



## QUIT SMOKING

Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health. Smoking decreases the oxygen carried by the blood, puts extra strain on the heart and promotes plaque build-up in arteries. Ask your doctor or PROfile Pharmacist for available resources to help you quit.

## CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure can cause damage to the walls of your blood vessels, making it easier for fatty plaque to build up. Your heart also needs to work harder to pump against high blood pressure. This can cause the heart to eventually weaken. The following will help to keep your blood pressure under control.

- Check and write down your blood pressure regularly - inform your doctor if it goes higher than the targets you and your doctor have set
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Stop smoking
- Exercise regularly
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Maintain a healthy body weight and use less salt

## EAT A LOWER FAT DIET

High fat diets raise blood cholesterol levels, and increase the risk for fatty plaque build-up. Your PROfile Pharmacist can provide you with information on how to reduce your fat intake.

## GET MORE EXERCISE!

Physical activity can help you keep excess pounds off and improve the strength of your heart. If you have a medical condition, ask your doctor about the level of exercise program that would best suit your circumstances.

## DIABETES CONTROL

Diabetes causes circulation problems that increase the risk for heart attack. Taking care of your health and controlling your blood sugar can reduce your risk.



## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

**The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada**  
 222 Queen St., Suite 1402  
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5V9  
 Phone: 613-569-4361  
*Check your local phone listings for the regional office nearest you or visit their website.*  
[www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com)

**Health Canada - Healthy Heart Kit**  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ccdpc-cpcmc/hhk-index.htm](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ccdpc-cpcmc/hhk-index.htm)

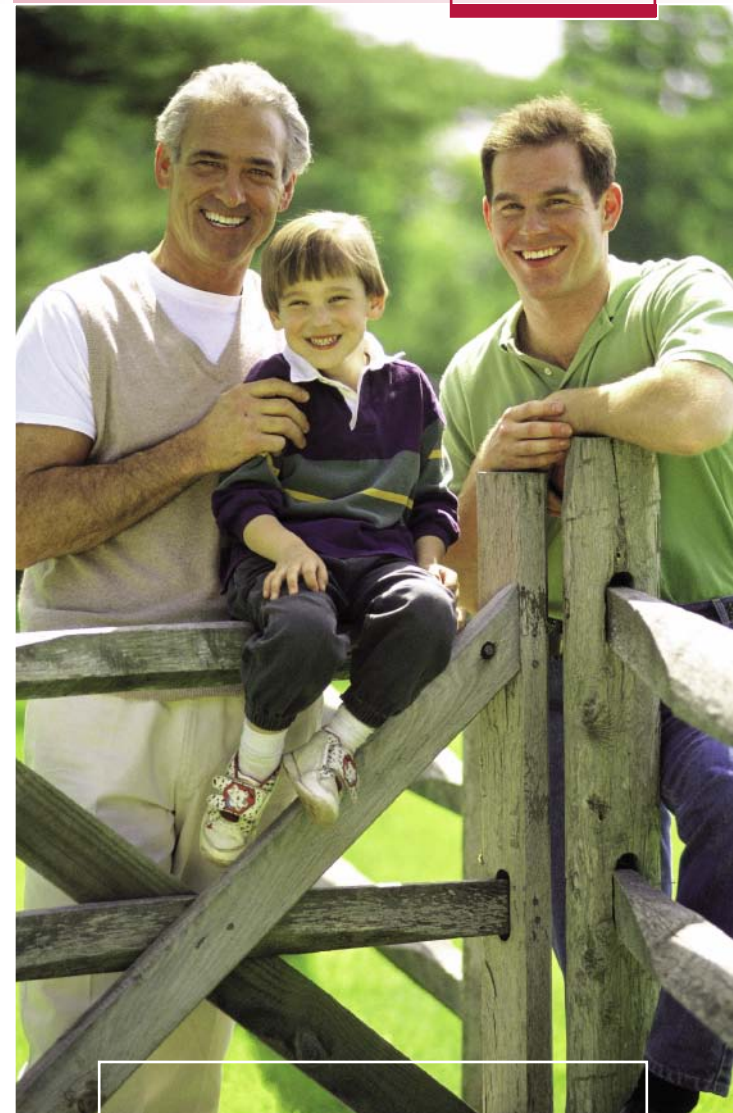
**Canada's Physical Activity Guide**  
[www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com)

**Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating**  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/index_e.html)

[www.gosmokefree.com](http://www.gosmokefree.com)

[www.smokershelplineworks.ca](http://www.smokershelplineworks.ca)

The information found in this PROfile health brochure is of a general nature only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your pharmacist, physician, or other healthcare provider. If you have questions relating to your specific health concerns, please contact your personal healthcare provider.



