

HEART DISEASE

Heart Disease: What It Is and Why It Matters

Heart disease — closely linked with obesity — is already North America's biggest health problem, and the crisis is only getting worse. Here are some sobering statistics for you:

- Each year, about 610,000 Americans and more than 33,000 Canadians die of heart disease. That's approximately 25% of all deaths in United States and 29% of all deaths in Canada!
- Over 700,000 Americans have a heart attack each year, and 90% of Canadians over age 20 have at least one risk factor that leads to heart disease.
- Approximately 40% of Americans and Canadians are considered overweight or obese.

That's scary news. But **there's good news, too: with heart disease, your choices matter and you make an impact!** Even if your current lifestyle and diet are hard on your heart, there are a number of small, moderate and long-term changes you can make to reduce your risk! But first, let's talk about what heart disease is.

section **01**

Your February Activity:

The Four Chambers of Heart Health

Heart disease is unique because in most cases, it doesn't just happen. Your choices and your lifestyle can help keep your heart happy! Complete this month's activity and improve your health in four areas — nutrition, exercise, health education and stress management.



What Is Heart Disease?

The term heart disease refers to several types of heart conditions. The most common kind of "heart disease" is coronary heart disease (CHD), which is also called coronary artery disease (CAD). Coronary heart disease develops when your coronary arteries (tubes that take your blood to your heart) are narrowed or blocked by cholesterol and fat. External symptoms include weakness or dizziness, shortness of breath, palpitations, sweating or nausea.

Okay, so that's what it is—but what does heart disease do? Basically, heart disease makes it harder for you to be you. Think about personal goals you have in your life. Whether you want to climb a mountain, chase your kids around or simply live each day without the symptoms listed above, it's vital to take care of your heart.

How to Know If You're at Risk

Your other resources this month focus on preventing heart disease or reducing its effects. But how do you know if you're already at risk? Each of the following traits increase your risk of developing heart disease:

Risk Factors

High cholesterol or high blood pressure

Please consult your doctor or physician for accurate numbers.

Smoking and/or drinking in excess

Smoking has no health benefits; generally, two drinks per day for men and one drink for women is considered moderate.

Unhealthy diet and/or weight

Keep reading to learn more about healthy nutrition.

Lack of exercise

It is important to be physically active at least 150 minutes per week.

Stress

Excess stress causes your body to release adrenaline, which temporarily raises your blood pressure and speeds up your heart rate. In addition, many people's response to stress—poor diet, alcohol consumption and/or lack of sleep, for example—also contribute to poor health that leads to heart disease.

Family history

If your family has a history of heart disease, it is important to take extra precaution!

One or more of these factors are true for you, it's a great idea to consult your doctor and discuss ways decrease your risk of developing heart disease.



Shop Right, Eat Right, Feel Right

Pay attention to nutrition labels! Often, unhealthy and unnatural ingredients are used in food items you don't expect. Follow these guidelines to take care of your heart:

- Eat less saturated fat and trans fat (especially trans fat!).
- Reduce your sodium intake. You and salt can still see each other, you just need some space; look for low-sodium or "no salt added" options.
- Eat more fiber (vegetables, fruits and whole grains).

Don't (Grocery) Shop Your Heart Out

What does a heart-healthy shopping list look like? The good news is that the guidelines above still provide plenty of options.

VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

- Fresh (not canned) vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, and broccoli.
- Leafy greens for salads, like spinach and kale.
- Fresh fruits such as apples, oranges, bananas, pears, and peaches.
- Unsweetened frozen and dried fruit; canned fruit must be in 100% juice, not syrup.
- Frozen or dried fruit (unsweetened).

DAIRY PRODUCTS

- Look for fat-free or low-fat milk products, or choose soy milk with added calcium.

BREADS, CEREALS, AND GRAINS

- For products with more than 1 ingredient, make sure whole wheat or another whole grain is listed first.
- Eat whole-grain breakfast cereals, such as oatmeal, and whole grains such as brown or wild rice, barley, and bulgur.
- Use whole-wheat or whole-grain pasta.

MEAT, BEANS, EGGS, AND NUTS

- Eat more beans, nuts and eggs to reduce your meat intake.
- Choose lean cuts of meat:
 - Seafood, including fish and shellfish.
 - Chicken and turkey breast without skin.
 - Pork: leg, shoulder, tenderloin.
 - Beef: round, sirloin, tenderloin, extra lean ground beef (at least 93% lean).

FATS AND OILS

- Cut back on saturated fat and look for products with no trans fats.
- Use cooking oil and vegetable spreads that do not contain partially hydrogenated oil.
- Eat salad dressings that are oil based instead of creamy.



February Recipe

Whitefish with Roasted Asparagus

Try this light, delicious and heart-healthy meal during a cozy February night at home.

Total Time (Cook and Prep): 40 minutes

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. fresh or frozen whitefish fillets	1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/2 cup chopped onion	1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 cup chopped carrot	12 oz. fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and sliced into 1-inch pieces
1/4 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth	
2 garlic cloves, minced	
1/4 teaspoon salt	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Thaw fish, if frozen, then rinse and pat dry.
2. Cut fish into 4 serving-size portions and set aside.
3. In a 2-quart rectangular dish, combine the onion, carrot, broth and garlic.
4. Place the fish on top of the mixture, then sprinkle with salt, paprika and pepper.
5. Cover and bake at 450° for 15-20 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.
6. Serve with vegetables.



NUTRITION INFO:

176 calories

6 g total fat (1 g sat. fat)

65 mg cholesterol

249 mg sodium

6 g carbohydrates

2 g fiber

23 g protein

Heart Health

4 Chambers of Heart Health

Your heart has four chambers: two atria and two ventricles. It takes all four of these chambers working in concert to pump life-giving oxygen through your bloodstream—each chamber must function properly to prevent a catastrophic health emergency.

Similarly, four areas of your lifestyle—nutrition, physical activity, health education and stress management — have a massive impact on your heart's (and body's) overall health. This month's activity will ask you to examine each of these areas and consider how you can live a holistically heart-healthy lifestyle.

Nutrition:

Use the Right Fuel

If you fill a traditional car up with diesel, it stops working — if you only eat unhealthy foods, your body breaks down as well. Use the nutrition tips and shopping list in this month's newsletter to guide your food choices in February.

Education:

The More You Know...

To effectively fight heart disease, you need to know your numbers, particularly cholesterol, blood pressure and body mass index (BMI).

Your Activity

Each week, practice following the guidelines for a different food group:

- **Week 1:** Vegetables and fruits
- **Week 2:** Dairy products & fats and oils
- **Week 3:** Breads, cereals and grains
- **Week 4:** Meat, beans, eggs and nuts

Your Activity

If you haven't visited a doctor in the past year, make an appointment (or confirm you already have one) for a basic check-up. The appointment doesn't need to take place in February; you just need to get it on the books!



Physical Activity:

Move Your Way to Better Health

Simply being active for 150 minutes each week* can greatly improve your health. Even short, 10-minute bouts of moderate to intense activity have a positive impact. Think of a few activities you enjoy—walking, running, biking, swimming, etc.—and stay active each day.

Your Activity

Find time for 150 active minutes each week.



Stress Management:

Make Your Heart Happy

Unpredictable or consistently high stress levels make your heart work harder and often lead to bad habits that cause poor health. Thankfully, stress management is a skill you can practice. An easy, free and effective way to manage stress is to practice deep breathing each day.

Your Activity

Spend 5-10 minutes each day in a calm, quiet place and practice deep breathing:

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your feet on the floor or lie down; close your eyes.
2. Picture yourself in a peaceful place; whatever feels soothing to you.
3. Inhale and exhale; focus on breathing slowly and deeply.
4. Continue to breathe slowly for 5-10 minutes or more.

Stay positive! Change is hard for everyone and studies show it takes 60-90 days to build new habits, so it's likely there will be stumbles along the way. Forgive yourself, start over and keep going!



**Always consult your doctor before starting any exercise program.*

The information in this activity document is provided for general informational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice, diagnosis or treatment recommendations.

Activity Tracking

Nutrition

Each week, practice following the guidelines for a different food group:

- **Week 1:** Vegetables and fruits
- **Week 2:** Dairy products & fats and oils
- **Week 3:** Breads, cereals and grains
- **Week 4:** Meat, beans, eggs and nuts

For each day your Nutrition task is completed, cross off "N" on the calendar.

Education

Schedule a doctor's appointment.

Write your appointment on the calendar.

Physical

Find time for 150 active minutes each week.

Keep track of your daily minutes. At the end of each week, total your completed minutes of activity.

Stress Management

Spend 5-10 minutes each day in a calm, quiet place and practice deep breathing.

For each day you complete 5-10 minutes of quiet time, cross-off "SM" on the calendar.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	TOTAL MINUTES
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Employer Activity Tracking

Please complete the following information and submit it to your employer to receive credit for this activity:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Nutrition

Were you successful in your efforts to follow the dietary guidelines each week? YES NO

If no, what was the most difficult part of following the guidelines?

Education

Did you schedule or confirm a doctor's appointment? YES NO

Physical Activity

Did you increase your activity level this month? YES NO

What is your favorite activity to "get moving"?

Stress Management

Were you able to focus on your breathing at least once a week this month? YES NO

If no, what obstacles prevented you from doing so?



Holistic Heart Health

Take Care of Your Whole Heart, Improve Your Whole Life

- Eat less saturated fat and trans fat (especially trans fat!)
- Reduce your sodium intake. You and salt can still see each other, you just need some space; look for low-sodium or “no salt added” options
- Eat more fiber (vegetables, fruits and whole grains)

FEBRUARY ACTIVITY

The Four Chambers of Heart Health

Use what you learn to live a heart-healthy lifestyle across four areas: nutrition, exercise, health education and stress management. Your first tip? Simply being active for 150 minutes each week can greatly improve your health. Even short, 10-minute bouts of moderate to intense activity have a positive impact.



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