



BetterLiving

**7 KEYS TO A  
HEALTHY HEART**

# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART

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# table of CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Why a Healthy Heart is Important</b>                   | <b>03</b> |
| <b>7 Keys to a Healthy Heart</b>                          | <b>05</b> |
| - <b>Key #1: Follow a Balanced and Nutrient-Rich Diet</b> | <b>05</b> |
| - <b>Why You Should Eat Heart-Healthy Foods</b>           | <b>06</b> |
| - <b>Heart-Healthy Foods You Should Choose</b>            | <b>07</b> |
| - <b>The Best Natural Heart Supplements</b>               | <b>08</b> |
| - <b>Key #2: Regular Physical Activity</b>                | <b>09</b> |
| - <b>Why Physical Activity is Good For Your Heart</b>     | <b>10</b> |
| - <b>The Best Physical Activity For Your Heart</b>        | <b>11</b> |
| - <b>Key #3: Avoid Unhealthy Habits</b>                   | <b>12</b> |
| - <b>Key #4: Maintain a Healthy Weight</b>                | <b>14</b> |
| - <b>How Obesity Affects Your Heart</b>                   | <b>15</b> |
| - <b>Key #5: Reduce Your Stress</b>                       | <b>16</b> |
| - <b>How to Reduce Stress for a Healthy Heart</b>         | <b>17</b> |
| - <b>Key #6: Monitor and Control Your Cholesterol</b>     | <b>18</b> |
| - <b>Key #7: Monitor and Control Your Blood Pressure</b>  | <b>20</b> |
|   | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Use These Keys for a Healthy Heart</b>                 |           |

# WHY A HEALTHY HEART IS IMPORTANT

**T**he heart is arguably the most important organ we have. It is also surprisingly fragile. Heart disease is the [second-leading cause of death](#) in Canada, with cardiac arrest and stroke killing millions every year.

In most cases, these deaths are entirely preventable.

Because of the demands placed on our hearts daily, we need them to be as strong and as robust as possible. Not only will a healthy heart help you live longer; good cardiac vitality is the engine that drives a fulfilling and active lifestyle.

Getting the most out of life means doing everything you can to nourish and protect your heart. And with so many heart disease risk factors being the result of poor lifestyle choices, the good news is that you are in control of your heart's health.

Let's take a look at the seven keys to a healthy heart, and learn how you can give your heart the love and care it deserves.



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #1

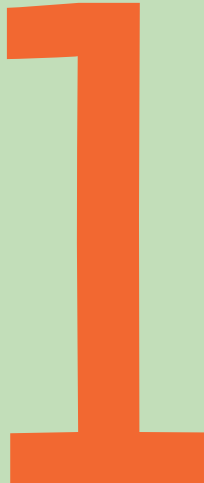
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FOLLOW A BALANCED AND  
NUTRIENT-RICH DIET



# “Follow a Balanced and Nutrient-Rich Diet”

KEY



The foods you eat have an enormous impact on the health of your heart. The correlation between diet and health is well-known, and dietary choices can be one of the major differences between cardiac vitality and an unhealthy heart.

According to the [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada](#), 80% of premature heart disease and stroke cases can be prevented by positive life habits that include a healthy diet.

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## Why You Should Eat Heart-Healthy Foods?

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Your heart is at the centre of a highly-sophisticated circulatory system. As the nexus for the body’s blood and nutrient delivery system, it’s continually exposed to chemicals and other substances that are either directly absorbed from or byproducts of the foods you eat.

Foods that are high in vitamins and nutrients will help replenish and nourish your heart muscles and tissues. However, a nutrient-poor diet high in bad fats, toxins, sodium, and other detrimental substances will promote disease.



## Heart-Healthy Foods You Should Choose

The American Heart Association [recommends](#) dietary choices that maximize nutritional intake while reducing unhealthy substances. These foods will also help reduce cholesterol and control your weight.

### Fruits and Vegetables

In addition to being rich sources of vitamins and minerals, fruits and vegetables supply much-needed dietary fibre - which in turn promotes a “full” feeling that helps control overeating.

They’re typically high in vitamins A and C, provide electrolyte support, and (when consumed fresh) are low in sodium - all key elements to maintaining a healthy blood pressure.

Certain vegetables such as red, yellow, and orange varieties are an excellent source of carotenoids, while certain green vegetables including asparagus provide beta-carotene and folate.

