

Did You Know...

February is Heart Health at Work Month

Heart disease affects approximately 2.4 million Canadian adults, and is the second leading cause of death in Canada. February is Heart Month and a time to bring attention to the importance of cardiovascular health, and what we can do to reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease.

Use care when lifting to avoid stressing the heart. Lift with your legs and avoid straining. Dollies, hand trucks, and other tools can help make lifting easier; consider asking others to help lift items that are very heavy.

Know your own heart health and consider that when taking action at work. Get an annual physical and follow up on any concerns raised by your doctor. If you're prescribed medication, take it according to your doctor's directions. Get enough exercise and sleep. Eat a balanced diet.

Be aware of potential respiratory hazards in your workplace and how to eliminate or minimize them. If you're not sure what these could be, ask.

Continue your own safety education to improve your knowledge about heart health and the potential heart hazards in your workplace so that you can make the best possible decisions every day.



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Choose good nutrition

A healthy diet is one of the best weapons you have to fight cardiovascular disease. The food you eat (and the amount) can affect other controllable risk factors: cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes and overweight. Choose a diet that emphasizes intake of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains; includes low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, legumes, no tropical vegetable oils, and nuts; and limits intake of sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages, and red meats.

Stop smoking

If you smoke, quit. If someone in your household smokes, encourage them to quit. We know it's tough. But it's tougher to recover from a heart attack or stroke or to live with chronic heart disease.

Move more

To keep it simple, you can aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week of moderate exercise. That includes any activity that gets you moving around and breaking a slight sweat.

Get more sleep

The next time you're tempted to stay up later than you should, remember how comfy that pillow will feel and how good a full night's sleep is for your heart. In one study, young and middle-age adults who slept 7 hours a night had less calcium in their arteries (an early sign of heart disease) than those who slept 5 hours or less or those who slept 9 hours or more.

Monitor your blood pressure

That cuff squeezing your arm at every doctor's visit is important. It measures the amount of pressure flowing through your arteries with every heartbeat. If your blood pressure gets too high, the extra force can damage artery walls and create scar tissue. That makes it harder for blood and oxygen to get to and from your heart. The heart has to pump harder and gets worn out faster. Get your blood pressure checked at least once a year and discuss the results with your doctor.

Find out if you have diabetes

Millions of people don't know that they have this condition. That's risky because over time, high blood sugar damages arteries and makes heart disease more likely. Your doctor should test your blood sugar if you are 45 or older, if you are pregnant, or if you're overweight and have other risk factors for diabetes.

Reduce stress

Managing stress in a healthy way, whether its meditation, yoga, or exercise is important. Make it a point, too, to spend time with people you're close to. Talk, laugh, confide, and enjoy each other. It's good for your emotional health and your heart.

