

TODAY'S HEARTSMART™ WOMAN

Your action plan for a healthy heart





About this booklet

Women are everyday heroes. As mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, spouses and aunts, women are the family's primary nurturers and caregivers. But many women are busy juggling different responsibilities, and don't ever think about heart disease until some serious signs start to appear. Prevention is critical because two-thirds of women who die suddenly from heart disease have had no previously recognized symptoms.

There is much you can do to reduce your risk of heart disease, or prevent your heart disease from worsening. Start by making healthy lifestyle choices, like exercising regularly, eating a heart healthy diet and reducing stress. Invite other women you care about to love their hearts, and support each other in leading a heart healthy lifestyle.

At Becel, our mission is to educate, inspire and empower Canadians to keep their hearts healthy. That's why we are proud to be a Founding Sponsor of **The Heart Truth™** campaign (www.thehearttruth.ca). Launched in Canada by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, The Heart Truth is a campaign to raise awareness about the risk of heart disease and stroke for women. Becel has also made a long-term commitment to assist the Foundation in its efforts to help save the lives of women across Canada by informing them of the risks of heart disease.

This booklet is brought to you by the Becel Centre for Heart Health, in association with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. In it you will find easy-to-read information and sensible advice on HeartSmart™ eating, physical activity and stress management. Try some of the tips and recipes today. Once you've started, keep up the great work – you are on your way to becoming today's HeartSmart™ woman!

Reviewed by members of the Dietitians of Canada Diabetes, Obesity and Cardiovascular Network.

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Joyce's story

My story begins in the fall of 1998 when I was 53 years old. I had been feeling fatigued the entire year. I went to visit my daughter in Vancouver, and, although I was just carrying one shoulder bag, I had to stop three times while walking through the airport. When my daughter greeted me, she immediately commented on how pale I looked. I casually replied that I was just tired from the flight.

A few days later, when I was out walking along Robson Street, my chest felt tight. I started to feel flu-like symptoms. Then, my left arm went totally numb and I couldn't continue walking.

When I saw my doctor back home in Toronto, she immediately arranged a battery of heart tests for me. I failed all of them. The cardiologist instantly diagnosed that I had heart disease. I had three narrowed arteries – they were 50%, 70% and 90% blocked. In March of 1999, I underwent quadruple bypass surgery.

I realized that I had ignored a lot of the symptoms of heart disease. I didn't drink or smoke, but I had a strong family history of heart disease. Both my father and my brother had early heart attacks at

ages 34 and 30, respectively.

The good news is that today, I have a new sense of well-being. I eat a healthy, well-rounded diet. I walk one hour every day. And I listen carefully to my body.

My deepest concern is that women are not getting the message. Heart disease kills more women than all of the cancers put together. Women may describe different symptoms, and not the typical crushing chest pain that men report. Be aware that you can't take care of your family and loved ones if you don't take care of yourself. If there is heart disease in your family, get your blood pressure and cholesterol checked. Go for long walks, watch your diet and don't smoke. Soon, these healthy habits will get easier and become a way of life!



Joyce Singer, aged 61

Joyce is not alone. In fact, she is among the tens of thousands of Canadian women who will develop heart disease. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, heart disease is the leading cause of death in Canada. Heart disease and stroke are responsible for about 33% of deaths among women, and 32% among men. Each year, an estimated 37,000 Canadian women die from heart disease and stroke. For your action plan for a healthy heart, read on.



Risk factors of heart disease

What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a general term that describes different heart problems. The most common type is coronary heart disease, a condition in which the arteries that supply blood to the heart become blocked with plaque. This can lead to a heart attack.

Warning signals

Be aware of the signs of a heart attack. They're different for men and women.

Both men and women may feel:

Crushing chest pain
Shortness of breath

Women may also feel:

Indigestion-like discomfort
Vague chest pain
Discomfort or pressure
Nausea and lightheadedness
Pain in the neck, jaw or back

MEN usually start to develop heart disease when they are in their

40s

WOMEN usually develop heart disease in their

50s

What are the risk factors of heart disease?

