

HEART HEALTH February 2025

February is Heart Health Month

Strive to be heart smart!

February is Heart Month, a time to bring attention to the importance of cardiovascular health, and what we can do to reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease.

We can all reduce our risk of heart disease by making healthy lifestyle choices, including quitting smoking, eating a healthy and balanced diet, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and monitoring blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Social connections have also been proven to improve your heart health, longevity, and physical and mental well-being. Taking time for self-care can help you relax, reduce stress and help keep your blood pressure within a healthy range.

During Heart Month, we encourage everyone to take the opportunity to learn more about the risk factors for heart disease and what can be done to prevent it. Making one small change towards a healthier lifestyle can make a big difference. We hope you take to “heart” the following information!



HEART HEALTH Be Heart Smart

Tips to maintain heart health as you age

Your heart is a strong muscle that pumps blood to your body. Just like an engine makes a car go, the heart keeps your body running.

Aging causes changes in the heart and blood vessels. Changes that happen with age may increase a person's risk of heart disease and related health problems. Heart disease is a major cause of disability that can limit activity and quality of life for older people.

Luckily, there are many steps you can take to help keep your heart healthy:

Check your blood pressure and cholesterol

As you get older, it's important to have your blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked regularly, even if you are healthy.

High blood pressure could lead to stroke and problems with your heart, eyes, brain, and kidneys. High cholesterol can also lead to serious health problems, such as a heart attack or stroke. Talk to a doctor about exercise, dietary changes, and medications that can help manage blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

If you smoke, quit

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death. Smoking adds to the damage to artery walls that occurs in heart disease. Quitting smoking, even in later life, can improve your health and lower your risk of heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

Follow a heart-healthy diet

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and foods high in fiber and whole grains.

Also choose foods that are low in saturated fats, added sugars, and salt which can cause high blood pressure.

Stay physically active

If possible, aim to get at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Strength training and aerobic exercise both benefit heart health. But it's important just to get moving - any physical activity is better than none! Talk with your doctor about the type of activities would be best for you.

Maintain a healthy weight

Balancing the calories you consume with the calories burned with physical activity helps to maintain a healthy weight. Other ways you can stay at a healthy weight include limiting portion size and following a heart healthy diet.

Keep your diabetes, high blood pressure, and/or high cholesterol under control.

Follow your doctor's advice to manage these conditions, and take medications as directed.

Don't drink much or any alcohol

As we age, alcohol consumption can make existing health problems worse and have dangerous interactions with some medications.

Manage stress

Learn how to manage stress, relax, and cope with problems to improve physical and emotional health. Consider activities such as, meditation, physical activity, and talking about concerns with friends or family.

Get enough sleep

Getting enough quality sleep is another way to help reduce the risk of heart disease. As we get older, our sleep patterns change, making it more difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep.

Signs to watch for:

If you experience any of the symptoms listed below suddenly or without exertion, call 911 for emergency assistance. Although other conditions can cause chest discomfort, don't always assume it's something minor.

It is critical to have your symptoms checked out quickly in case it is a heart attack. Immediate treatment is essential to prevent permanent damage when the heart is not getting enough oxygen.

Chest pain is not always the main warning sign of a heart attack, so be aware of other possible symptoms:

- **Crushing chest pain or pressure in the center or left side of the chest**
- **Pain, numbness, and/or tingling in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Fainting, light-headedness, or sudden dizziness**
- **Rapid or irregular heartbeat**
- **Cold sweats**
- **Nausea, vomiting, or stomach upset**
- **Tiredness or fatigue**
- **Weakness**
- **Anxiety**

The symptoms of a heart attack can be different in men and women. Women are more likely than men to experience shortness of breath; tiredness; weakness; upset stomach; anxiety; and pain in the shoulder, back, or arm.

Although these problems can be signs of heart disease, they can also be associated with other health conditions. Tell your doctor about any concerns you have.