### Whole Grains

Whole grains are important sources of dietary fibre, helping to control blood pressure, high cholesterol and blood sugar. Since these nutrients are destroyed during the refining process, avoid white flours altogether and opt for whole grains including:

- a. Whole-grain flour
- b. Brown rice, barley, and quinoa
- c. Whole-grain pasta
- d. Oatmeal



### Magnesium Rich -Foods

Whole grains are important sources of dietary fibre, helping to control blood pressure, high cholesterol and blood sugar. Since these nutrients are destroyed during the refining process, avoid white flours altogether and opt for whole grains including:

#### Lean/Skinless Fish and Poultry

Fish and poultry are essential sources of protein, which is one of the body's critical building blocks for healthy tissues. Certain fish such as salmon and tuna are rich in Omega-3s fatty acids and other healthy oils.

Choose skinless and lean cuts when preparing fish or chicken, and avoid cooking them in unhealthy saturated fats.

#### Nuts and Legumes

Nuts and legumes such as almonds, walnuts, and kidney beans are rich in a variety of healthy substances including fibre and a spectrum of B-vitamins.

## The Best Natural Heart Supplements

Research [suggests](#) that certain supplements can help reduce cholesterol levels and improve blood pressure, factors which place you at a higher risk for heart disease and stroke.

These natural cholesterol-lowering [supplements](#) can help boost the health of your heart:

- a. Fibre** - Readily found in fruits and vegetables, fibre is available in supplement form for those looking to boost their intake.
- b. Sterols and Stanols** - These substances are found in nuts and can help with LDL cholesterol levels
- c. Coenzyme Q10** - A naturally-occurring enzyme that helps lower blood pressure

For more heart-healthy nutrition and dietary supplements advice, [contact](#) the expert Better Living team.





# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #2

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## REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



# Regular Physical Activity

KEY

# 2

There's no doubt that physical activity is important to maintaining a healthy heart. And it does not have to be intense to be effective; the American Heart Association [defines physical activity](#) as anything that makes you move your body and burns calories.

## Why Physical Activity is Good For Your Heart

Like any muscle, your heart gets stronger the harder it works. In addition to improving cardiac strength, physical activity can:

- a. Lower your blood pressure
- b. Reduce unhealthy LDL cholesterol
- c. Increase healthy HDL cholesterol



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## The Best Physical Activity For Your Heart

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Physical activity can come in many forms - from taking a brisk walk for 30 minutes a day to swimming, biking, jogging, or climbing stairs. And while it does not hurt, you don't need to take out a gym membership to engage in an active lifestyle.

For overall cardiovascular health, the American Heart Association [recommends the following activity guidelines:](#)

- a. 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity at least five days per week **OR**
- b. 25 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity at least three days per week **OR**
- c. Moderate to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least two days per week.



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #3

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## AVOID UNHEALTHY HABITS



# Avoid Unhealthy Habits



**2.4 million Canadians** live with ischemic heart disease. While the causes vary, unhealthy lifestyle habits such as excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, and poor sleep habits directly increase your heart attack and stroke risks. To make sure your heart stays healthy, it's essential that you avoid these health risks:

## Smoking

Smoking is a leading cause and risk factor for a number of deadly diseases. According to the [British Heart Foundation](#), smoking:

- a. Damages artery linings causing a fatty buildup that narrows the artery
- b. Introduces carbon monoxide into your bloodstream, forcing the heart to work harder
- c. Introduces nicotine into your bloodstream which raises your blood pressure
- d. Makes your blood more likely to clot, increasing heart attack and stroke risk

## Excessive Alcohol Consumption

Excessive alcohol consumption, whether you drink consistently or engage in binge drinking, can lead to serious health conditions and affect the health of your heart.

Drinking more than a moderate amount can raise your blood pressure and cause [cardiomyopathy](#), a progressive heart disease resulting in damage to the organ.

## Lack of Sleep

There is a growing body of evidence to support the fact that insufficient sleep can lead to a host of health conditions, particularly when it comes to the heart. According to [Harvard Medical School](#):

Short sleep - less than six hours per night — appears to be especially hazardous to your heart health, says Dr. Susan Redline, the Peter C. Farrell Professor of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School. “Sleep-deprived people have higher blood levels of stress hormones and substances that indicate inflammation, a key player in cardiovascular disease. Even a single night of insufficient sleep can perturb your system.”



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #4

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## MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT



# Maintain a Healthy Weight



KEY

Obesity has long been associated with increased heart attack risks due to higher cholesterol and blood pressure levels found in overweight individuals. It is estimated that obese, middle-aged men have a [60% increased risk of death from heart attack](#) than their non-obese peers.

However, [a study conducted by the University of Glasgow](#) suggests that obesity is itself a direct heart attack risk, independent of other conditions it may cause.

