

WOMEN'S HEARTS...

AND NATURAL MEDICINE FOR BETTER HEALTH.

For women between the ages of 15 and 65 who worry about the health of their hearts and desire some clear guidance on how to use safe, effective natural medicine for prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease.

Ladies: Your heart and blood vessels may be at risk if you:

- Take the Birth Control Pill.
- Are Pre-menopausal, but have diabetes.
- Are Post-menopausal.

Other Risk Factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD) include:

- Smoking cigarettes, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, high blood pressure (HBP), diabetes, high cholesterol, high body fat to low muscle mass ratio, a family history of heart disease, stroke or blood clotting disorder and *STRESS!*

Some Statistics:

- 90% of Canadians have at least one risk factor for CVD.
- 25% of Canadians report a high degree of life stress, *especially women.*
- Heart Disease is the #1 leading cause of death of women in Canada.

Eeech! This kind of information can make your blood pressure rise and your heart sink.

Maybe you've already tried to help yourself by using some of the following methods:

- **Avoidance:** Out of site out of mind. "*What I don't know, will not hurt me. Right?*"
- **Monitoring:** Blood work (cholesterol, inflammation, blood sugar) & BP.
- **BP Medicine:** ACE inhibitors, Beta-Blockers, Calcium Antagonist, Diuretics ("water pill")
- **Anti-Cholesterol Medicine:** Statins.

These methods might be somewhat helpful but can lead you astray in terms of how to get to the bottom of your heart and blood vessel health now and for the long-term.



Let's consider for a moment that almost ALL symptoms of CVD (what you feel in your body) are SILENT!

- In medical texts CVD is referred to as the “silent disease”.
- Unless you go for a physical exam and get your BP and your blood work checked, you may never know if, or to what extent, your heart is at risk for heart attack or stroke.
- *Avoidance does not help your heart.*

Although, BP and anti-cholesterol drugs are somewhat effective because they do take stress off the blood vessels around the heart, body and brain, if you are not supported by the rest of your body's systems and treatment plan, these drugs can lead to problematic side effects and end up harming your heart health.

For example:

- Beta-Blockers and cholesterol (statin) drugs use vitamin B12 in your liver for detoxification. Reduced blood levels of vitamin B12 means increased levels of Homocysteine. Homocysteine exerts a negative effect on the cardiovascular system by increasing the risk of heart disease.
- Cholesterol (statin) drugs decrease your body's ability to make CoQ10. CoQ10 is needed by the muscles of the heart (and body) for energy. Insufficient levels of CoQ10 lead to extra strain on your heart muscle.
- Some ACE inhibitors (BP medicine) cause a dry cough because they exert a constricting/narrowing effect on the bronchial tubes of the lungs. The cough can be a mere annoyance, but if you lose sleep due to it, then your heart health will be at risk.
- Diuretics (“water pill”) can leave you deficient in some key electrolytes needed for healthy heart function. Also, some diuretics negatively affect blood sugar regulation increasing a risk factor for heart disease (diabetes).

Overall, pharmaceutical medicines, although somewhat helpful at times, bring with them

negative side effects and other problems, which miss the mark in helping your heart and blood vessels really get what they need for good health.

FOLLOW THESE THREE KEYS TO HELP YOUR HEART AND BLOOD VESSELS REALLY GET WHAT THEY NEED FOR GOOD HEALTH:

- 1) Learn about your heart and blood vessels: “What is CVD anyway?” Read on.
- 2) See your local naturopathic doctor who can help you diagnose, treat and prevent heart disease using safe, effective natural therapies.
- 3) Eat some chocolate. (“Yes...it's true.... I said eat more chocolate”). Read on.

1) Definition of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD):

Diseases and injury of the Cardiovascular System = the heart, and the blood vessels of the heart, body and brain.

Blood vessels include:

- **Arteries** - “pipes” that carry oxygenated (O₂) blood from the heart to your heart itself, the body and brain.
- **Veins** - “pipes” that collect blood from the tissues of the heart, the body and brain, laden with carbon dioxide (CO₂) and directs it back to the heart to be pumped toward the lungs to exchange CO₂ with O₂ when we breathe.

The blood vessels of the heart, body and brain incur “injury” (damage) by various means: smoking cigarettes, high blood sugar levels, lack of physical activity, stress and high blood pressure (HBP).

Let's look at how HBP injures the cardio-vascular system:

High blood pressure means that the heart is pumping at a high threshold and usually at a faster rhythm, *often due to stress!* The blood pumping out of the heart, at this high pressure, injures the artery walls of the heart

itself, the body and brain. When blood pressure remains high long term (chronic stress and poor lifestyle behaviors) the arteries sustain continuous injury and in their attempt to heal, they build up “gunk” (e.g. calcium deposits, cholesterol = *sticky stuff*). As a result, arteries lose their natural elasticity and become hardened. Also, the “gunk” that builds up narrows the diameter of the artery passage and increases the risk of clots (= a chunk of the “gunky” build up breaking off). Harder arteries, with smaller diameters mean that the blood pumped out of the heart now “hit” the artery walls with a higher pressure (maintaining the cycle of increased blood pressure). This puts a lot of extra strain on the heart muscle because it has to work harder with each beat to get blood through a narrower, harder passage way.

