational exchange of ideas and values contributes to a more informed and active society.

2024 Senate Appropriations Committee by District



What Women Should Know About Their Heart Health

By Dr. Amna Ahmed, Cardiologist at IU Health West

February is American Heart Month, an annual observance to encourage people across the country to pay attention to their heart health. For women, this is vital. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 60 million women in the United States are living with heart disease. In fact, it is the leading cause of death for American women. It is responsible for one in every five female deaths. That is more than breast cancer. Research has shown that only about half of U.S. women recognize heart disease as their number one killer. It is crucial to know the signs and symptoms of heart disease so you can lower your risk.

Know the symptoms

For women 55 and older, heart disease shows up differently than in men. The symptoms can be subtle—like feeling tired, having trouble breathing, or experiencing discomfort in unexpected places like your back or jaw. These signs often don’t scream “heart problem,” which can delay getting the right diagnosis and treatment. It is very important to keep in mind that hormonal changes after menopause can raise the risk of heart disease, especially if you have risk factors like diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, or a family history of heart disease. After menopause, women surpass their male counterparts in risk of heart disease.

Among the prevalent forms of heart disease in women, a few stand out. Coronary artery disease (CAD) remains the leading cause, characterized by plaque buildup in the arteries, which restricts blood flow to the heart. Additionally, heart failure, where the heart cannot pump blood efficiently, affects women commonly post-menopause. Arrhythmias, irregular heart rhythms, can pose risks, often associated with palpitations or fainting spells. Understanding these common heart diseases empowers women to recognize symptoms early and seek timely medical care, enhancing their heart health journey.



Dr. Amna Ahmed

Focus on prevention

Taking care of your heart starts with the choices you make every day. Eating well is a big part of it—focus on lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats like the ones in fish and nuts. Being active regularly matters, too. Try to aim for around 150 minutes each week doing things you enjoy, whether it’s walking, swimming, dancing or whatever gets your heart pumping. Managing your weight is very important

in reducing your risk of developing heart issues. Finding ways to manage stress, like meditation, yoga or hobbies you love, can also help your heart. If you smoke, quitting can also make a huge difference.

Check in with your doctor

Regular check-ups to evaluate your risk factors are your best defense against heart disease. Keep an eye on your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and watch out for signs of diabetes by getting checked regularly. Talking openly with your doctor about your heart health concerns and asking questions can be a game-changer in taking care of yourself.

Getting help early and understanding your medications and any procedures recommended is crucial. Stick to the treatment plan your doctor suggests, and don’t hesitate to talk about any concerns or side effects.

Lean on others

Having a support network is invaluable. Connecting with others in similar situations, whether through support groups, community events, or online forums, can offer guidance and encouragement.

Your heart is the engine of your vitality. Taking charge of its well-being means making smart choices, keeping up with check-ups, and embracing a supportive lifestyle. Prioritizing your heart health isn’t just about looking after yourself; it’s an investment into a long and healthy life.

To learn more about heart disease and treatment options, visit iuhealth.org/heart.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can contact Indiana 211 to get connected to the following resources:

- Food and Clothing
- Mental health and substance abuse services
- Housing and utility assistance
- Education, employment and tax assistance
- Domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual assault support
- Children and family services
- Healthcare

CALL

2-1-1 or 866-211-9966

TEXT

Your ZIP Code to 898-211

ONLINE

Visit the web at: in211.org

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