Two out of three Canadian women have one or more major risk factors for heart disease. A risk factor is a certain lifestyle behaviour, personal factor or environmental condition that raises a person's chances of developing a disease. The more risk factors you have, the higher your chances of developing heart disease. If you already have heart disease, the presence of risk factors can worsen your existing condition. Some risk factors can be changed, while others cannot. Knowing your risk factors is the first step in taking control of heart disease.

Risk factors you can control	Risk factors you cannot control
Smoking	Age
Physical inactivity	Gender
High blood pressure	Family history
High blood cholesterol	Ethnicity
Being overweight	
Diabetes	
Excessive alcohol consumption	
Stress	

What's your risk for heart disease and stroke?

1	Are you age 65 or older?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
2	Are you menopausal? (Have you stopped having menstrual periods?)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
3	Do you have a parent, sister, brother or child who was diagnosed with heart disease or stroke? (If you do not know, answer yes to be safe.)	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
4	Are you a member of any of the following at-risk ethnic groups: <input type="radio"/> South Asian (Indian, Pakistani or Sri Lankan); or <input type="radio"/> First Nations/Aboriginal Peoples or Inuit; or <input type="radio"/> Black Canadian?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
5	Do you smoke?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
6	Are you regularly exposed to someone else's tobacco smoke (second-hand smoke)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
7	Do you have high blood pressure?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
8	Do you have high blood cholesterol and/or high blood triglycerides?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
9	Do you have diabetes?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
10	Are you overweight?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
11	Do you get less than 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
12	Do you often eat high-fat foods such as deep-fried fast foods, pastries, donuts, full-fat milk products and fatty cuts of meat?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
13	Do you usually eat fewer than five servings of vegetables and fruit each day?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No



The more “Yes” answers you have, the higher your risk of developing heart disease. Bring this checklist to your doctor and discuss ways to reduce your risk. Read on to see what you can start doing now to reduce your heart disease risk. Write your own action plan for heart health.

How young is your heart?

Visit www.loveyourheart.ca to find out the estimated “age” of your heart compared to your actual age.*

Also learn about some positive lifestyle changes you can make to keep your heart healthy or help improve your heart age.

Your action plan for a healthy heart

Read on for more information
and tips from women just
like you.

Whether you have one risk factor or many risk factors for heart disease, it's never too late to start looking after your heart. The small changes that you make to your lifestyle and eating habits all add up to big improvements in your heart health, even if you already have some form of heart disease.

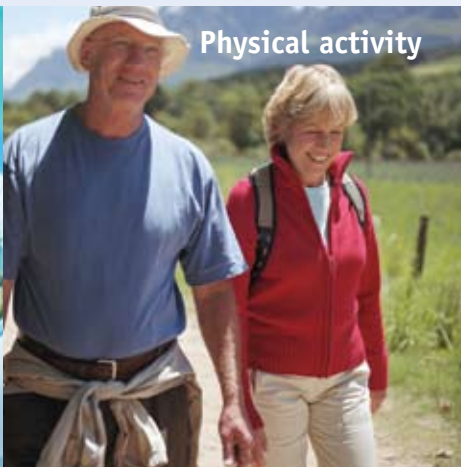
Your action plan for heart health outlines some easy changes you can make to improve three important lifestyle factors:

- HeartSmart™ eating
- Physical activity
- Stress management

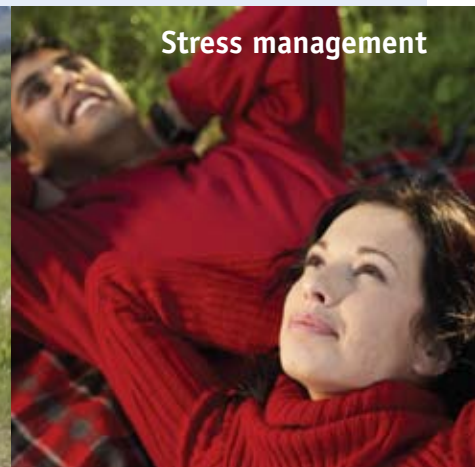
HeartSmart™ eating



Physical activity



Stress management



HeartSmart™ eating





Eating is one of life's greatest pleasures. HeartSmart™ eating is all about choosing foods wisely and enjoying healthy food choices whenever and wherever you can.

