Heart Healthy Living

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES
# PHONE NUMBERS

Use this page to keep track of the names and numbers of the health care professionals involved in your care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardiologist</td>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Family Doctor</td>
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<td>Pharmacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cardiac Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Heart Healthy Living Guide was developed by a working committee of health professionals at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. In order to create this guide, the committee reviewed the most current scientific evidence on heart healthy living and blended it with their extensive experience in caring for people with heart disease. A panel of current and former heart patients reviewed the information to make sure that it was easy to read and understand. We hope that this information helps you build a plan for heart healthy living that you can stick with over the long term.

The development of the Heart Healthy Living Guide was supported by the Heart Institute Alumni as part of their commitment to enhancing the service and care provided to people with heart disease.

INTRODUCTION

At the Ottawa Heart Institute you have received the best available cardiac care to treat and manage your heart condition; however, we have not cured your heart disease. Heart disease is a chronic health condition and, like any health problem, it can bring uncertainty and changes into your everyday life.

You can respond to these changes in different ways. Research tells us that learning about your risk factors, taking charge of your heart health, and staying involved in your health and health care will help you to continue to do the things that you wish to do. The purpose of this guide is to support you as you learn to take care of your heart and preserve your health.

We propose you follow a three-step plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Get to know your own risk factors and plan how to manage them. Use the risk factor profile on page 7 to help you to identify your risk factors and think about how you might set some health goals.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Participate in a Cardiac Rehabilitation Program. Work with specialists in nutrition, physical activity, stress management, return-to-work counselling, and other social and emotional services to develop a plan that is tailored to your specific needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Learn how to live and work with heart disease. Use the information here to help you get through the normal bouts of anxiety and emotional ups and downs so that you can renew your sense of well being.</td>
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STEP 1: KNOW AND MANAGE YOUR RISK FACTORS

Causes of Heart Disease

Coronary artery disease is caused by a combination of genetic and lifestyle factors. These are called risk factors. You should be aware of the following risk factors but they are not under your control.

- **Your age**
  - As you get older, your risk of heart disease increases

- **Your gender**
  - Men over the age of 55 are at higher risk of heart disease
  - After menopause, a woman’s risk of heart disease gradually becomes the same as a man’s

- **Your heredity**
  - Your risk of heart disease is increased if close family members—a parent brother or sister—developed heart disease before age 55 or, in the case of female relatives, before menopause.

- **Your ethnicity**
  - First nations people and people of African or Asian descent are at higher risk of developing heart disease

THE RISK FACTORS THAT YOU CAN CONTROL ARE:

- Smoking
- Excess body weight, especially around your waist
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Abnormal blood cholesterol levels
- Lack of regular exercise
- Abnormal blood glucose levels that can lead to prediabetes and diabetes
- Excessive stress levels
- Depression

These are referred to as modifiable risk factors.

The table on pages 9-10 summarizes modifiable cardiac risk factors. As you look at the table, decide which controllable risk factors apply to you. Each risk factor will direct you to more information to help you learn more and take charge of your health.
SMART Goals for Heart Healthy Changes

When thinking about making heart healthy lifestyle changes, it’s easier to get started if you set some S.M.A.R.T. goals.

**Specific** – Decide what you are going to do and how to do it.

**Measurable** – Keep track of how you are doing.

**Achievable** – Pick something you think you can do. Start with small changes.

**Rewarding** – Think of how good you will feel when you make small changes.

**Time Frame** – Give yourself a time limit to reach your goal.

**EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL**

**Goal:** I will eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day

**Specific**
- Eat one piece of fruit at breakfast and one piece of fruit at 4:00 pm when I get hungry.
- Eat 1 cup (2 servings) of vegetables at lunch, and 1 cup (2 servings) at supper
- Buy at least 14 pieces of fruit and extra vegetables at the grocery store.

**Measurable**
- Write down how many vegetables and fruit I eat each day.
- Use a measuring cup to make sure I eat 1 cup of vegetables.

**Achievable**
- I am going to start by eating two pieces of fruit a day.

**Rewarding**
- When I eat two pieces of fruit a day I will feel like I have really done something to improve my health.

**Time Frame**
- This week I am going to eat more fruit.
- Next week I am going to eat more fruit and eat more vegetables.
## Modifiable Risk Factors for Heart Disease

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RISK FACTOR</th>
<th>TARGET GOALS</th>
<th>INFORMATION SECTIONS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>Smoke Free</td>
<td>• Smoking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obesity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideal range: BMI of 18.5 – 25</strong></td>
<td>• Heart Healthy Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waist Circumference</td>
<td>If your BMI is 30 or above, aim for a 5 – 10% reduction of your total body weight.</td>
<td>• Weight Management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Waist:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Women: Below 35 in (88 cm) Men: Below 40 in (102 cm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Less than 140/90 in your doctor’s office and less than 135/85 at home</td>
<td>• Heart Healthy Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>If you have diabetes or kidney disease: less than 130/80 in your doctor’s office and less than 125/75 at home</em></td>
<td>• Blood Pressure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Heart Healthy Nutrition</td>
<td>• Safe Medications</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Cholesterol</td>
<td>Total Cholesterol: below 4.0 mmol/L</td>
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<td></td>
<td>HDL Cholesterol: above 1.0 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LDL Cholesterol: below 2.0 mmol/L</td>
<td>• Heart Healthy Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-HDL Cholesterol: below 2.6 mmol/L</td>
<td>• Cholesterol</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Triglycerides: below 1.7 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Inactivity</td>
<td>Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate exercise (example: brisk walking) on most days of the week</td>
<td>• Healthy Physical Activity</td>
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<td>If you have Diabetes</td>
<td>Fasting blood glucose and before meals: between 4.0 and 7.0 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1C: 7% or less</td>
<td>• Diabetes</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you have prediabetes</td>
<td>Fasting blood glucose and before meals: 4.0 and 6.0 mmol/L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1C: less than 6.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressed</td>
<td>Manage stress</td>
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<td>Depressed</td>
<td>Manage depression</td>
<td>• Depression</td>
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SMOKING
HOW SMOKING AFFECTS YOUR HEART

The chemicals in tobacco smoke can damage the function of your heart and blood vessels. The carbon monoxide released from cigarettes causes damage to the walls of the arteries encouraging the build up of fat on those walls.

Smoking also:
• Raises your LDL (lousy) cholesterol
• Lowers your HDL (healthy) cholesterol
• Speeds up your heart rate
• Increases your blood pressure

Smoking after a heart attack or angioplasty increases the chances of a second heart attack and/or re-stenosis (re-blocking) of the coronary arteries.

IF YOU SMOKE, QUIT!
• Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to positively affect your heart health!
• The benefits of quitting occur within 20 minutes of your last cigarette and after one year your risk of a heart attack is reduced by 50 per cent.

The Heart Institute’s Quit Smoking Program is available to all smokers who are interested in quitting. We use proven techniques and individualized counselling to help people quit. To register for the Quit Smoking Program, please call 613-696-7069.

There are other options for quitting smoking in our region. It is up to you to decide which option is best. Visit www.myquit.ca to learn more.

Keep in mind this one important tip: most people find that the more support they get while trying to quit, the better!

More Information about Quitting Smoking

Websites
• Quit Smoking Program: www.myquit.ca
• Canadian Cancer Society Smokers Helpline Online: www.smokershelpline.ca

Quit Smoking Assistance Programs
• The MyQuit program is designed to support anyone interested in quitting smoking or cutting back their tobacco use. The program connects smokers with personalized services in their community and is free of charge. To learn more, visit www.myquit.ca or call 1-877-376-1701. Services are available in locations across Eastern Ontario
• For a list of programs in Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec, see Appendix 2.
HEART HEALTHY EATING

HOW WHAT YOU EAT AFFECTS YOUR HEART

The food that you eat affects many of the important risk factors associated with heart disease, for example:

- Your blood cholesterol
- Your blood pressure
- Your glucose levels if you have diabetes
- Your risk for another event

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FOODS TO CHOOSE AND ENJOY!

