

FACT SHEET ON THE HEART HEALTH OF CANADIAN WOMEN

MORTALITY¹

HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

The number of female deaths is now equivalent to male deaths (36,823 women and 37,004 men in 2003).

HEART DISEASE

The gap between men and women in the number of deaths from heart disease has narrowed. In 2003, there were 25,024 deaths among Canadian women due to heart disease and 27,950 deaths among men.

STROKE

Each year, more women than men die from stroke. In 2003, 8,951 Canadian women died from stroke (compared to 6,332 men).

RISK FACTORS

SMOKING

- In 2005, 16% of Canadian women and 22% of men aged 15 and older smoke - the lowest level in more than four decades of monitoring smoking rates.²
- Among women aged 20-24 years of age, 23% smoke³
- Among young women who smoke, 83% began before they were 16 years of age⁴
- Oral contraceptive use in combination with smoking can increase the risk of blood clots and stroke.⁵

OBESITY

- 53% of Canadian women aged 18 and over are overweight or obese⁶
- Among girls aged 2 to 17, 26% are overweight or obese⁷
- Obesity increases the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood cholesterol, heart disease and stroke.

PHYSICAL INACTIVITY

- Among Canadian women aged 12 and over, 49% are physically inactive⁸
- Inactivity doubles the risk of developing heart disease, doubles the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, and increases the risk of hypertension by 30%.⁹

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

- 21% of Canadian women age 45 to 64 years of age have been diagnosed with high blood pressure, climbing to 48% among those age 65 and over¹⁰
- A woman with hypertension has a 3.5-times greater risk of developing heart disease than a woman with normal blood pressure.¹¹

DIABETES

- 6% of Canadian women aged 45 to 64 years have been diagnosed with diabetes, climbing to 13% among those 65 and over¹²
- A woman with type 2 diabetes has an 8-fold greater risk of heart disease than a woman without diabetes.¹³

PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

- A quarter (26%) of Canadian women 45-64 years report quite a lot of life stress¹⁴
- Research shows an association between psychosocial and marital stress and heart disease in women.^{15 16}

EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

- 22% of Canadian women aged 20 to 34 drink 5 or more drinks on one occasion, 12 or more times a year. The rate decreases with age, however, dropping to 11%¹⁷ among those 35-44, 8% among those 45-64 and 2% of those 65 and older.
- Excessive alcohol consumption can increase the blood pressure and increase the risk of obesity, some forms of heart disease and stroke.

Sources:

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