A healthy diet low in saturated fat and trans fat may reduce the risk of heart disease.

For heart health, the *type* of fat you choose is just as important as the *amount* of fat. Get into the habit of choosing more foods with mono- or polyunsaturated fat and fewer foods with saturated and trans fats – and use the chart below as a guide. Studies show that saturated and trans fats may increase cholesterol levels, while mono- and polyunsaturated fats may help reduce cholesterol levels.

This chart shows which fats are heart healthy, and where you'll find different types of fats.



Type of fat	Is this a heart healthy fat?	Which foods contain this type of fat?
 Saturated fat	No It raises blood cholesterol levels	Fatty cuts of meat; poultry skins; butter; higher-fat cheese; cream; processed foods containing hydrogenated fat; fast foods
 Trans fat*	No It raises blood cholesterol levels	Processed food containing shortening or partially hydrogenated fat (such as some cookies and crackers); deep-fried foods; some hard (stick) margarines; fast foods
 Monounsaturated fat	Yes It lowers blood cholesterol levels	Oils: canola, olive and peanut; soft, non-hydrogenated margarine; nuts and seeds; avocados; olives; peanut butter
 Polyunsaturated fat (e.g., omega-6 and omega-3)	Yes It lowers blood cholesterol levels	Oils: sunflower, corn, safflower, canola, soybean, flax; soft, non-hydrogenated margarine; nuts and seeds; fatty fish (such as salmon, trout, sardines and mackerel)

*Trans fat also occurs naturally. It is found at low levels in animal-based foods such as dairy products and beef.



Top 10 nutrition tips for heart disease prevention

from Registered Dietitian Liz Pearson

Liz Pearson is a Registered Dietitian and author of *When in Doubt, Eat Broccoli (but leave room for chocolate)* and *The Ultimate Healthy Eating Plan That Still Leaves Room for Chocolate*.



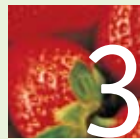
Remember that your heart loves omega-3 polyunsaturated fats.

To get more omega-3, serve fatty fish for dinner one night a week and try canned tuna or salmon for lunch. Make plant sources of omega-3 fats – for example, foods like canola oil, walnuts, flax seeds and soft margarine – a regular part of your diet.



Proceed with caution when you see trans fats and saturated fats.

Saturated and trans fats can increase cholesterol. Trans fats are found in deep-fried and processed foods made with partially hydrogenated oil. Saturated fats are found in foods like cheese, butter and fatty meats. Choose lower-fat dairy products (like skim milk or low-fat yogurt), leaner meats and soft, non-hydrogenated margarine. Look for products containing mostly monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.



Load up on colourful vegetables and fruit.

Vegetables and fruit contain a powerful mix of nutrients, fibre and plant compounds that can help protect the heart and lower cholesterol levels. Aim for seven to 10 servings (½ cup per serving) of colourful vegetables and fruit daily. To get more servings, add fruit to cereal, snack on carrot and green pepper sticks, eat a salad with dinner and add vegetables to soups, tomato sauce and stews.



Eat the whole grain, especially the bran.

Whole grains – including whole grain wheat, corn, rice, oats, barley, quinoa and rye – are made up of three parts: bran, germ and endosperm. When grains are refined, the bran and germ are removed. Studies show that 80% of healthy plant compounds and fibre are found in the bran or germ. For adults, *Canada's Food Guide* recommends six to eight servings of grain products daily and making at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.



Enjoy nuts often. Studies support a link between nuts and heart health. Nuts contain a complex mix of nutrients, fibre, beneficial plant compounds and good-for-your-heart monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Nuts are a concentrated source of calories, so enjoy only a small handful (about 1 oz/28 g or ¼ cup/50 mL) of plain, unsalted nuts daily.



More beans please! Eating beans lowers cholesterol levels. Beans are loaded with soluble fibre and are rich in heart healthy nutrients like magnesium and B vitamins.