TOP 10 TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

Making healthy food choices doesn’t have to be overwhelming. These tips will get you on your way.

1. **Cook at home more often.** Cooking at home makes it easier to avoid processed foods. It can be as simple as scrambled eggs, whole grain toast, tomato and cucumber slices.

2. **How you eat is as important as what you eat.** Enjoy mealtimes and the food you eat! Don’t multitask. Avoid distractions like your computer or TV while you eat. Sit down and enjoy a meal at the table. If you live with others, make family dinner a priority.

3. **Listen to your body.** Eat when you’re hungry and stop when you feel satisfied.

4. **Eat at regular times.** Eat breakfast within 1 to 2 hours after waking up. Don’t wait too long between your meals. It’s harder to make healthy choices when you’re hungry.

5. **Plan healthy snacks.** Try whole grain crackers and peanut butter or hummus, a piece of fruit and a few unsalted nuts, or frozen berries and plain yogurt.

6. **Eat a variety of vegetables and fruit at every meal.** Enjoy brightly coloured whole vegetables and fruit. Fresh or frozen, try them in different ways—raw, roasted, or sautéed.

7. **Eat whole grains more often.** Switch to brown rice, whole wheat pasta, dark rye bread or oatmeal. Try something new in your soup, salad or casserole like quinoa, bulgur or barley.

8. **Eat fish at least twice a week.** Trout, salmon, tuna and sardines are some tasty options. Try fresh frozen or canned.

9. **Include legumes like beans, chickpeas, lentils, nuts and seeds more often.** Add them to salads, soups and grain dishes such as rice, quinoa or couscous. Legumes can replace meat in your meals. Try a vegetarian chili.

10. **Don’t be afraid of fat.** You need fat for good health and it adds flavour to your cooking. Use plant-based fats such as olive or canola oil.
Cook at Home More Often

What is a home cooked meal?
- Meals cooked at home should include at least 3 food groups (Vegetables and fruit, Grain Products, Milk and alternatives, Meat and alternates.)
- Meals cooked at home don’t need to be fancy or time consuming.
- Meals can be as simple as a peanut butter and banana sandwich and a glass of milk.
- Use whole, unprocessed foods.

Why should I cook at home?
- Cooking at home gives you more control over the what goes into your food.
- Cooking at home is cheaper than eating pre-made meals or at restaurants.
- Food cooked at home is lower in sodium (salt) fat and sugar.

Tips to cook more at home
- Cook with your family and friends.
- Try new recipes.
- Cook large batches of soups, stews and casseroles on the weekend to eat during the week or freeze for another day.
- Keep ingredients like canned fish, eggs, frozen vegetables and brown rice in your cupboard for fast easy meals.
- Plan ahead and make a weekly meal plan.

How You Eat is as Important as What You Eat

How should I eat?
- Sit at the table to eat.
- Don’t do other activities while eating.
- Turn off all screens including television, phones, tablets and computers.
- If you live with others take this opportunity to connect with friends and family.
- If you live alone set the table nicely and listen to music.

Why should I eat at the table?
- Eating while doing other things means you pay less attention to what you eat and may end up eating faster and more food.
- By sitting at the table you will enjoy what you are eating. You will also be more aware of how much and what you are eating.
- Eating with others is a great opportunity to connect with friends and family.

Tips to start eating at the table
- Start by eating at the table once or twice each week.
- If it’s too difficult to eat supper together at the table, start with breakfast.
- At work eat lunch away from your desk.
## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

### Why should I listen to my body?
- There is no one right way to eat.
- Don’t diet. Think about making small changes.
- Choose foods which are nourishing and taste good.
- Eating is about more than just nutrients.
- Eating is social and should be enjoyable.

### How do I listen to my body?
- Listen to your body’s cues. Eat when you feel hungry.
- Stop eating when you feel full.
- Enjoy the food that you are eating.
- Use all your senses when eating.

### Tips to listen to your body
- Turn off all distractions, such as the TV, computer or tablet.
- Don’t rush. Eat slowly and taste the food you are eating.
- Pause during and after your meal to ask yourself how full you are.

## EAT AT REGULAR TIMES

### What are regular meals?
- Eat breakfast within one to two hours after waking up.
- Aim to eat every 4 to 6 hours after breakfast.
- Try not to skip meals.
- If you know it will be longer than 4 to 6 hours between meals plan a snack.

### Why should I eat regular meals?
- Skipping meals leaves you feeling extra hungry. By the time you get to the next meal you might eat too much.
- When you are very hungry it’s hard to reach for healthy foods and to eat slowly.

### Tips to eat regular meals
- Start by including breakfast on a daily basis, if you have never eaten breakfast, start by aiming to eat it one or two days/week.
- Set an alarm to remind yourself to eat.
- At work book an appointment in your calendar to avoid interruption.
- Plan your meals in advance; they can be simple.
# PLAN HEALTHY SNACKS

## What is a healthy snack?
- A healthy snack should include at least two food groups (Vegetables and fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternates, Meat and Alternates.)
- Keep your serving sizes small.
- See snack handout for easy snack ideas to have on hand.

## Why should I plan healthy snacks?
- Healthy snacking can help you feel full between meals.
- Healthy snacking can help you to keep your energy level up.
- Snack when you are hungry, not because you are bored or stressed.
- Snacking can make it easier to eat enough vegetables and fruits.

## Tips for healthy snacking
- Plan snacks ahead of time.
- Don’t snack out of the container, portion it into a bowl.
- Don’t eat while driving.
- Don’t eat in front of the TV, while reading, while using your phone, computer or tablet.

# EAT A VARIETY OF VEGETABLES AND FRUIT AT EVERY MEAL

## Why should I eat more?
- Eating 7 servings of vegetables and fruit each day may help to reduce your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke.
- Eating enough vegetables and fruit can help reduce cholesterol and blood pressure.

## What is a serving of vegetables and fruit?
- A serving of most raw or cooked vegetables is ½ cup.
- A serving of most fruit is ½ cup or 1 small piece of fruit (size of a tennis ball).
- Choose whole vegetables and fruit more often instead of juice.

## Tips to include more vegetables and fruit
- Eat a vegetable or fruit at all meals.
- Have an apple, orange, banana, kiwi or melon for a snack.
- Keep raw, cut up vegetables in the fridge for snacking.
- Move your vegetables and fruit out of the crisper and onto a higher shelf.
- Use fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit more often. If you buy canned make sure to look for No Added Salt canned vegetables.
- Roast vegetables and eat them leftover all week.
### EAT WHOLE GRAINS MORE OFTEN

#### What are whole grains?
- Whole grains include the entire seed of the plant.
- Whole grains are higher in fibre, vitamins and minerals.
- They include oatmeal, bulgur, brown or wild rice, barley, quinoa and popcorn.

#### Why should I eat more?
- Eating whole grains may help to reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer and stroke.
- Oatmeal, barley and psyllium are high in soluble fibre which helps to reduce LDL (lousy) cholesterol.

#### Tips to include more whole grains
- Use brown or wild rice instead of white rice.
- Have oatmeal for breakfast or snack a few times each week.
- Add quinoa or barley to salads.
- Use dark rye bread or whole grain bread instead of white bread.
- Use whole grain pasta instead of white (or try half and half).

