

Heart Healthy Tips in support of Heart Month

By: John A Sawdon, Public Education & Special Projects Director, Cardiac Health Foundation of Canada

- Exercising regularly is a key strategy in preventing heart disease
- Regular exercise contributes to Healthy-Habits while preventing and or reducing levels of obesity, high blood pressure, and poor cholesterol levels which contribute to heart attacks and strokes
- American Heart Association notes that 69% of all adults are obese or overweight. This is directly related to increased diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. In Canada, 25.3% of Canadians were considered obese in 2015. In 2014 61.8% of men and 46.2% of women were considered obese or overweight.
- Center for Disease Control indicates that lack of physical activity is a risk factor for heart disease and that only 20% of the adult population met the physical activity Guidelines for both aerobic and muscle strengthening activity. In Canada, only 20% of adults met the Canadian Physical Activity guidelines and only 10% of children & youth met these same Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. Stats Canada 2016, AHA 2019
- Physical Activity is any body movement that works your muscles and requires more energy than resting. Walking, running, dancing, yoga, swimming, cycling and gardening are a few examples of physical activity
- There are four types of physical activity: aerobic, muscle strengthening, bone-strengthening and stretching. Aerobic activity makes your heart beat faster than usual, you also breathe harder. Over time regular aerobic exercise such as walking, running, cycling, dancing and swimming makes your heart and lungs stronger.
- When we do regular moderate and vigorous (can talk but cannot sing) physical activity strengthens the heart muscle. This improves the heart's ability to pump blood to your lungs and throughout your body. This means more blood flows to your muscles and oxygen levels in your blood rises. Capillaries which are the body's tiny blood vessels also widen. This allows them to deliver more oxygen to your body, strengthening cells and carrying away waste. (National institute of Heart, Lung & Blood Institute 2019)
- Physical activity can help reduce risk of coronary artery disease by controlling the following:
 - lowering blood pressure & triglycerides
 - raise an HDL cholesterol level which helps transport bad cholesterol for disposal
 - Helps body manage blood sugar and insulin levels
 - reduces C-reactive protein which is a sign of inflammation
 - reduces overweight and obesity levels
 - contributes to helping you quit smoking (NHLBI 2019)



- Do at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity per week. This can be accumulated by walking ten minutes after each meal.
- If you have not been active in a while, start at a comfortable pace for you. Gradually increase intensity and duration as your body adapts. If you have a chronic condition (living with Type 2 Diabetes, COPD, Heart Disease, Rheumatoid arthritis), ask your Doctor to provide some guidelines and potentially an exercise prescription in keeping you safe.
- Physical Activity on a daily basis becomes much easier when you become active with a friend. This type of social support reinforces motivation, energy and support as your physical and oxygen capacity improves.