# Heart Attack

# PROfile

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## WHAT CAUSES A HEART ATTACK?

All of the body's tissues require oxygen to survive. Oxygen is taken in by the lungs and carried throughout the bloodstream. Heart attacks occur when the blood supply to part of the heart muscle is either severely restricted or stopped entirely. Over 90% of the time, a blood clot in a large blood vessel known as a coronary artery causes the blockage of blood flow to the heart. This is most often caused by plaque (a combination of cholesterol and other materials) that has built up on the side of the arteries, breaking free to form the blood clot. Many factors put us at increased risk for plaque build-up (atherosclerosis) and subsequent heart attack.

They include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High fat diet and/or excess cholesterol produced by the liver
- Lack of physical exercise
- Diabetes
- Stress
- Family history of heart disease
- Male over 55 years or female after menopause

Although we cannot change our age or family history, we certainly can do something about many of the risk factors listed. Following are some measures you can take to reduce your risk of having a heart attack.



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEART ATTACK

Over 22,000 Canadians die as a result of a heart attack each year. Over 80% of people admitted to the hospital after a heart attack survive. The chances of survival increase greatly if medical attention is received as soon as possible after symptoms are noticed. Over one-half of all deaths caused by heart attack occur within two hours of the first symptoms or before reaching the hospital. Unfortunately, the average Canadian waits 5 hours before getting help. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to recognize the following signs and symptoms and get help as quickly as possible if you suspect a heart attack:

- **Crushing, squeezing pain in the chest, often accompanied by pains in the left arm and jaw - pain may feel like burning, squeezing, heaviness, tightness or pressure**
- **Breathlessness**
- **Nausea, indigestion, vomiting**
- **Sweating, cool clammy skin**
- **Anxiety, denial**

**It is important to understand that heart attack symptoms are different for different people.** Women in particular may have vague symptoms of chest discomfort or think they are having severe heartburn.



Unless you are being treated for angina and have medications to take (and your doctor has told you when it is time to go to the hospital), treat any chest pain as a medical emergency and get help immediately (e.g. call 911 and rest quietly until help arrives). If you are with someone who is having chest pain, take charge of the situation, as denial will often be an issue. Call 911 and urge the person having the problems to wait quietly.



The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada recommends chewing and swallowing one 325 mg ASA tablet or two of the low dose ASA 81 mg tablets if you think you might be having a heart attack. This will help to begin the process of dissolving a clot that could be blocking an artery that leads to your heart.

**Acetylsalicylic Acid (ASA)** - ASA helps to reduce the clotting ability of the blood. It does this by making certain factors in the blood known as 'platelets' less sticky. Studies have shown that as little as 81 mg daily (the equivalent of a "baby ASA") is as effective as higher doses in people at risk for a heart attack. ASA can increase the risk of unwanted bleeding. Therefore, doctors usually only recommend daily ASA therapy for:

- people at increased risk for a heart attack (over 50 and at least one of: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoker, immediate family history of heart disease)
- people who have had a heart attack, or stroke, or angina.

Guidelines based on many scientific studies suggest that one coated ASA (81 mg - 325 mg) tablet daily is as effective as higher doses for prevention of heart attack. If you have diabetes or other risk factors for heart attack and are not taking one ASA tablet daily, talk with your doctor and PROfile Pharmacist about the benefits and risks in your particular circumstances.

## What about Omega-3?

Omega-3 fatty acids are thought to benefit heart health. Fish (especially "fatty" fish like salmon, lake trout, mackerel, herring and sardines) are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids. Healthy people should aim to eat fish at least twice a week. People with heart disease may benefit from larger amounts of omega-3 fatty acids. Talk with a healthcare provider if you are considering omega-3 supplements.

## What about vitamins or herbal products?

Various vitamins and herbal products have been reported to reduce the risk of heart disease. You deserve to have the best scientific information available regarding the risks and benefits of these products. This will allow you to make an informed decision. *Always talk with your PROfile Pharmacist before purchasing any products claiming to reduce risk of heart attack!*