### EAT FISH AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK

#### What fish should I eat?
- Choose fatty fish more often.
- Try salmon, mackerel, pickerel, sardines or trout.
- Aim to eat fish at least twice each week.
- Seafood like oysters, mussels, shrimp, and lobster are also good choices.

#### Why should I eat fish?
- Eating fish can help to lower your risk of having more heart problems.
- Fatty fish are high in omega-3 fats which may help to reduce your risk of heart disease.
- Fish is a good source of protein.

#### Tips to eat more fish
- Use fresh, frozen or canned fish.
- Use canned salmon to make a sandwich.
- Add canned fish to salads.
- Bake frozen fish for a quick easy weeknight meal.
- Have sardines on toast or whole grain crackers.
- Add fresh or frozen fish to a curry.
### INCLUDE LEGUMES LIKE BEANS, CHICKPEAS, LENTILS, NUTS AND SEEDS MORE OFTEN

**What are legumes?**
- Legumes include most beans like chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and white beans.
- Nuts and seeds will give you many of the same benefits.
- Nuts and seeds make an excellent snack.

**Why should I eat more?**
- Eating nuts, seeds, beans and lentils may help to reduce your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
- Nuts, seeds, beans and lentils may help to reduce your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Aim to include them at least 4-5 times/week.

**Tips to include more nuts, seeds, bean and lentils**
- Add chickpeas to a main course salad.
- Add kidney beans to chili.
- Eat one vegetarian meal once a week.
- Make bean salad and keep it in the fridge for lunches.
- Eat nuts as a snack.
- Add nuts or seeds to your salad.

### DON’T BE AFRAID OF FAT

**Why is fat important?**
- Fats play an important role in your body.
- Fats give you energy, and some fatty acids that our bodies can’t make.
- Fats are a part of cell walls, hormones and insulate our bodies.
- Fats make food taste good and keep you full.

**Which fats should I eat more often?**
- Choose unsaturated fats more often.
- Unsaturated fats come from plant sources including nuts, seeds, avocado.
- When cooking use olive oil, or canola oil, more often.
- Make your own salad dressing at home using olive oil or canola oil.
- Eat nuts and seeds as a snack.

**Which fats should I eat less often?**
- Trans fats are found mainly in processed foods and cooking more at home will help you to avoid them.
- Choose saturated fats less often. Saturated fats come from animal based products such as red meat and dairy.
- Limit your intake of red meat to once or twice/week.
- Choose lower fat dairy more often.
A WORD ABOUT ALCOHOL

Limit alcohol to three servings a day (maximum of 15 servings a week) for men and two servings a day (maximum 10 servings a week) for women.

One serving is:
- 125 ml (4 oz) wine or
- 355 ml (12 oz) beer or
- 45 ml (1.5 oz) liquor

Heart Healthy Eating Resources

NUTRITION WORKSHOPS:

The dietitian at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute offers a series of interactive workshop series
- The workshops can be attended by patients, families, and members of the public who are interested in learning about heart healthy eating.
- Workshops are 60 minutes in length and daytime and evening options are available.
- The workshops are free of charge.
- Pick up your Workshops Schedule at the Heart Institute or check our Calendar at: www.ottawaheart.ca for dates and times.

Nutrition 101: Learn how to read food labels and get the facts on fat, cholesterol, fibre and salt.
Nutrition 201: Learn about trends in nutrition including super foods, supplements and the Mediterranean diet
Nutrition Tips for Weight Management: Learn to set realistic goals and plan meals for weight management

WEBSITES:
- Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca
- Heart and Stroke Foundation: www.heartandstroke.ca
- Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- Diabetes Canada: www.diabetes.ca
- American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org
- Eat Right Ontario: www.eatrightontario.ca
- Canadian Obesity Network: www.obesitynetwork.ca
- Ottawa Public Health: www.ottawa.ca

COOKBOOKS:
- Hold the Salt: Tilley, Maureen 2009
- Hold the Hidden Salt: Tilley, Maureen 2011
- Nourish: Whole food recipes featuring seeds, nuts, and beans: Nettie Cronish, Cara Rosenbloom, 2016
- Dietitians of Canada! 275 Recipes: Weisman, Mary Sue, 2012
- 15 Minute Meals: Oliver, Jamie 2016
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

HOW HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AFFECTS YOUR HEART

High blood pressure makes your heart work harder, damages your blood vessels, and can also cause greater plaque build up. All these factors eventually lead to heart damage. Controlling your blood pressure can reduce the progression of your heart disease and may reduce your risk of having a stroke.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

- Aim to make healthier food choices
- Achieve and maintain a healthier body weight
- Be active every day and follow your physical activity plan
- Practice stress management techniques that work for you
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Become smoke free

More Information about High Blood Pressure

WEBSITES

- EatRight Ontario: www.eatrightontario.ca
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada: www.heartandstroke.ca
HIGH BLOOD CHOLESTEROL

HOW CHOLESTEROL AFFECTS YOUR HEART

Cholesterol is a fat-like substance that is produced mostly in your liver, although some of the cholesterol in your blood comes from the foods you eat.

The most important types of cholesterol in your blood are:

- Low density lipoprotein cholesterol or LDL
- High density lipoprotein cholesterol or HDL

L Is for “Lousy”

- LDL Cholesterol carries fats to your body organs to be stored away for future use.
- It causes a build-up of cholesterol (plaque) on the walls of the arteries in your heart.
- High levels of LDL can damage artery walls.
- Eating heart healthy foods can help to lower your LDL

H Is for “Healthy”

- HDL Cholesterol is good because it carries excess fats away from your body organs for elimination.
- The more HDL you have in your blood, the better protected you are against the build-up of plaque in your arteries.
- Regular exercise and quitting smoking can help increase HDL.

How You Can Improve Your Cholesterol

- Be aware of your cholesterol levels
- Follow your heart health nutrition plan
- Aim to make healthier food choices (page 12)
- If you smoke, stop or cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke (page 11)
- Be active every day and follow your Physical Activity Plan (page 24)
- Attend a nutrition workshop (page 18)
- Take your cholesterol medications as prescribed by your doctor

More information about high blood cholesterol

WEBSITES

- Eat Right Ontario: www.eatrightontario.ca
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada: www.heartandstroke.ca
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

HOW A LACK OF REGULAR EXERCISE AFFECTS YOUR HEART

Physical inactivity or lack of regular exercise is clearly shown to be a risk factor for heart disease. People who do not exercise regularly have twice the risk for heart disease compared to those who exercise regularly. In fact, the amount of risk to your heart caused by lack of regular exercise is comparable to having high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and cigarette smoking.

START AND MAINTAIN A REGULAR EXERCISE PROGRAM

Physical activity will:

- Improve the efficiency of your heart and lungs
- Improve your HDL (good) cholesterol and triglycerides
- Lower your blood pressure
- Help you achieve healthier body weight
- Improve your blood glucose levels
- Improve your muscle tone and bone density
- Increase your stamina and improve your confidence
- Improve your ability to cope with stress and decrease anxiety and depression

SET A S.M.A.R.T. EXERCISE GOAL (SEE PAGE 8 OF THIS GUIDE).

Aim to:

- Exercise on most days of the week.
- Start with a gentle warm-up.
- Work towards 30 minutes of continuous exercise with your heart rate elevated.
- Finish off with a gentle cool down.
- Work towards getting 200 to 400 minutes of aerobic exercise weekly. That's about 30 to 60 minutes of exercise per day on most days of the week.

Aerobic exercise is continuous exercise that uses large muscle groups and increases your heart rate. Examples of recommended aerobic exercises include walking at a moderate to brisk pace, swimming, cycling or skating.

If you have had a procedure that may limit your physical activity, make sure you follow the exercise instructions in your procedure guide.

REMEMBER!

