

# Blood Pressure Action Plan™

## Take action... Now!



It's deceptive. Unlike other risk factors for heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure is difficult to detect. You can't see it; you can't feel it.

But you can control it using the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Blood Pressure Action Plan™, an invaluable tool that identifies your health risks and provides a customized plan with proven, practical tips.

Maybe you already have hypertension, or maybe you are sitting on the cusp, like so many others now diagnosed with borderline hypertension.

Either way, creating an action plan is imperative.

Your first step is to create a risk profile. You'll have a clearer picture of the lifestyle modifications it might take to curb your risk and simple solutions to bring your blood pressure down into the safety zone.

The Blood Pressure Action Plan™ can help you reach your goal of living a longer and healthier life. Simply log onto [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) and click on the blood pressure icon.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

The Heart and Stroke Foundation's Dr. Norm Campbell answers your most frequently asked questions about high blood pressure.

**"There's a machine in our supermarket offering free blood pressure readings. How accurate are machines like this?"**

The machines increasingly found in supermarkets or drug stores may be calibrated to give a correct reading.

If such a machine gives you a reading indicating that you have high blood pressure, go see your doctor as soon as possible to have your blood pressure accurately measured. Remember, all Canadians over age 20 should have their blood pressure checked regularly, by a professional, at least every two years.

**"What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?"**

There are none —that's why hypertension is called the silent killer. It doubles or even triples your risk of heart disease and stroke without you feeling a thing.

**"Systolic, diastolic — what do these terms mean?"**

Blood pressure is a measure of the force of the blood against the walls of your blood vessels. This pressure is measured in units called mm Hg (a measurement that is short for millimetres of mercury). Systolic blood pressure is the pressure when the heart contracts and forces blood into the blood vessels. Diastolic blood pressure measures the pressure when the heart is relaxed. Just so you understand the numbers, systolic is the top reading, diastolic is the bottom. (As in 140/90 —which is a high reading.)

**"I am overweight. Can that cause high blood pressure?"**

It certainly can. Even a slight gain in weight can affect your blood pressure for the worse. Blood pressure is actually reduced by 2/1 mm Hg for each kg of weight loss.

**"I like to drink a few beers. Will that affect my blood pressure?"**

Yes. More than 14 alcoholic drinks weekly for men and more than nine drinks weekly for women can be a major contribution to high blood pressure. Eight per cent of hypertension in males in Canada is caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

**"What's a healthy diet to keep my weight and blood pressure down?"**

The DASH diet is high in fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts and legumes and low-fat dairy products. It is low in saturated (bad) fat and salt. Log on to [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) for more information.

**"I've followed the recommended lifestyle changes but my blood pressure stays too high. What should I do next?"**

Fortunately there is a wide range of medications for treating high blood pressure. And they can be tailored to your individual needs. Unpleasant side effects are extremely rare and can be countered by changes in prescription. Ask your doctor.

**For heart disease, stroke and lifestyle information, visit us at [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca).**



A NEWSLETTER FOR HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION VOLUNTEERS

FALL/WINTER 2004

### WHAT'S INSIDE

- Volunteering is a Family Affair
- A Weighty Issue
- Fresh Thinking About Your Health

## Thanks to you we're making a remarkable difference

February is probably one of the coldest months of our Canadian year. But something heart-warming happens each year at this time: thousands of Canadians, just like you, volunteer their time by going out in their communities and collecting donations on behalf of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. You see, with each door that opens, and each person that opens his or her heart to donate, we get a little bit closer to understanding the root causes of heart disease and stroke. And we couldn't do it without your support.

The difference you can make as a volunteer is remarkable. Thanks to your personal efforts, we continue to be a leading funder of heart and stroke

research that is truly making a difference.

With hundreds of hospital and university-based research teams working across the country, we are gaining knowledge that allows for earlier diagnoses and better treatments, while providing Canadians with critical information on how to protect their health.