Try to eat beans, such as chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans or soy beans, at least three times a week in salads, chili, dips, stirfries and soups.



Go for flavonoids, powerful plant compounds that protect your heart.

Certain foods are rich in plant compounds called flavonoids, which are powerful protectors of the heart. Try berries, apples with the peel on, pomegranate or grape juice, and green or black tea.



Slash the salt. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke. It is most important to cut back on processed foods and fast foods. Also, add less salt when cooking and at the table.



If you choose to drink alcohol, moderation is the key. Alcohol is good for the heart in moderation. Excess alcohol, however, may increase blood pressure and

risk of stroke. If you don't drink, don't start. If you drink, moderation is no more than one to two drinks daily for women (up to a maximum of nine drinks per week) and two drinks daily for men (up to a maximum of 14 drinks per week). A drink is equal to a bottle of beer, 5 oz. wine or 1½ oz. spirits.



Don't rely solely on supplements for the answer.

Scientific data do not justify the use of high-dose, antioxidant vitamin supplements (such as vitamin C or E) for the prevention of heart disease. Eating whole foods is the best route to a healthy heart.

A HeartSmart™ woman shares her tips

Ever since I found out that I have high cholesterol, I've been paying closer attention to the food labels.

I'm careful to avoid products that are high in saturated and trans fats. It takes me an extra 10 minutes to complete my shopping, but I know I'm buying HeartSmart™ foods for me and my family.

Janice, aged 38

Now it's your turn. Write down two HeartSmart™ things you can do this month to eat better.

1.

2.



Get the facts... the nutrition facts

Almost every food package shows a Nutrition Facts table that lists the total fat, saturated fat and trans fat content, plus other nutrients in one serving of food. Here's how to use this information to help you find and choose HeartSmart™ foods.



When shopping, look for the Health Check™ logo on foods. Created by the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Health Check™ program helps you quickly identify products that can contribute to a healthy diet. Look for the Health Check™ logo – it's like shopping with the Heart and Stroke Foundation's dietitians. Visit www.healthcheck.org for more information.

AMOUNT

All of the nutrition information in the table is based on this amount of food. Compare this amount with the actual amount of the food that you eat.

CALORIES

This is the number of calories per amount of food listed. So this product has 70 calories per 2 tsp.

TOTAL FAT

This number tells you how much total fat you're getting if you eat the serving size.

SATURATED AND TRANS FATS

Try to choose foods with as little saturated and trans fats as possible. This product has 1 g saturated fat and 0 g trans fat.

% DAILY VALUE

This number tells you if the food contains a lot or a little of the specific nutrient. 5% is a little; 20% or more is a lot.

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Serving Size 2 tsp. (10 g) / Portion 2 c. à thé (10 g)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 70	
Total Fat / Lipides 8 g	12 %
Saturated / saturés 1 g + Trans / trans 0 g	5 %
Polyunsaturated / polyinsaturés 2.5 g	
Omega-6 / oméga-6 2 g	
Omega-3 / oméga-3 0.4 g	
Monounsaturated / monoinsaturés 3.5 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 70 mg	3 %
Total Carbohydrate / Glucides 0 g	0 %
Dietary Fibre / Fibres alimentaires 0 g	
Sugars / Sucres 0 g	
Protein / Protéines 0 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	10 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	0 %
Iron / Fer	0 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D	30 %
Vitamin E / Vitamine E	15 %

HeartSmart™ eating at home

Consider Liz Pearson's nutrition tips (pages 8-9) when planning your meals. The hearty recipe below will help you incorporate Liz's tips into a simple and tasty dinner – and you can bring the leftovers for lunch. For more healthy recipe ideas, visit www.heartandstroke.ca or www.becel.ca.



Farfalle with Tuna, Lemon and Swiss Chard

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

COOKING TIME: 15 minutes

MAKES: 4 servings

The fish is a source of omega-3 fat, the pasta is made from whole grains and the Swiss chard counts as a serving of vegetables. Enjoy a side salad sprinkled with chickpeas and walnuts for a heart healthy meal.