Even exercise sessions that last as little as 10 minutes at a time are beneficial and can be added up throughout the day!
Helpful Physical Activity Tips

**BREATHING**
- Breathe steadily and in a relaxed manner while you exercise.
- Avoid straining and never hold your breath.

**PACE & INTENSITY**
- You should be able to carry on a conversation while you exercise.
- This is known as the “talk test.”
- Once you can comfortably walk for 30 minutes, try gradually increasing your speed or arm swing.

**TERRAIN**
- Walk on flat ground initially, until 30 minutes of walking is comfortable.
- If hills are unavoidable, walk more slowly when going uphill.

**EATING**
- Wait up to one hour after a meal before you exercise (the larger the meal, the longer the wait time).

**WEATHER**
- Avoid exercising in very hot or very cold temperatures.
- If it is very hot and humid, walk during the cooler part of the day, such as in the morning and later at night.
- If it is extremely cold or windy, exercise indoors using stationary equipment or walk in the hallways of your house/apartment or in a mall.
- If you do choose to exercise outdoors in colder weather, walk during warmer times of the day and cover your face with a scarf to help warm the air before it reaches your lungs.

**POSTURE**
- It is important that you maintain good posture. Keep your shoulders back and relaxed.

**STRETCHING**
- After your walks, stretch your calf muscles.
  - Stand straight, close to a solid surface on which you can use your hands for balance.
  - Place one leg behind the other, shoulder width apart, with both feet pointing forward.
  - Bend the knee that is forward while keeping the back knee straight until you feel a stretch in the back leg keep both heels on the ground.
  - Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat with the other leg. Repeat exercise two to three times.
Abnormal responses to exercise may include:

- Nausea, headaches, dizziness, chest pain or palpitations.
- If you notice any of these, stop and rest until the symptoms decrease.
- If you have Nitroglycerin spray, use as directed

If these symptoms persist, **call 911** or go to your nearest emergency room.

**KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS**

Use the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale to guide your progression with your exercise program.

The idea behind the RPE scale is for you to choose a number based on how you feel during your physical activity sessions. The number you choose should reflect your overall level of effort including your breathing. There is no right or wrong answer. For aerobic exercise, you should be between 3 and 5 on the scale.

As your recovery and fitness improves, so too will your perceived level of effort. The change in effort that you feel over time is a measure of your improvement.

### Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Exertion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nothing at all</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Extremely light</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Very light</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Light</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Somewhat hard</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Hard (heavy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Very hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Extremely hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Maximal exertion</td>
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**ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR KEEPING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE**

1. Choose an activity that you enjoy and that fits with your lifestyle.
2. Exercise with a buddy.
3. Keep an exercise log like the example on the next page. This way you can see your progress and keep track of how you are feeling.
4. Set realistic goals or objectives you would like to achieve and talk openly about them with important people in your life.
5. Reward yourself when you have achieved your goals.
6. Remember to evaluate your progress; consider the effort rather than the end result.
7. Be prepared for lapses; knowing they will happen may prevent the feeling of failure. Get back on track right away and start from where you left off.
8. Plan for what type of activity you will do in the cold weather months e.g. mall walking.
# My Physical Activity Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
<th>Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE)</th>
<th>Unusual Events e.g., Chest pain, Dizziness or Other</th>
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</table>
PREDIABETES AND DIABETES

HOW GLUCOSE AFFECTS YOUR HEART

Type 2 diabetes is a progressive disease. Up to 10 years before diagnosis insulin resistance occurs causing blood glucose levels to rise particularly after meals (Prediabetes). This can lead to insulin deficiency. Insulin is a hormone that unlocks our body's cell doors so that glucose can be taken up as fuel. These abnormalities lead to an inflammatory response in the vessel wall which favour growth of the atherosclerotic plaque and may cause instability and plaque rupture.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS HEALTHY

• Take your medications as prescribed
• Learn about managing glucose by attending a diabetes education program (see More Information on next page)
• Monitor and keep track of your blood glucose
• Aim to make healthier food choices
• Be active every day and follow your Physical Activity Plan
• Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight (see Appendix 2 – Rate Your Weight)
• Visit your family doctor or diabetes specialist regularly

ADDITIONAL MEAL PLANNING TIPS

1. Eat regular meals. Aim to eat every four to six hours. Include a healthy snack if meals are more than four to six hours apart.
2. Eat breakfast every day.
3. Limit sugars and sweets such as regular soft drinks, fruit drinks, juice, desserts, candies, jam, syrup and honey.
4. If you are thirsty, drink water or sugar free drinks. Drinking regular soft drinks, sweetened drinks or fruit juices will raise your blood sugar level. If you have a condition requiring fluid restriction, follow your personalized recommendations.
5. More information in the heart healthy eating section.
More Information about Diabetes and Prediabetes

It’s natural to have questions about what food to eat. A registered dietitian can help you make healthier food choices.

If you have diabetes and are taking insulin, speak with your family doctor. You may need to see an endocrinologist (a doctor specializing in diabetes).

COMMUNITY DIABETES AND PREDIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Champlain Diabetes Regional Coordination Centre (DRCC): www.champlaindrcc.ca

DRCC is a resource for both people living with diabetes and prediabetes and healthcare providers in the Champlain region. The DRCC website has lists of services, tools and resources, along with links to regional partners in the prevention and management of diabetes.

TO LOCATE A COMMUNITY DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM NEAREST YOU, CONTACT:

- **Champlain Diabetes Regional Coordination Centre (DRCC) website**: www.champlaindrcc.ca (Ottawa and surrounding area)
- **Diabète Québec**: www.diabete.qc.ca (province of Quebec)
- **Diabetes Ontario**: www.diabetesontario.org
- **Diabetes Canada**: 1-800-BANTING (226-8464) or e-mail at info@diabetes.ca

BOOKS

- Diabetes for Canadians for Dummies. (2009)
- Complete Canadian Diabetes Cookbook. (2005)

WEBSITES

- **Diabetes Canada**: www.diabetes.ca, 1-800-BANTING (226-8464)
- **Eat Right Ontario**: www.eatrightontario.ca
- **Dietitians of Canada**: www.dietitians.ca
- **Champlain Diabetes Regional Coordination Centre**: www.champlaindrcc.ca
- **Diabète Québec**: www.diabete.qc.ca
STRESS

HOW STRESS AFFECTS YOUR HEART

In situations that are perceived as stressful, your body reacts by releasing stress hormones. In response, your heart rate and blood pressure increase, your breathing becomes faster and shallow, you start to sweat, and your entire body enters high gear.

In the short term, these reactions make you more alert and able to deal with the stressful situation. However, if you are under stress for a long time, negative changes occur. Fat cells that were released into the bloodstream for extra energy are converted into cholesterol. Platelets circulating in the blood become more “sticky”, putting you at risk of blockages. Patterns of daily life may change which makes it more difficult to eat well, exercise regularly, and get enough rest.

HOW YOU CAN MANAGE YOUR STRESS

How we think about an event determines its impact on our health.

- Attend a stress management program (see below) and learn how to identify what causes your stress and how it affects you. These programs can teach you stress management skills like breathing and relaxation exercises.
- Be physically active every day as this will play a role in reducing the effects of stress.
- Identify and use your support networks, talk to friends and family.
- Consider speaking to a health professional if you feel anxious or depressed, or if you feel so overwhelmed that you are having difficulty doing your daily activities. Some of the options that might be available to help you are:
  - Books or websites
  - A stress management program
  - A referral to counseling services
Where to Find More Information about Stress

STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute Minto Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre provides a skills-oriented Stress Management program that teaches a variety of techniques to better manage stress. There are five 90-minute sessions in a group format and each of the sessions covers different topics including:

- Breathing and muscle relaxation techniques
- Improving assertive communication
- Uncovering and changing negative thoughts
- Managing sleep

The courses take place at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, 40 Ruskin St., Ottawa. To register call 613-696-7399.

