



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY + HEART DISEASE



Your heart is one of the most vital muscles in your body. It is the organ responsible for pumping blood through the body, supplying nutrients and oxygen to surrounding tissues, and removing waste.



WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease is an umbrella term that refers to any group of conditions that affect the function and structure of the heart. Some examples include: high blood pressure (i.e., hypertension), high cholesterol, stroke, and heart attack.



THE FACTS

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in Canada. Approximately 29 per cent of all deaths in Canada are attributed to heart disease. Women and Indigenous people are at heightened risk for heart disease; it kills 32 per cent more women than men, and Indigenous people are 1.5 to 2 times more likely than the general Canadian population to die of heart disease.

In addition to negatively impacting the lives of thousands of Canadians, it also has an enormous financial cost—it costs the Canadian economy close to \$20.9 billion per year.



1 Physical activity plays a pivotal role in preventing and managing heart disease and related risk factors such as type 2 diabetes and obesity. Research shows that physical activity can reduce 21 per cent of heart disease cases in men, and 29 per cent in women. The good news is that your heart health is quite responsive to physical activity.

2 Exercise helps strengthen your heart, allowing it to be more efficient at pumping blood throughout the body. As it becomes more efficient, the heart is able to pump higher amounts of blood with each beat and at a slower pace, therefore keeping your blood pressure under control.

3 Physical activity helps increase your levels of “good” cholesterol (HDL) and decrease the amount of artery-clogging “bad” cholesterol (LDL).

4 Physical activity also improves blood flow in the small vessels around the heart. It also helps create more branches and connections between these blood vessels. Consequently, there are other routes for blood to travel to and around the heart, decreasing the effects of narrow arteries of fatty deposits (i.e., clogs in the artery).

5 Physical activity also helps improve your body’s sensitivity to insulin and helps manage your blood glucose levels, thus decreasing your risk for type 2 diabetes.

Tips and Recommendations

For best results, aim for 150 minutes of heart-pumping (i.e., moderate to vigorous intensity) physical activity each week. To make this task less daunting, you can break up your activity throughout the week and participate in smaller bouts at a time.



Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. This includes hats and sunscreen in the summer months and walking poles or ice grips during the icy winter months to prevent falling.



It's important not to rush your body into doing too much too fast. Give your body, including your heart, time to adjust to the new demands. Over time, you can start increasing the intensity.



Stay hydrated. This is particularly important as you start to incorporate more activity into your daily routine.



CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

And obviously, before starting any new exercise program, please check with your healthcare professional for sign-off.



“ Within five days of first feeling pains in my chest, I had six bypasses performed in my coronary arteries with some showing 94 per cent blockage. This happened over 17 years ago and now at 89 years old, I attribute my health to keeping active around the house and exercising regularly. I walk on the treadmill, mow the lawn, look after the garden, and any spare time I have, I spend it woodworking in my shed. Being active has allowed me more time with my family, and I get more moments with my lovely wife Dixie, while we complete 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles, our favorite activity to do together. ”

Ray 89 years old, St. John's



For more information:

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
1037 Topsail Rd
Mount Pearl, NL A1N 5E9
709-753-8521 | info.nl@heartandstroke.ca