When this cycle continues, three things happen:

- The arteries incur more injury, gunk, hardening and narrowing = more high blood pressure.
- The heart muscle increases in size, which means it has an increase need for blood flow (oxygen).
- The gunky-stuff on the artery walls can break off and produce a “ball of free floating sticky stuff” = a clot.

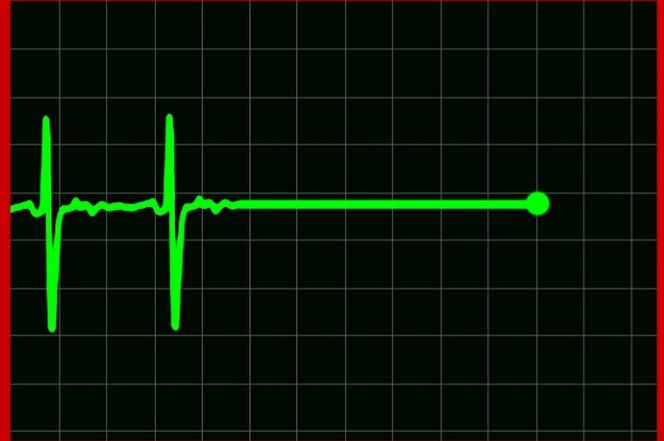
Worst Case Scenario:

Is when this free floating sticky ball of gunk (clot) partially or completely occludes a narrowed artery, obstructing blood flow... *that's big time trouble!*

Eeech!

When this happens in the:

- **Heart:** the result is a heart attack (the muscles of the heart are starved for healthy, oxygenated blood & the heart stops beating).
- **Brain:** the result is a stroke (the brain cannot get oxygenated blood and stops functioning).
- **Body:** muscles and tissue are starved for oxygenated blood = pain and loss of function.



Heart Attack Symptoms:

- Sudden discomfort or pain that does not go away with rest.
- Pain: Chest, neck, jaw, shoulder, arm, back (even the lower back ladies!).
- Feels like: burning, squeezing, heaviness, tightness, pressure or a dull ache (ladies!).
- All are worse with exertion.

Other signs and symptoms:

- Shortness of breath.
- Indigestion and vomiting.
- Cool, clammy skin.
- Anxiety and/or denial.

Stroke Symptoms:

- Headache: sudden, severe or unusual pain.
- Dizziness: loss of balance.
- Vision: trouble with vision.
- Speaking: difficulty speaking or understanding others (confusion).
- Weakness: loss of strength in limbs or numbness of the face, arm or leg.
- All of these symptoms are serious, even if temporary (lasting only seconds)!

What to do in case of a heart attack or stroke:

- Call 911 (emergency) or tell someone to do so and rest as best you can.

2) Naturopathic Doctors guide you toward genuine heart health and wellness by:

- Taking the time to complete a thorough personal and family health history and physical exam (including BP readings and blood work), thus discovering your risk level for CVD.
- Designing a treatment plan that meets your individual heart health needs.
- Employing the therapies of lifestyle counseling (nutrition, exercise, stress reduction), vitamin-mineral supplementation, herbal and homeopathic medicine, Traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

Together these therapies safely and effectively address your body's nutrient needs for better heart and blood vessel function, reduce BP, cholesterol and blood sugar, modify lifestyle behaviors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, dietary & physical activity factors and offer healthier strategies for managing stress.

Naturopathic Doctors help you prevent CVD and promote healthy heart function, while you experience the joy of living with more vitality and body-mind wellness.

3) Chocolate and Heart Health:

It's not just that you love chocolate so much.

Perhaps all along it has been your heart's true love because the heart always knows what's good for it and for us!

Some clinical studies have shown that chocolate exerts a protective effect on cardiovascular status.

- There is a bit of a catch however... *you knew that right?*
- The kind of chocolate your heart and blood vessels need for good health is not the kind you buy in the regular grocery store or even the health food store.
- Even the "70% cocoa, organic, small farm, lovingly tended" chocolate will not do the trick.

Here's Why:

- The heart healthy ingredient found in chocolate is a type of flavanol called a polyphenol.
- Polyphenols are destroyed by high heat.
- Even the "good chocolate" is exposed to high heat in the processing.

The Best Case Scenario:

- Research suggests a daily dose of **RAW CHOCOLATE** = 1/4 to 1/2 oz.
- Yup! *Per day!* If it's the right kind of chocolate you can and should consume it every day!
- Note: a small dose is all it takes to affect your heart and blood vessels in healthy ways.

News like that just might make your heart sing and drop your blood pressure a few points!

For the full scoop:

Look for the article, "The Science: Chocolate's Healthy Affect On Your Heart" in the 'Research' section of our website at: www.healingfoundations.ca

FOLLOW THESE THREE KEYS TO HELP YOUR HEART AND BLOOD VESSELS REALLY GET WHAT THEY NEED FOR GOOD HEALTH, while you experience the joy of living with more energy and ease in your body and mind.



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has helped dozens of women (and men) achieve better cardiovascular function and overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of naturopathic medicine. She offers seminars and writes articles on topics that matter to you. Heidi is passionate about educating you on how your body functions and is focused on guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

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