BOOKS

- Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff…and It’s All Small Stuff. R. Carlson. (1997)
- Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness. J. Kabat-Zinn. (1990)
- Stress, Sanity and Survival. R. Woolfolk, F.C. Richardson. (1979)
DEPRESSION

Depression is common in people with heart problems; about one in five patients (20 per cent) experience clinical (or major) depression. If you are experiencing at least five of the symptoms listed below for a two-week period, you may be developing depression and you may need to speak to a health professional.

These symptoms may include:

- Sad feelings
- Loss of interest in activities that you usually enjoy
- Changes in appetite
- Significant unplanned weight loss or weight gain
- Sleep problems
- Loss of energy
- Difficulties with concentration or memory
- Decrease in your normal social activities or withdrawal from friends and family
- Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Changes in sexual desire
- Thoughts about death or suicide

HOW DEPRESSION AFFECTS YOUR HEART

Depression may affect your heart directly and indirectly. Depression affects your heart directly by increasing the risk of blood clotting, plaque build up and atherosclerosis. Depression also negatively affects your immune system, so you are less able to fight off germs and viruses.

Depression may affect your heart indirectly by influencing some of the decisions you make. People with depression often find it difficult to make healthy choices, e.g. quitting smoking, getting exercise, eating well, or taking medications regularly. They find it difficult to find the drive or energy to make healthy lifestyle changes.
WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU ARE FEELING DEPRESSED

Negative thinking is often involved in depression. Getting help to learn new ways of thinking and stopping the negative thinking can be beneficial. Seek support by talking with your family and friends and/or joining a support group. You can also talk to your doctor or a mental health professional (social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist) about proven treatments and strategies for coping with depression.

Do more pleasant activities—even when you don’t feel like it. They can help to improve your mood. Regular exercise can also improve your mood. Set realistic goals for yourself and celebrate when you achieve them. You may need to record your daily activities to prove to yourself that you are making gains.

Make sure to take time for yourself away from daily stresses. Consider participating in a Cardiac Rehabilitation Program to educate yourself and gain confidence about your recovery.

More Information about Depression

BOOKS


WEBSITES

- Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
- Canadian Psychological Association: www.cpa.ca
ANXIETY

Anxiety is one of the most distressing emotions that people feel. At some point in time, most cardiac patients will experience varying degrees of fear or nervousness related to their health condition. Anxiety describes a number of problems including generalized anxiety (a mixture of worries experienced most of the time), panic attacks (intense feelings of anxiety; sometimes people feel like they are going to die), and posttraumatic stress disorder (repeated memories of terrible experiences with high levels of fear.) Like depression, about one in five cardiac patients experience significant anxiety symptoms.

Anxiety symptoms may include:
- Uncontrollable worry
- Feeling “on edge” or restless
- Feeling irritable
- Muscle tension
- Light-headedness
- Sleep problems
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty breathing
- Increased heart rate
- Headaches
- Sweating

HOW ANXIETY AFFECTS YOUR HEART

Anxiety may play a role in cardiac problems by increasing the risk of an irregular heart beat and triggering spasms; both of these responses may lead to cardiac complications. Anxiety may also lead to unhealthy behaviours such as: smoking, overeating, poor sleep and decreased physical activity.
WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU ARE FEELING ANXIOUS

• Learn to recognize when you are starting to feel anxious and plan ways to manage your feelings. Learn new coping strategies to handle stressful situations instead of avoiding them. For example: practise slow and deep breathing.
• Imagine scenes that are relaxing and pleasant for you.
• Learn relaxation skills (e.g., tense and release the muscles throughout your body).
• Distract yourself from the thoughts or physical symptoms that contribute to your anxiety (e.g., count backwards from 100 in three’s).
• Do something pleasurable like reading a funny book or getting a back rub.
• Share your fears and worries with someone you trust.

Challenge yourself to change the way you are thinking about a problem. For example, tell yourself “I can handle this, I’ve done it before” or “I’m not going to die, it is normal for my heart to pump harder when I am exercising”.

When facing stressful situations, it helps to be prepared. Think of solutions to problems that cause you anxiety, so you are ready in advance when the problems come up. When you’re in a stressful situation, try and let go of the things that are beyond your control.

Considering participating in the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program so you can educate yourself, alleviate some worries and get answers to your questions and concerns. If you need to, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional (social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist) about proven treatments for anxiety.

More Information about Anxiety

BOOKS

WEBSITES
• Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
• Canadian Psychological Association: www.cpa.ca
• Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada: www.anxietycanada.ca
STEP 2: PARTICIPATE IN A CARDIAC REHABILITATION PROGRAM

About Cardiac Rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation is a program of exercise, education, and counselling that is designed to help you learn how to make heart healthy living a part of your everyday life. Research demonstrates that people who participate in a cardiac rehabilitation program are more successful at managing their risk factors compared to those who do not.

Participating in a cardiac rehabilitation program will dramatically reduce your risk of future heart problems. There are a variety of programs available for you to choose from. Your program will be personalized to meet your needs. We will measure your risk factors at different time points to watch your progress and improvement.

In most cases, your cardiologist or cardiac surgeon will automatically refer you to a cardiac rehabilitation program. If you have not received your cardiac rehabilitation appointment within a few weeks of being discharged from the hospital, you should contact your doctor and discuss whether cardiac rehabilitation is right for you.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs are designed to assist you in achieving and maintaining a heart healthy lifestyle and to help you return to everyday life. There are a number of program options available to residents living in the Ottawa-Carleton and surrounding regions. There is no cost for participation in these programs.

University of Ottawa Heart Institute Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs

ON-SITE SUPERVISED PROGRAM

Phone: 613-761-4572

This program consists of supervised, on site, twice weekly exercise sessions over the course of two to three months. Medical assessments by a cardiac rehabilitation physician and follow-up evaluations at three and twelve months monitor your progress. This program also includes nutrition workshops and if required, referrals to services such as stress management, smoking cessation, dietitian, psychological counselling and vocational counselling.
CASE-MANAGED HOME PROGRAM
Phone: 613-761-4572

The home program offers flexibility for those unable to participate in a hospital-based program. Consisting of a total of 15 appointments (30 minutes each), it is tailored to focus on your personal health goals. It includes a coronary risk factor assessment and a follow-up evaluation scheduled after three and twelve months. The exercise program is carried out at home; there are no supervised exercise sessions.

BRIEF PROGRAM
Phone: 613-761-4572

The Brief Program consists of a home exercise program tailored to your health goals. It includes a coronary risk factor assessment, three appointments at Heart Institute and one by phone, and nutrition education sessions. There is a follow-up evaluation after three and twelve months to monitor your progress.

FRANCOFORME (FRENCH CASE-MANAGED HOME PROGRAM)
Phone: 613-761-4572

This is a three month program offered in French and is open to Franco-Ontarians only. Consisting of a total of 15 appointments (30 minutes each), it is tailored to focus on your personal health goals. It includes a coronary risk factor assessment and a follow-up evaluation scheduled after three and twelve months. There are no supervised exercise sessions; you work on your own exercise program at home. This ensures flexibility for those unable to participate in a hospital-based program.

THE VIRTUAL CARE PROGRAM

The Virtual Care Program is an online system that uses best practices to help you take control of your heart health. It will help you understand your current health situation and motivate you to manage and improve the risk factors that impact your health and well-being. In addition to having access to the system and its features, some participants can qualify to have access to a Health Coach remotely. The program is available to people who are at risk for developing heart disease and patients who have established heart disease. The program is free of charge.