HEART HEALTH Vaccinations

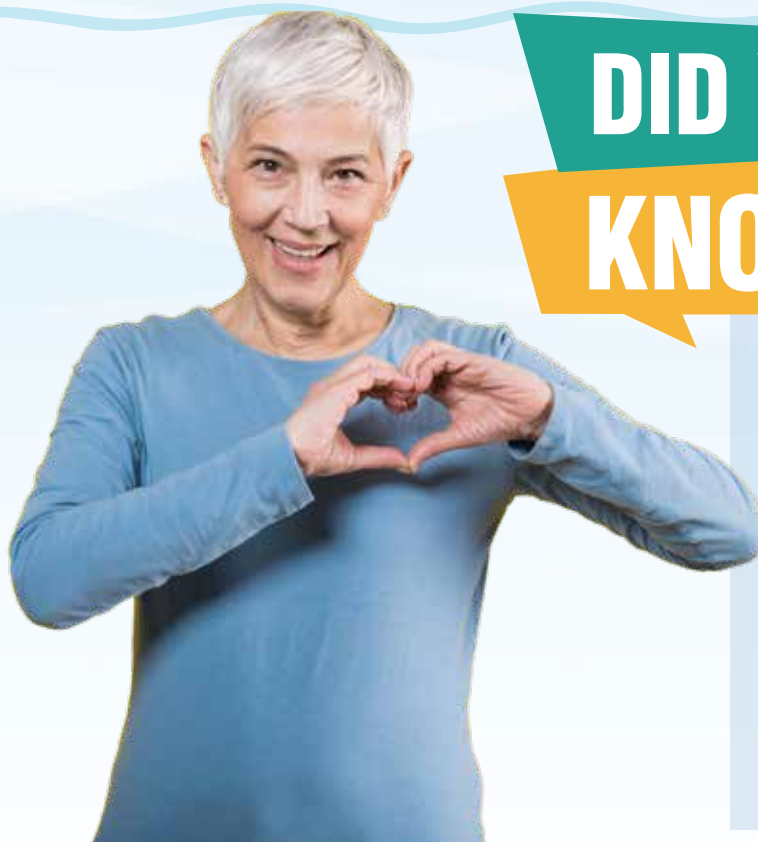
The annual flu shot can be part of the fight against heart disease

Influenza is commonly called the flu. The flu is highly contagious and can cause serious complications in older adults.

Almost 1 in 2 adults 50+ have a chronic condition in Canada, putting them at higher risk of flu complications. Cardiovascular disease in particular can be worsened as a result of getting the flu.

The seasonal flu vaccine is the most effective way to reduce the risk of a severe flu infection and prevent hospitalizations and other serious complications.

***Ask your doctor for more information on the different types of vaccines, and learn which is right for you.**



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

**VACCINATION CAN
REDUCE THE RISK OF
HEART ATTACKS DUE
TO FLU BY UP TO
45%**

HEART HEALTH Participate!

Join us in Steinbach, MB for the 2025 MB 55+ Games

Save the Date & Participate

Join us in Steinbach!

Curling event: March 4 - 6, 2025
Summer Games: June 3 - 5, 2025

- Curling registration is open now!
- Summer registration opens soon!

What are the 55+ Games and how can I get involved?

This June, 20+ age-friendly events will attract over 1000 athletes, 300 volunteers and many more spectators to 3 days of fun and friendly competition. The Manitoba 55+ Games event fosters fun and enjoyable competition for participants and spectators alike. If you have never been to a MB 55+ Games, this is one celebration you will not want to miss!



The Games also provide a social and cultural atmosphere through entertainment and social events. On Wednesday night a Celebration Banquet is held, complete with great food and local entertainment! This allows the participants a chance to mingle and dance!

Choose from any of these age-friendly events:

- 3 km walk/run (Predicted time)
- 5 Pin Bowling – singles & team
- 8-Ball & 9-Ball
- 9 & 18 Hole Golf
- Arts & Crafts
- Bocce Ball
- Bridge
- Corn Hole
- Cribbage
- Curling – Ice & Stick Curling (March 4-6)
- Floor Curling
- Floor Shuffleboard
- Horseshoes
- Lawn Bowling
- Pickleball
- Slo-Pitch
- Swimming
- Table tennis
- Track
- Wall Darts
- Whist
- *Demo event: beach volleyball*



**Manitoba
55+ Games**
PRESENTED BY  **PLAYNOW**



Looking to get involved?

Participants, volunteers, spectators and sponsors are all needed to make the Games a success.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the 55+ Games in Steinbach, please email: **55plusgames@patporteralc.com**

We look forward to seeing you there!

For more information, contact us:

Phone: 204-632-3947

Email: info@activeagingmb.ca

Website: www.activeagingmb.ca

HEART HEALTH Movement

Winter walking safety tips

We all know that manitoba winters can be long. However, one of the easiest and most affordable ways to maintain and enjoy physical activity is to go for a walk!

Walking is one the best ways of improving your overall well-being. Not to mention it is a great way to get out and explore your community. Walking is also one of the best ways to keep your body healthy because it improves fitness and mental well-being. Walking also helps us to avoid falls. It improves balance, strength and posture.

And while potential hazards such as icy surfaces and hard-packed snow can pose a fall risk, it's important to remember safe winter movement is possible by being prepared.

This is particularly important during the long months of a Manitoba winter, where shorter days and frigid temperatures can contribute to weight gain, reduced physical fitness and a higher incidence of mental health issues.

When the air is crisp and the ground is covered with snow, there's nothing like spending time outside to enjoy the beauty of the season!