1 pkg (300 g)	whole wheat farfalle (bow-tie pasta)
3 tbsp (45 mL)	Becel margarine
1	medium onion, finely chopped
4 cloves	garlic, minced
1 large bunch	Swiss chard, spinach or other leafy green vegetable, trimmed and coarsely chopped
1 can (170 g)	chunk light tuna, water packed, undrained
¼ tsp (1 mL)	each salt, ground black pepper and chili flakes
	zest and juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup (50 mL)	chopped fresh basil leaves
½ cup (125 mL)	freshly grated Parmesan cheese

In large pot, cook pasta in boiling water until tender; drain.

In large, wide pot, melt 2 tbsp (30 mL) margarine over medium-high heat and sauté onion and garlic until softened, about 5 minutes. Add Swiss chard and cook while stirring until leaves wilt, about 3 minutes. Add tuna and stir until heated through. Add drained pasta, remaining 1 tbsp (15 mL) margarine, salt, pepper, chili flakes, lemon rind, lemon juice, basil and Parmesan cheese; toss well to thoroughly coat. Serve right away.

Nutrients per serving: 469 kcal energy (kilocalories), 14.3 g fat, 3.8 g saturates, 3 g polyunsaturates, 6.4 g monounsaturates, 20 mg cholesterol, 64 g carbohydrate, 9 g total dietary fibre, 26.9 g protein, 728 mg sodium, 629 mg potassium, 21 mg vitamin C, 360 IU (international units) vitamin A, 264 mg calcium, 4.6 mg iron, 1.7 IU vitamin D, 3.18 mg vitamin E.



Let's get physical

Do you know how good it feels after you've gone for a swim, taken a long walk or played a solid game of tennis? Unfortunately, the answer is "no" for the 68% of women in Canada who are physically inactive. Being inactive increases your likelihood of developing high blood pressure, diabetes and being overweight. Each of these is a risk factor for heart disease. On the other hand, regular physical activity is one of the best things that you can do for yourself and your heart.

A HeartSmart™ woman shares her tips

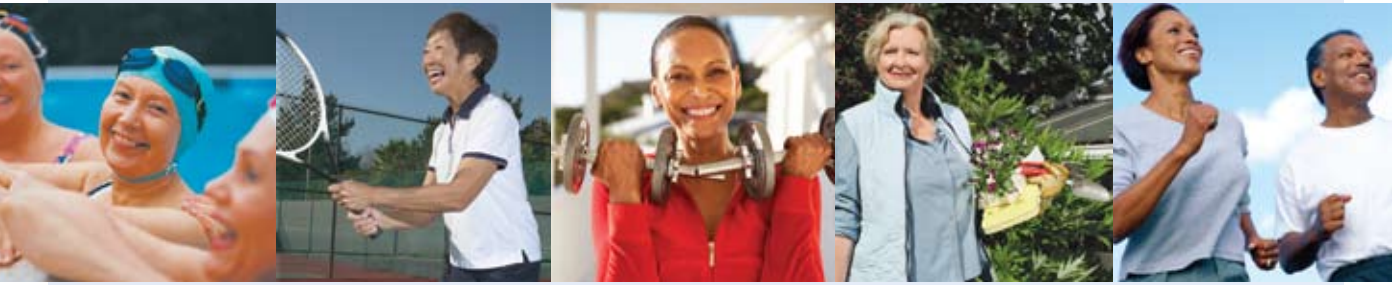
I have a triple threat for heart disease – a family history, obesity and high blood cholesterol. At lunch, I go for brisk walks with my colleagues at work. It gives me a break from my work and helps to keep my cholesterol under control. I feel much more energetic after the walk, and ready to take on the afternoon!

Mary, aged 52

Now it's your turn. Write down two HeartSmart™ things you can do this month to be more physically active.

1.

2.



Active benefits

Regular physical activity is rewarding in more ways than one because it:

- helps to prevent or reduce high blood cholesterol levels and high blood pressure
- increases levels of the “good” HDL cholesterol
- helps reduce stress so you feel more relaxed
- keeps weight under control
- lowers your risk of heart disease
- strengthens your heart, muscles and bones
- improves self-esteem, posture, flexibility and balance

To maintain good health, the Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity – most preferably every day of the week.*

If you’re just starting out or you’re short on time, try 10 minutes of activity at a time, a few times a day. Here’s how you can do it!