WOMEN@HEART

The Women@Heart program is a peer support program lead by women with heart disease, for women with heart disease that aims to create a caring environment for women to learn from each other and support one another on the road to recovery. The program provides women with heart disease, in every community, with access to emotional support, education support and a caring environment for a better recovery. Women@Heart lasts six months and consists of 12 two-hour sessions held bi-weekly in community settings across the region. It is free and physician referral is not required.
Community and Regional Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs

PEMBROKE REGIONAL HOSPITAL CARDIAC REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Phone: 613-732-2811 x8091

This program is carried out over three to six months and is modelled after the Heart Institute’s on-site cardiac rehab program. It consists of supervised on-site exercise sessions twice weekly. Also included are heart education sessions and medical assessments to monitor your progress. If needed, you will also receive a referral to a dietician or social worker. A case-managed home program is also available.

HAWKESBURY DISTRICT AND GENERAL HOSPITAL SUPERVISED PROGRAM

Phone: 613-632-1111 x52702
Fax : 613-636-6210

On-site 12 weeks twice a week supervised exercise program. A brief exercise program is also available. Education sessions are bilingual.

Referral to such services such as:
- Diabetes clinic
- Smoking cessation
- Telemedicine clinic in collaboration with UOHI for Heart Healthy Workshops and Telehome monitoring for heart failure patients

BROCKVILLE CARDIOVASCULAR PROGRAM

Phone: 613-345-5645 x1414
Fax: 613-345-8348

A 12-week program that focuses on your personal heart health goals. It consists of supervised on-site, twice weekly exercise sessions. It also includes a risk factor assessment, a medical assessment and education sessions. Referrals to specific services are available. A case-managed home program is also available for those that cannot participate in on-site programs.

PROGRAMME DE RÉADAPTATION CARDIAQUE DE L’OUTAOUAIS

Phone : 819-966-6214

This program, based on the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Quebec program, is a personalized one-year case managed home program. A personalized physical exercise program is developed and five meetings with a case manager help you to meet your personal health goals. Nutrition management and stress management workshops are included plus four optional information sessions.
Where You Can Exercise After Cardiac Rehabilitation

HEART WISE EXERCISE

Phone: 613-696-7000 ext 67387  
Email: HeartWise@ottawaheart.ca  
www.heartwiseexercise.ca

The Heart Wise Exercise program was developed to help individuals with heart problems exercise safely. It is a model for cardiac safe exercise developed by the University of Ottawa Heart Institute in partnership with many community agencies to address the barriers to exercise experienced by cardiac clients. Ideally, this program supplements a formal Cardiac Rehabilitation program. It could also be an alternative if no Cardiac Rehabilitation programs are accessible.

There are a variety of Heart Wise Exercise program options allowing patients and their families to choose one that is best suited to their needs and location. Free walking programs are offered in Ottawa shopping malls and in local high schools in Leeds, Lanark and Grenville County, Renfrew County and Prescott-Russell County. All programs must work with the Heart Institute, including attending a training workshop, to meet program criteria and become designated as a Heart Wise site. There must also be a defibrillator on site and volunteers/staff who are trained to use it.
STEP 3: LEARN TO LIVE AND WORK WITH HEART DISEASE

Expect an Adjustment Period

It is normal, throughout your recovery and in the coming months to feel uncertain, anxious, or depressed about your health; to wonder whether you should return to work or change other aspects of your life; and to wonder if there are ways that you can decrease stress and increase your quality of life.

Most people will regain their confidence over the next few months as they recover and begin to be more active.

Manage Your Medications Safely

When you were discharged, you probably received a new medication prescription. Make sure your doctor knows all the medications and supplements that you were taking previously so you can both feel confident that you are getting the right prescription.

When you receive your prescription, make sure that you ask your doctor:

• What is the name of the medication?
• Why is it being prescribed?
• When and how should it be taken?
• How long will you need to take it?
• What side effects should you expect to have?
• What should you do about the side effects?

Use the same pharmacy for all your prescriptions. Your pharmacist can keep a complete and updated list of all your medications and make sure that your medications can be safely taken together. When you pick up your prescription, ask your pharmacist:

• To explain the best way to take the medication
• To explain what is written on the labels
• To provide written information about the medication
• To provide a list of all current medications.

Make a list of your medications and carry it with you at all times. Make sure the list includes all of your medications, as well as any vitamins, supplements, and herbals. Also list any of your allergies, immunizations, and your pharmacy phone number. Review the list regularly with your doctor or pharmacist. Take the medication as it is prescribed by your doctor. If you have concerns about taking medications, discuss them openly and honestly with your doctor. Discuss troublesome side effects with your doctor- you may be able to take a different kind of medication. Do not stop taking any medications without speaking with your doctor first.
If you have trouble remembering to take your medications, the following tips are “tried and true”:

- Take your medications at regular times each day
- Associate your medications with daily activities like brushing your teeth, eating a meal or bedtime
- Use a pill organizer (dosette) with different compartments for different times of the day or ask your pharmacy if they can organize your pills in blister packs
- Keep a one day supply of your medications in your handbag or at the office
- If your medications are too complicated, ask your doctor if something simpler can be prescribed
- Put a note on your calendar to remind you to pick up your prescription refills. Some pharmacies will call you when your refills are ready, ask your pharmacist.

Do not store your medication in hot or humid areas, such as the bathroom or glove compartment of your car. These conditions will accelerate the expiry of your drugs.

If you are worried about the cost of your medication, ask your doctor if a less expensive medication can be substituted, or check with the Ontario Trillium Program for possible assistance.

- **Phone:** 1-800-575-5386
- **Website:** www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/drugs/trillium.html
Get the Most from Your Follow-up Clinic Appointments

• Bring your updated medication list and plan to review it with your doctor
• Make a list of your questions and concerns
• Bring a family member or friend with you and ask them to take notes
• Ask questions if you are not sure you understand the information

WHEN THINKING ABOUT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR, CONSIDER:

• Your return to work or driving
• Unusual symptoms you have had
• Changes in medication or medication side effects
• Recommended limitations to your activity
• Follow up appointment plans

QUESTIONS FOR THE DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY/PROGRESS:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 
Plan Your Return to Work

In order to help you understand whether you can return to work, you and your doctor will consider:

- How stable your condition is
- How safe you are to do your job
- What the licensing requirements are (for example: truck drivers or pilots)
- What the demands of your job are—both physically and mentally

A vocational counsellor who specializes in work-related issues will be available through your Cardiac Rehabilitation program. Talk to your family physician as well.

Through your workplace, ask whether help is available through a human resources staff member, an occupational health nurse, company doctor or union representative.

WHAT YOUR DOCTOR NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR JOB

Take a copy of your job description to your doctor. Your doctor will need to know about:

- The physical work that you do such as lifting or carrying
- Whether you use heavy tools like jackhammers
- The conditions that you work under such as temperature, fumes, shift work, or frequent deadlines
- The amount of job stress you have

PAPERS YOU NEED TO RETURN TO WORK

You require a letter from your doctor or a medical certificate or form stating when you can return to work and the activities you can or cannot do. If your doctor writes “light duty” in this letter, it needs to be explained. This letter should also include a list of duties you can perform, what hours you can work, and how long light duty is to continue.
Sexual Health and Heart Disease

Sexual activity is an important part of quality of life and is often a great concern for both patients and their partners after a cardiac event. Fears and concerns may temporarily interfere with sexual spontaneity and response. Feel free to talk about your questions and concerns with your health provider. He or she is used to discussing these matters and will answer your questions in a professional and understanding way.