For most people, walking is accessible, affordable and enjoyable. With a few simple precautions, it can be a safe and effective way of getting where we need to go, even in winter.

Consider these tips:

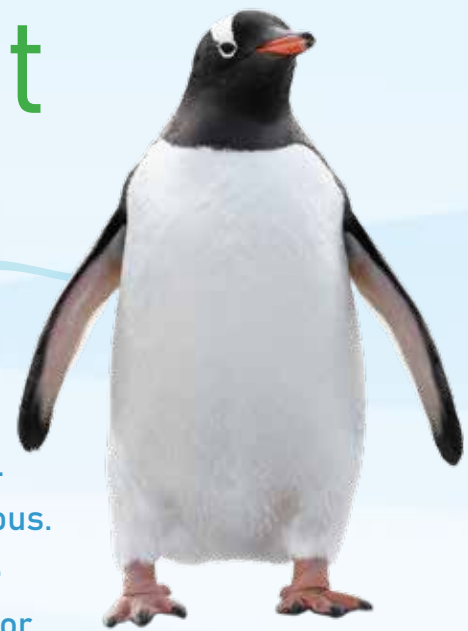
- Let others know where you are going and/or go with a friend.
- For warmth and stability, wear lightweight winter boots with that are well-insulated and waterproof. Choose boots with a thick, non-slip, treaded sole made of natural rubber, and with wide, low heels.
- Consider using a nordic pole (similar to a ski pole) with a sharp tip that digs into the ice. If you use a cane, you can buy an ice pick for the cane.
- If you have items to carry, use a backpack. That will keep your hands free in case of a fall.
- Watch for cars as they may have trouble seeing you in the winter. Snowbanks, falling snow or rain can decrease visibility.
- Because the winter days are shorter, wear clothing with reflective strips, a reflective vest, or add ankle and wrist reflector bands to your outdoor gear.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets to help keep your balance.
- Plan ahead to make sure you have enough time to get where you're going.
- Assume that all wet, dark areas on the pavement may be slippery or icy. If you can, walk around them.
- Walk on cleared walkways—avoid shortcuts that haven't been cleared.
- Download a local weather app on your phone (such as Government of Canada Weather Alerts) so you know what the weather is like before you go outside.
- Don't text or talk on your phone and walk at the same time.
- Use handrails on stairs and ramps.
- Spread sand or grit on your steps and walkways.

Facing an icy surface can be a scary experience.

Falls can be serious.

Falling can cause bruises, sprains, or more serious injuries

like broken bones or concussions.



Melting snow can freeze overnight, forming a thin layer of ice that is hard to see. The ground can become very slippery in the morning when the ice starts to melt. In months where the ground is frozen, frost and ice can make it slippery for walking. No matter how well the snow is cleared from areas, there will still be slippery places.

Body movements such as the "penguin walk" can increase your stability on an icy surface. It includes the following movement tips:

- ***Bend slightly and walk flat-footed.***
- ***Point your feet out slightly, like a penguin.***
- ***Keep your centre of gravity over your feet as much as possible.***
- ***Watch where you are stepping.***
- ***Take shorter, shuffle-like steps.***
- ***Keep your arms at your sides — not in your pockets!***
- ***Concentrate on keeping your balance.***
- ***Go S-L-O-W-L-Y.***

Icy conditions can also prevent effective use of canes and walkers, which are more likely to slip on ice and snow. Persons with disabilities and other mobility challenges may need to pay extra attention when outside during the winter months.

Making the decision to spend time outside helps with improving your overall well-being. So, get out there and be safe. Walking in winter can be enjoyable when you are prepared. Remember to ask for support if needed, and to take the time to plan a safe route before you go!

For more information about preventing falls and staying on your feet, [visit www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca).

Volunteer Opportunities

Get involved with Active Aging in Manitoba

Looking for a **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY?** Active Aging in Manitoba is always looking for volunteers and peer leaders for our Active Aging programs: the Manitoba 55+ Games, Steppin' Up with Confidence and Active Aging Presentations (on various healthy aging and wellness topics).

PEER LEADER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Are you interested in becoming a Peer Leader for Active Aging in Manitoba and leading a functional exercise class? Give us a call or send us an email!

For more information please contact us by email: info@activeagingmb.ca or call: 204-632-3947 or visit our website: www.activeagingmb.ca



HEART HEALTH Mental Health

Beat those 'winter blues' with physical activity

Warm up to winter weather

We often refer to ourselves as "hardy Manitobans" or we say it's a "dry cold" and who doesn't bristle when "Winterpeg" is used instead of Winnipeg in a conversation!

But our defensive nature about winter weather is more deeply rooted than we sometimes realize. Tara Brousseau Snider, MA Counselling Psychology, Chief Executive Officer at Sara Riel Inc. suggests that as people who inhabit colder climates, we need the changing seasons and the colder weather.