- Wake up 10 minutes earlier each day, and stretch or do a short yoga routine. It’s a great way to start the day.
- Get walking – anytime, anywhere. Even a 10-minute brisk walk at lunch or after supper can clear your head and re-energize you.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation
recommends at least

30 minutes

of moderately intense physical activity
– most preferably every day of the week.

- Sign up for a lunchtime fitness class or try an exercise routine on DVD.
- Rake the leaves, dig up the weeds and plant some flowers. You’ll be surprised at how much exercise you get.
- Take the stairs – up and down – wherever you are. It’s just as good as the stair climber machine at the gym.

*If you are inactive, check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.



Dr. Rob Nolan is the Director of the Behavioural Cardiology Research Unit at the University Health Network in Toronto. He is also an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto.



Managing stress

You're caught in a traffic jam and your gas gauge suddenly points to empty. Your company is downsizing and announcing the staff cuts today. Or your best friend calls and says she's getting a divorce.

Big or small, stress hits us every day in different ways. Research by the Heart and Stroke Foundation shows that 45% of women aged 30+ report frequently feeling overwhelmed by the demands of their families, jobs and/or finances.

According to Dr. Rob Nolan, "Women may be more vulnerable to stress caused by multiple role strain." It's common for women to experience a wider range of social demands than men do. Women often feel the strain of trying to balance responsibilities at work and home.

Many demands and challenges can put extra strain on the body over time. Your heart may beat faster and contract with more force. Your blood pressure and rate of breathing may increase. In this whole process, you may feel emotionally tense. This response pattern may contribute to high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart disease.

Chronic stress can also lead to unhealthy habits, such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol, eating high-fat "comfort foods" and decreasing the amount of exercise you get. Managing stress is an important part of your heart health action plan. Dr. Nolan recommends these two strategies:

1. Recognize your personal stress warning signs. Your response to stress can involve physical signs (like tense muscles), behavioural symptoms (such as sleep disruption) or it can affect your thoughts and feelings (like being easily distracted or feeling tense). Taking note of the one or two key warning signs of your personal stress response can help you to take action more quickly, before your stress symptoms increase.

2. Practice skills that help you reduce the impact of stress on your life. Training in time management,

managing finances or learning better communication techniques are common ways to control stress. Getting together with friends, having a personal hobby, getting some exercise or going away for the weekend can be effective ways to manage stress. Try some of these additional stress-busters and use the ones that work for you.

Take a break. When you're feeling uptight or grouchy, head out for a walk and catch a breath of fresh air.

Talk about it. Just talking to a friend, family member or co-worker can help you feel better about what's happening in your life.

Plan some "me" time every day. Whether it's a few quiet minutes to read a chapter of a novel or indulge in a relaxing bubble bath, you deserve some time to do the things you enjoy.

Laugh out loud. Share a joke with your colleague or read the daily funnies.

Eat well. See Liz Pearson's tips on pages 8 and 9 of this booklet.

Calm your mind. Try relaxation exercises like meditation, deep breathing

or visualization (closing your eyes and imagining yourself in a relaxed setting).

Don't try to be perfect. The dishes can soak in the sink overnight and taking out the garbage can wait until tomorrow.

Accept help and support. Say "yes" when friends and family offer to lend a helping hand.



A HeartSmart™ woman shares her tips

I get up ½ hour early every morning and go for a power walk. It's my "me" time. The walk wakes me up, clears my head and energizes me for the rest of the day. I feel ready to take on the day's challenges.

Narda, aged 40

Now it's your turn. Write down two HeartSmart™ things you can do this month to help relieve stress.

1.

2.

Today's HeartSmart™ woman knows that protecting her heart can be as easy as having broiled fish for supper tonight. She's the one who takes the stairs at work instead of the elevator, and calls a good friend when a problem comes up. Today's HeartSmart™ woman takes care of herself and recognizes the signs of heart disease. Today's HeartSmart™ woman is you!



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