A few factors may interfere with your sexual health after your discharge from the hospital. You might temporarily suffer from mild depression which will affect your sexual desire. Some medications may also impact sexual function. You might fear that sexual activity will cause a heart attack or your spouse might silently think the same. For the majority of patients, this will last a short period of time and life will pick up where it left you before you had a cardiac event.

**SEXUAL ACTIVITY AFTER A HEART ATTACK**

If you have recently had a heart attack, your doctor might ask you to wait up to 6 weeks before resuming sexual activity. After this healing period, the risk of having a heart attack during sex is actually quite low. The risk is comparable to that of getting angry and is reduced if you exercise regularly and take your medication.

From a cardiac standpoint, sexual intercourse is like any other physical activity; your heart rate and your blood pressure increase. The activity is often compared to walking at three to six kilometres per hour (2-3 mph) on a level surface.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

- These past few weeks have been very stressful on your partner and yourself. Both of you might still be tired. Plan sexual activity for the time of day when you have the most energy and are least bothered by other health issues.
- Avoid having sex after a large meal. Give yourself a few hours to digest.
- The effort on your heart is about the same regardless of your position.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink and avoid using tobacco as both of these may affect sexual function.
- If you have chest pain or shortness of breath, speak to your doctor.

**IF YOU HAD ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION BEFORE YOUR HEART ATTACK**

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is often associated with heart disease. The same factors that contributed to blocking the arteries of your heart can block arteries elsewhere in your body. Some medications may also contribute to ED. A healthy lifestyle that incorporates a heart healthy diet, exercise and reaching a healthy weight will correct ED in 30 per cent of obese patients.

Speak to you doctor if you suspect your medications are a contributing factor.
USE OF ED MEDICATION AFTER A HEART ATTACK

Check with your doctor before starting or resuming ED medications (Viagra®, Cialis® or Levitra®). These medications are usually safe but can be devastating on your blood pressure if taken with any form of nitroglycerin (spray under the tongue, pills or patches).

You should not take any form of nitroglycerin within 24 hours after taking Viagra® or Levitra®, or within 48 hours if you take Cialis®.

If you do experience chest pain within 24 hours of taking any of the above medications, call 911 and let the paramedics and emergency physician know you have taken these drugs.

ED TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR NITROGLYCERIN USERS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR ED MEDICATION

If you have been told you are not a candidate for ED medication, there are other options. These involve treating the penis by inserting or injecting medications or using vacuum devices. Finally, a penile prosthesis may be surgically implanted. These more specialized approaches require a referral to an urologist.

HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY FOR POSTMENOPAUSAL WOMEN

For years, women were prescribed HRT (estrogen and progesterone) to relieve postmenopausal symptoms. Several studies have shown no protective effect on the heart, and one study reported an increase in the risk of heart disease. In women taking HRT for menopausal symptoms, treatment should be discontinued if they experience angina or a heart attack. There is also evidence that HRT may increase the risk of stroke, blood clots and breast cancer.

TREATMENTS FOR SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION IN WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE

There are a few options for women but the problem is often more complicated than with men. Women respond more to touch and verbal stimuli and will present with sexual dysfunction involving several of the sexual response cycles (desire, arousal and orgasm).

Certain medications may improve low sexual desire in women taking antidepressants and there is a small category of women that will benefit from Viagra®. A clitoral suction vacuum device, EROS CTDT, is FDA approved for female sexual dysfunction. Its mechanism is similar to vacuum devices used for male erectile dysfunction. It may improve local arousal and response and is safe to use. Speak to your doctor about your concerns.

SUGGESTIONS FOR MAINTAINING YOUR SEX LIFE

Sex is not always about intercourse. Explore your senses: hold hands, hug and touch your partner. Create a bit of romance with music, candles and special scents. Agree to have honest discussions and tell each other what you like and don’t like.
Our experience shows you can enhance your return to well-being by setting some personal goals for your health and sticking with them. Like all things worthwhile in life, it will require continuous effort on your part to stick with your plan.

Remember that you are not alone. Sometimes, making changes in your life requires help. Get your family involved; enrol in a cardiac rehabilitation program; keep in touch with your family doctor. There are many options available to provide you with support, information, and help along the way.

If you have any questions, please contact the Heart Institute Prevention and Rehabilitation Centre. Best wishes for your continued journey back to health!
APPENDIX 1 – WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

Prevention & Wellness Centre

The University of Ottawa Heart Institute’s Prevention & Wellness Centre is open to patients, family members, and the public.

The Centre provides:
- Resources and workshops to help prevent, detect, and manage heart disease
- Someone who is always available to help you find information
- Prevention program to help lower the risk of heart disease in those who do not have known cardiovascular disease.

**Location:** 2nd Floor of the Heart Institute, H-2353

**Hours of Operation:** 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Phone:** 613-696-7071 or 1-866-399-4432

**Email:** hearthealth@ottawaheart.ca

**Website:** www.ottawaheart.ca/pwc

**CARDIOPREVENT PROGRAM**

*CardioPrevent* helps people with risk factors to lower their chances of having cardiovascular disease. We create a tailored lifestyle program based on your personal risk factor profile.

*CardioPrevent* is free of charge. You need a referral from your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Call 613-696-7071 for more information.

Nutrition Workshops

The dietitian at the University of Ottawa Heart Institute offers a series of interactive workshop series
- The workshops can be attended by patients, families, and members of the public who are interested in learning about heart healthy eating.
- Workshops are 60 minutes in length and daytime and evening options are available.
- The workshops are free of charge.
- Pick up your Workshops Schedule at the Heart Institute or check our Calendar at: www.ottawaheart.ca for dates and times.
NUTRITION 101
Learn how to read food labels and get the facts on fat, cholesterol, fibre and salt.

NUTRITION 201
Learn about trends in nutrition including super foods, supplements and the Mediterranean diet

NUTRITION TIPS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT
Learn to set realistic goals and plan meals for weight management

Websites
University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Prevention & Wellness Centre: www.ottawaheart.ca/pwc
Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca
Eat Right Ontario: www.eatrightontario.ca
Heart and Stroke Foundation: www.heartandstroke.ca
Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
Diabetes Canada: www.diabetes.ca
American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

Heart Disease Support Groups

HEART INSTITUTE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INC.
Alumni Office: 613-696-7241
E-mail: info@ottawaheartalumni.ca

OTTAWA HEART SUPPORT GROUP
Website: ottheartsupport.bravehost.com
E-mail: OttawaHeartSupport@bigfoot.com
- William Holland: 613-824-9563
- Cheryl Drain: 613-839-1331
- George Power: 613-830-9822
APPENDIX 2: QUIT SMOKING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Ontario

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY’S SMOKERS’ HELPLINE
1-877-513-5333
Toll-free, bilingual, confidential telephone service for all smokers, whether or not they are ready to quit. They can also assist family and friends who would like to help a smoker quit.
Hours of Operation: Monday to Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.; Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Ottawa

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA HEART INSTITUTE QUIT SMOKING PROGRAM
613-696-7069 or 1-866-399-4432
Prevention and Wellness Centre, H-2353
40 Ruskin Street, Ottawa, ON
Program involves three major components: behavioural therapy; pharmacologic therapy (NRT, Champix, Zyban); and relapse prevention.
Language: Offered in English and French.
Cost: Covered by the Ontario Health Card, or the Régie d’assurance maladie du Québec.
$10 one time fee.

OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH
613-580-6744 or 1-866-426-8885
100 Constellation Crescent
7th Floor, East, Ottawa, ON

CENTRETOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
613-233-4443
420 Cooper Street, Ottawa, ON

CARLINGTON COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES
613-722-4000
900 Merivale Road, Ottawa, ON

PINECREST-QUEENSWAY HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
613-820-4922
1365 Richmond Road, 2nd Floor, Ottawa, ON

SANDY HILL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
613-789-7752
221 Nelson Street (at Rideau), Ottawa, ON
Language: Offered in French.
SOMERSET WEST COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE
613-238-8210
55 Eccles Street, Ottawa, ON

WABANO CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH
613-748-5999
1299 Montreal Road, Ottawa, ON
Tuesdays from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Eastern Ontario Region

EASTERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT
613-933-1375 or 1-800-267-7120
1000 Pitt Street, Cornwall, ON
Quit smoking workshops and brief counselling.
Language: Offered in English and French.
- **Rockland**: 613-446-1400
- **Hawkesbury**: 613-632-4355 or 1-800-565-2314
- **Alexandria**: 613-525-1112
- **Cornwall**: 613-933-1375 or 1-800-267-7120
- **Winchester**: 613-774-2739
- **Casselman**: 613-764-2841 or 1-800-267-8260

Renfrew County and District

RENFREW COUNTRY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
613-732-3629 or 1-800-267-1097
7 International Drive, Pembroke, ON
Quit smoking sessions and programs, minimal contact intervention, and free self-help quit information.

HEALTH INFO LINE
613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 666

RENFREW COUNTRY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
613-623-2991 or 1-800-465-5000
346 John Street North, Arnprior, ON

RENFREW COUNTRY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
613-756-2744 or 1-800-267-8824
149 Dunn Street, Barry’s Bay, ON

RENFREW COUNTRY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
613-432-5853 or 1-800-804-0772
180 Plaunt Street South, Renfrew, ON

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY RENFREW COUNTY UNIT
613-735-2571
1217 Pembroke Street East, Pembroke, ON

STRENGTHENING THE FORCES HEALTH PROMOTION OFFICE
613-687-5511 ext. 4685
57 Festubert Blvd., Unit P – 118, C.F.B. Petawawa, ON
“BUTT OUT” program for military members, their families, and members of the defence team.
Kingston Area

**KFL&A PUBLIC HEALTH TOBACCO INFORMATION LINE**

613-549-1232, ext. 333
1-800-267-7875, ext. 333
221 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, ON
Smoke-Free for Good Group
(Mondays 7–8 p.m.)

**HASTINGS & PRINCE EDWARD COUNTIES HEALTH**

(613) 966-5500

**TOBACCOTALK LINE**

(613) 966-5513, ext. 600 or
1-800-267-2803, ext. 600
Unit 179 North Park Street, Belleville, ON
Quit smoking classes, free self-help quit information, free quit smoking kits

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District

**LEEDS, GRENVILLE & LANARK DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT**

613-345-5685
458 Laurier Boulevard, Brockville, ON
Brief counselling and free self-help quit information.

**MERRICKVILLE DISTRICT COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

613-269-3400, ext. 237
354 Read Street Merrickville, ON
Individual and group counselling

Quebec

**CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY’S SMOKERS’ HELPLINE**

1-866-527-7383
Toll-free, bilingual, confidential telephone service for all smokers, whether or not they are ready to quit. They can also assist family and friends who would like to help a smoker quit.

Hours of Operation: Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Gatineau/Hull Region

CLSC DE HULL
819-770-6900 ext. 2278
85, rue St-Rédempteur, Gatineau, QC

CLSC-CHSLD GRANDE-RIVIERE
819-684-2251 ext. 218 or 227
425, rue LeGuerrier, Gatineau, QC

CLSC-CHSLD DE GATINEAU
819-561-2550
777, boul. de la Gappe, Gatineau, QC
Centre de service à la communauté et siege social

CENTRE DE SANTE DU PONTIAC
819-683-3000
160, chemin de la Chute, C.P. 430, Mansfield, QC

CLSC-CHSLD DE LA PETITE-NATION
819-983-7341 ext. 380
14, rue St-André, St-André-Avellin, QC

CENTRE DE SANTE VALLEE-DE-LA-GATINEAU
1-866-441-2600 or 819-422-3548
309, boul. Desjardins, Maniwaki, QC

CLSC-CHSLD DES COLLINES
819-671-3777 or 819-456-2819
1884, route du Carrefour, Val-des-Monts, QC

CLSC VALLEE-DE-LA-LIEVRE
819-986-3359
578, rue MacLaren Est, Gatineau, QC

READAPTATION CARDIAQUE AU CHVO
819-595-6000 ext. 5366 or 819-595-6002
WHAT MAKES WOMEN DIFFERENT?

Men and women can be very different when it comes to matters of the heart, and that’s just as true for matters of heart health. Heart disease is RISING among women. The good news is that the majority of risk factors that cause heart disease such as smoking, diabetes, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, high stress levels and high cholesterol can be controlled or treated.

If you are receiving this booklet from the University of Ottawa Heart Institute and have been diagnosed with heart disease, we highly recommend that you participate in one of our cardiac rehabilitation program options, including our Women at Heart Program, after your discharge from hospital. This simple step can significantly decrease the chances of a future cardiac event and improve your chances of leading a healthy life in your future. This includes women who have had a heart attack, had a stent inserted, had heart surgery or a heart disease diagnosis, such as SCAD (Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection). Even if you have had a treatment for your heart disease, you still have heart disease and would greatly benefit from attending our rehabilitation program after your treatment.

DID YOU KNOW? After a heart attack, heart surgery or a heart disease diagnosis, attendance in a cardiac rehab program can reduce the chances of you being re-admitted to hospital by 31%! It also lowers your mortality by 25% (Cdn. Guidelines for Cardiac Rehabilitation and CVD Prevention, March 2009). Despite this clear benefit, women are only half as likely as men to attend and adhere to the program. Many women don’t know they are at risk after an event or even after a treatment they received. That can change beginning right now, with you.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Know your risk factors. It’s never too late to start making healthy changes.
- When in doubt, check it out! Call 911 or seek immediate medical care if you think you are having any possible heart related symptoms.
- Attend a free cardiac rehabilitation program (on-site and home program options available)
- Join the Women at Heart Program: led by women with heart disease for women with heart disease

The Heart Institute’s Canadian Women’s Heart Health Centre aims to provide leadership in the development, implementation and evaluation of cardiovascular prevention and management strategies to improve women’s cardiovascular health.

For more information or to enroll in a program right now please call: 613-696-7068
You can also visit our website for more information:
Visit www.ottawaheart.ca/clinical-department/cardiac-prevention-rehabilitation or www.yourheart.ca to learn more about the programs we offer for heart disease prevention and support!
HEART INSTITUTE PATIENT ALUMNI

WE CAN HELP. WE’VE BEEN THERE.

The Patient Alumni is a diverse community of current and former University of Ottawa Heart Institute patients, their families, friends and caregivers. We gratefully support the Institute by sharing information on advancements in the prevention and treatment of heart disease and by designating funds towards projects and services that improve patient comfort and care.

By joining the Alumni, you will become part of a very unique community!

The Heart Institute is the only hospital in Canada that has formed an alumni group to stay in contact with discharged patients and their families. For over 40 years, the Heart Institute has delivered world-class care to thousands of patients. As Alumni members, we wish to stay in touch, stay informed, and contribute to the Institute’s quality of care and future success.

WHY JOIN THE ALUMNI?

Alumni membership is free of charge, thanks to the partnership and financial support of the Heart Institute and its fundraising Foundation.

As an Alumni member, you’ll get up-to-date information through our:

- e-letters
- Websites
- Lectures, courses and special events

By joining you will also be able to share information and experiences with other Alumni members through our unique private social networking site, at: http://community.ottawaheart.ca

For more information and access to free membership, visit our website: ottawaheartalumni.ca

Or contact us at:
Email: alumni@ottawaheart.ca
Tel: 613-696-7241