

Lifeline



Heart health matters

Recommendations for better heart health.

Why is heart health important?

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation heart disease and stroke claim the lives of more men and women in Canada than any other cause. In fact, over 1.3 million Canadians are

living with heart disease. Although some risk for heart disease is inherited, there are many actions you can take to reduce your chances of developing this dangerous condition.

What is heart disease?

Heart disease includes a number of conditions affecting the structures or function of the heart.

They can include:

- ✓ Coronary artery disease (narrowing of the arteries)
- ✓ Heart attack
- ✓ Abnormal heart rhythms or arrhythmias
- ✓ Heart failure
- ✓ Heart valve disease
- ✓ Congenital heart disease
- ✓ Heart muscle disease (cardiomyopathy)
- ✓ Pericardial disease
- ✓ Aorta disease and Marfan syndrome
- ✓ Vascular disease (blood vessel disease)

What are the risk factors of Cardiovascular Disease?

Understanding the different types of heart disease and knowing if you have risk factors can help you to prevent it. According to the World Health Organization, the most important behavioural risk factors of heart disease and stroke are unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol. The effects of behavioral risk factors may show up

in individuals as raised blood pressure, raised blood glucose, raised blood lipids, and being overweight and obesity. These “intermediate risks factors” can be measured in primary care facilities and indicate an increased risk of developing a heart attack, stroke, heart failure and other complications.

Self management tips for keeping your heart healthy

Simple lifestyle changes will go a long way towards lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels and improving overall heart health.



Exercise regularly

Regular exercise can help the heart pump more efficiently and can help you maintain a healthy weight by lowering cholesterol and blood pressure.

Check with your local senior centre or community centre to find low-cost or free exercise classes.



Maintain a healthy weight

Being overweight or obese can increase your risk for heart disease.

Weight increases can be a sign of increased fluid retention. Report a gain of over two pounds in a day or five pounds in a week. Make sure to weigh yourself at the same time each day.



Take steps to quit smoking

Cigarette smoking damages blood vessels and puts extra strain on your heart, therefore greatly increasing your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

If you do smoke, call 1 877-513-5333 for guidance.



Consult a professional

It is vital that a healthcare provider monitor your heart health and medications.

Keep all your appointments and be prepared to ask questions.

Medications for heart failure can only work if taken as prescribed.

Flu and pneumonia are especially dangerous for people with heart failure. Be sure you are immunized and avoid people with communicable diseases.



Eat a healthy diet

Our bodies need the right vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients to stay healthy. A healthy diet includes: whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and low-fat milk products.

Cholesterol and saturated fat contribute to coronary artery disease, a major cause of heart failure.

Cut down on sodium (salt); look for low sodium or no-salt added products; such as: soup, canned vegetables, snack food and lunch meats.

Add more fibre to your diet by eating plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.



Limit alcohol use

As we age, we become more sensitive to alcohol's effects. The same amount of alcohol can have a greater effect on an older adult than on someone who is younger.

Alcoholic beverages can weaken the heart and may interact negatively with your medications. Discuss safe levels of alcohol intake with your healthcare provider.

Older adults are more likely to have health problems that can become more serious with alcohol. Some examples of these conditions are stroke, high blood pressure, memory loss, and mood disorders.

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