Over the years we have adapted to our climate and therefore we are able to survive and thrive in the colder months. Tara says our bodies need the sunshine not only for Vitamin D production but also for our physical and mental well-being. One of the best things we can do is to get sunshine on our face in the winter months. Sara commented on last winter which was milder, and we experienced more grey days and she saw the negative impact on people's mental health.

Being active during the winter, getting exposure to sunshine, and addressing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) are all important aspects of maintaining physical and mental well-being during the colder months. With reduced daylight hours we sometimes struggle to be able to see enough sunshine and might be diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Some symptoms of SAD include sleep disturbances, low energy, loss of appetite, and difficulty concentrating.

Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) SAD is a form of depression that typically occurs during the winter months, when sunlight exposure is limited. It can affect anyone, though it is more common in people who live in areas with long winters or limited sunlight.

Symptoms of SAD include:

- **Low energy or fatigue**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Changes in appetite (often craving carbs or sweets)**
- **Sleep disturbances (either oversleeping or insomnia)**
- **Irritability**
- **Feelings of hopelessness or sadness**

Sara suggests using light therapy for 20 minutes in the morning helps our cognitive function, improves mood and promotes well-being. Exposure to light therapy can increase Serotonin levels. Serotonin, a chemical in our body, carries messages from our brain to our nerve cells, and plays a key role in our mood.

What can we do to avoid the symptoms of SAD?

Regular physical activity

Physical activity plays a key role in combatting SAD. Exercise boosts our serotonin and endorphins which significantly improves our mood and energy levels.

Get enough vitamin D

Supplementing with vitamin D can help with the negative effects of sunlight deprivation. Also, try to get as much sunlight as you can!

Maintain a healthy diet

Eating a balanced diet with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains helps support overall mental health and energy levels. Avoiding too many sugary or carb-heavy foods can help maintain stable blood sugar and prevent mood swings.

Socialize

Spending time with loved ones, even if it's virtually, can help fight feelings of isolation that often accompany SAD.

Stay connected to nature

If you can, try to get outside during daylight hours, even if it's just for a short walk. Being in nature, regardless of the temperature, can improve mood and reduce stress.

Sara commented on reports that the happiest people live in the colder climates such as the Scandinavian countries, and Canada! So, venture outside even for a few minutes on those bitterly cold days, breath in the fresh air, let the sun shine on your face and tell yourself this is all part of being a hardy Manitoban!

Tips for Staying Active and Optimizing Winter Wellness:

Dress appropriately for winter activities

Layer up in moisture-wicking fabrics and wear insulated, breathable clothing to stay warm without overheating.

Good quality boots

Be sure to wear warm boots with good gripping soles. Add winter walking cleats that will give you better traction on ice.



Nordic pole walking

Nordic walking combines cardiovascular exercise with a vigorous muscle workout for your shoulders, arms, core, and legs. Learn more: www.urbanpoling.com

Monitor your body temperature

As we age, we do not feel the cold as readily as we did when we were younger. We often don't generate as much body heat especially if we are moving more slowly.

Follow the weather forecast

A quick change in wind direction and wind speed can quickly impact your outdoor activity.

Try outdoor winter sports like skiing, snowshoeing, or ice skating, which are great ways to stay active and have fun.

Be active with others

Especially if you are planning to be outside for an extended period in colder weather. Safety in numbers!

Try indoor activities

If you can't get outside on certain days, try things like yoga, dance, or strength training.

Take advantage of sunny days

Even if it's cold, to go for a walk or simply sit outside for a bit to get that dose of natural light. By being active, seeking out sunlight when possible, you can help maintain your physical and mental well-being through the winter months. We have beautiful, sunny, cold days that can be enjoyed by dressing appropriately and going for a walk!

Move more; Sit Less!

Making the time to be active with our busy lives can be challenging, but start with 10 minutes and try to build up to at least half an hour of activity a day. Some activity is better than none. And if you spend a lot of time sitting, set reminders to stand up and stretch.



The Benefits of Sunshine during Winter

**DID YOU
KNOW?**

While the sun's rays are weaker in the winter, exposure to natural light still provides numerous benefits

Vitamin D Synthesis: Sunlight helps your skin produce vitamin D, which is crucial for your immune system, mood regulation, and bone health

Improved Mood: Exposure to natural sunlight increases serotonin levels in the brain. Bright light has been shown to boost overall mood and promote a sense of well-being, even when it's cold outside.

Regulates Circadian Rhythm: Sunlight helps set your body's internal clock, making it easier to wake up in the morning and sleep at night.

Increased Alertness: Natural light helps you stay alert and awake during the day.

Mental Health: Sunshine can help reduce symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder