

LOVE YOUR HEART



February is “Heart Health Month,” a time to raise awareness about how to protect your heart. The goal is to help people understand how things like quitting smoking, physical activity, nutrition, and social connection can impact your heart, and recognize how blood pressure can be a key risk factor. In Canada, about 1 in 12 adults (2.6 million people) aged 20 and over live with diagnosed heart disease, and every hour, about 14 Canadians in this age group die from it. Below is important information to help you better understand factors that can impact your heart.

Healthy Habits for Your Heart

Not smoking and staying active can greatly reduce your risk of heart disease. Quitting smoking can cut your risk by about 50% within one year, and regular physical activity can lower it by up to 30%. Pair this with simple, affordable food choices: build a balanced plate with $\frac{1}{2}$ vegetables & fruit, $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains and $\frac{1}{4}$ protein (beans, eggs, fish, chicken, tofu) plus small amounts of healthy fats (olive or canola oil).

Find healthy recipes and tips from Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada [here](#).



Social Connection & Your Heart

Staying connected supports heart health and mental well-being. Simple, face-to-face moments — like sharing meals, walking together, or joining community activities — can make a real difference. Organizations like GenWell in Canada promote the importance of social connection as a simple, proactive step for personal and community well-being.

Click [here](#) for more information about GenWell.

Blood Pressure & Heart Health

High blood pressure often has no symptoms, but it increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. Blood pressure can be measured at home using a validated automatic monitor.

- Sit and rest 5 minutes before checking
- Take 2–3 readings and use the average

Normal: < 120 / 80 mmHg

High: 130 / 80 mmHg or higher

If your readings stay high, talk to your healthcare provider. A healthcare professional can show you how to take the measurement at home if needed.



Recognizing Heart Attack Signs



Heart attacks don't always look the same — symptoms can be different for everyone. Common signs include chest pain or pressure, shortness of breath, pain in the arm, jaw, or back, nausea, or unusual fatigue. Women and people with diabetes may have different or less typical symptoms. Don't wait — call 911 if something doesn't feel right.

Every minute counts — getting help quickly can reduce heart damage and save your life.

Understanding your blood pressure, recognizing heart attack signs, and building healthy habits — like eating well, staying active, staying connected, and choosing not to smoke — can help protect your heart and overall well-being.

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Local public health units work with communities to help make heart healthy choices easy, by influencing the environments where we live, learn, work and play. For more resources on physical, mental, and nutritional health, visit the Workplace Wellness and Health section on alpha's website [here](#).