



2009

Tracking Heart Disease *and* Stroke *in* Canada

Prevention Highlights

Heart disease and stroke can be prevented.

- Avoiding smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and healthy nutrition, engaging in regular physical activity, avoiding alcohol abuse and effectively managing stress combined with early detection and treatment of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes can greatly reduce the risk of developing heart disease or stroke, as well as the risk of having another heart attack or stroke.

Some progress is being made in reducing risk in the population for CVD.

- From 2000 to 2007, the proportion of self-reported daily smokers has declined by 23%, people report being more physically active during leisure time (increase of 7%), more people report consuming at least five servings of vegetables and fruit each day (increase of 10%), and the proportion of the population who reported being quite a bit or extremely stressed on a daily basis has declined (decrease of 12%). In addition, evidence from Ontario suggests high blood pressure is now better detected and controlled.

Even with these positive changes, many people are still at risk for heart disease and stroke.

- Nine out of ten individuals over the age of 20 years have at least one risk factor for heart disease or stroke. Four in ten have three or more of these risk factors. As the number of risk factors increases, so does the risk of CVD.
- In 2007, 15% of the population were daily smokers.
- About half the population did not spend at least 30 minutes per day engaging in moderate physical activity during leisure time, and 56% of the population still consumed less than five servings of vegetables and fruit each day.
- Since 2000, increases have been seen in the proportion of the population who are overweight (increase of 3%) or obese (increase of 11%), who have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (increase of 25%), and who have been diagnosed with diabetes (increase of 29%). The increase in obesity is contributing to the increase in high blood pressure and diabetes.
- The aging of the population combined with increases in obesity and diabetes are likely to increase the number of people with CVD and associated use of health care services and deaths in the future.
- Several risk factors including smoking, physical inactivity during leisure time, inadequate consumption of vegetables and fruit, high blood pressure, and diabetes were more common among people with lower incomes compared to those with higher incomes.
- Many people who reported having heart disease continued to smoke (14%), were obese (25%), and reported high levels of stress (22%). Over half of those with heart disease were physically inactive during leisure time. These risk factors put them at increased risk of having further heart problems.