## How Obesity Affects Your Heart

Obesity is a significant factor in the development of these cardiac health risks:

- a. High blood pressure
- b. Diabetes
- c. High cholesterol
- d. Damaged heart tissues from toxic substances such as adipokines and cytokines
- e. Elevated cardiac stress from increased blood volume

Controlling your weight is an essential part of maintaining a healthy heart, and even shedding a few pounds can be beneficial. It's believed that [a sustained loss of between 3% to 5%](#) of your body weight can reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels as well as reverse some obesity-related heart damage.

## Diabetes

The American Heart Association reports that [68% of people age 65 or older with diabetes](#) die from some form of heart disease, suggesting a strong correlation between diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Obesity is the single greatest indicator of type 2 diabetes, as nearly [90% of people with the condition are overweight](#) or have obesity.

Lifestyle changes including diet and physical activity can reduce the chances of developing type 2 diabetes by 40% to 50%, underscoring the importance of following healthy life habits.

To learn more about healthy weight loss and maintenance, [contact the Better Living healthcare team.](#)



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #5

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REDUCE YOUR STRESS





# Reduce Your Stress



**W**ith our busy and often intense lives, it has never been more important to practice ways to reduce your stress levels. And now, recent research suggests that the health of your heart may depend on it.

A [Harvard Medical School study](#) found that heightened activity in the amygdala region of the brain - the source of intense emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety - can trigger mechanisms in the body that increase your heart attack risk.

Stress, it was determined, activates infection-fighting white blood cells which can cause arterial inflammation leading to a buildup of dangerous plaque.

## How to Reduce Stress for a Healthy Heart

There are many things you can do to induce relaxation and relieve stress and anxiety. These include:

- a. Progressive relaxation techniques
- b. Supplements
- c. Yoga
- d. Reiki
- e. Meditation
- d. Breathing exercises
- e. Exercise
- f. Massage therapy
- g. Reducing caffeine intake
- h. Listening to music

**For more ways to bring about a sense of calm relaxation into your life, [contact the Better Living team](#) for expert natural health advice.**



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #6

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MONITOR AND CONTROL  
YOUR CHOLESTEROL



# Monitor and Control Your Cholesterol

# 6

KEY

**Y**ou might not realize that cholesterol is an important substance your liver produces to help create new cells. It's also found in certain foods that when eaten cause the liver to produce too much cholesterol, resulting in elevated levels in our bloodstreams.

There are two types: "good" cholesterol (HDL) and "bad" cholesterol (LDL). It is the LDL kind that builds up and clogs arteries, and people with high LDL levels have [twice the risk](#) of developing heart disease.

There are several ways you can reduce and control your LDL cholesterol levels:

- Eat heart-healthy foods
- Dietary supplements
- Exercise
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Adopt healthy lifestyle choices

[Talk to the expert natural health team](#) at Better Living to learn how to reduce and maintain healthy cholesterol levels.



# 7 KEYS TO A HEALTHY HEART



KEY #7

MONITOR AND CONTROL YOUR  
BLOOD PRESSURE



# Monitor and Control Your Blood Pressure



KEY

**H**igh blood pressure or hypertension affects [5.3 million Canadians](#) and is a significant cause of heart attack and stroke. To make matters worse, many people with hypertension either aren't aware or don't have it under control.

## The main causes of high blood pressure are:

1. Diabetes
2. Smoking
3. A diet high in sodium
4. A lack of physical activity
5. Obesity
6. Excessive alcohol consumption
7. High levels of stress

As with cholesterol, your blood pressure can usually be lowered and maintained at a healthy level by following healthy lifestyle habits - eating properly, exercising, and avoiding risky habits such as smoking and excessive drinking.

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it measured by a health professional. Regular monitoring is critical to the health of your heart - so make sure you have your blood pressure checked regularly.



# USE THESE KEYS FOR A HEALTHY HEART



**Y**ou only have one heart, and your health and longevity depend on treating it well. If you **follow a healthy diet**, are **physically active**, **avoid risky habits**, **manage your weight**, **reduce stress**, and **keep your cholesterol** and **blood pressure in check**, you'll be well on your way to living a long and rewarding life.

Better Living is a Toronto full-service wellness clinic and health store providing natural health care services and advice to people from all walks of life. We offer supplements, nutritional counselling, and health foods, along with a range of services including massage therapy and testing services to support your healthy and active lifestyle.

[Contact our friendly and dedicated team](#) of health experts today to get the guidance and all-natural solutions you need for a lifetime of heart health and vitality.



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