This year, we are looking forward to keeping the momentum going by making this February one of our most outstanding ever, thanks to remarkable people like you who put their hearts into volunteering.



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HEART AND STROKE  
FOUNDATION VOLUNTEER

## One person truly can make a difference!

You often hear people say, 'what difference can one person make?' As a Heart and Stroke Foundation volunteer, you know that the difference one person can make is truly remarkable. Thanks to the many volunteers who gave their time and their commitment to volunteering last February, we raised nearly \$10 million.

These donations are now helping to fund invaluable research and an increased public awareness that may help reduce the risk for millions of Canadians. Thanks again for being a part of this extraordinary effort.



Finding answers. For life.

To find out if you're at risk of heart attack or stroke.

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



Finding answers. For life.

## Volunteering is a family affair



The Heart and Stroke Foundation depends on literally hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the country to go into their neighbourhoods during the month of February, Heart Month, and collect funds on our behalf. Volunteers like you are at the heart of everything we are able to accomplish.

Every volunteer has a story about why they choose to lend a hand. Very often, it is a desire to give back to the community, a desire to help people understand the importance of healthy living that can prevent heart disease and stroke, or because a family member or friend has been touched by these diseases. We have one story in particular we'd like to share with you.

Steve and Ann-Marie Schneider are a family that really takes volunteering to heart. Ann-Marie has been a high school teacher for 10 years and Steve is in the housewares business. They have a growing family that includes three-year-old Sarah, 19-month-old Isabella, and one-month-old Sophia. Even though their lives are full, the Schneiders have made a commitment to volunteer their time to support the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

"Volunteering was something we decided we wanted to do as a family to begin with," says Ann-Marie. "We wanted to be involved with an organization that affects the lives and health of many people. We feel that if we have the time, we should give. It's something we just want to do."

The Schneiders believe in visiting homes in their neighbourhood. "It's a good idea, because it's not a stranger coming to your door," explains Ann-Marie. "These days, people are often hesitant to open their door. So when it's a neighbour coming round year after year, they know you. It's also a great way to introduce ourselves as neighbours and to get to know them better."

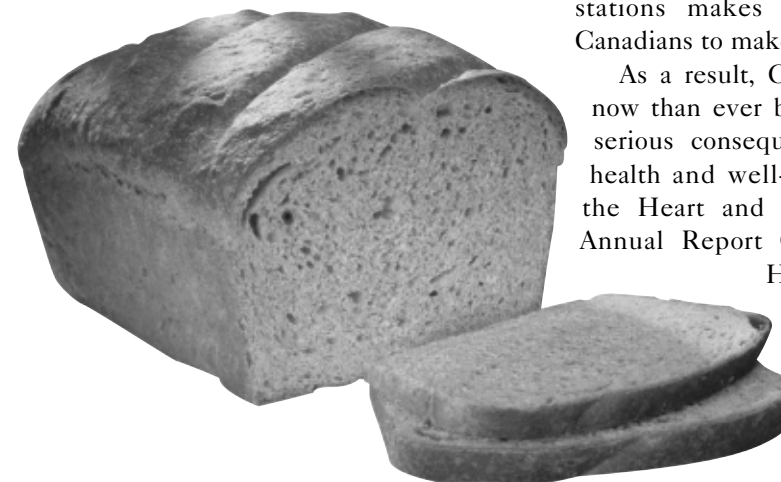
Ann-Marie and Steve believe volunteering is a family affair. That's why, even though it's February when they are out knocking on doors, and it's almost always cold and snowy, they bundle their children up to go with them. "Last February, I was pregnant with Sophia and we took Sarah and Isabella out in a stroller," says Ann-Marie.

When asked why her family is so committed to volunteering, the Schneiders explain that it makes them feel good to contribute because it's a good cause they both believe in. "You may not realize how much it helps other people until you're in need of help yourself," Ann-Marie continues. "It's a great way to give something back. Like that movie 'Pay it Forward', you never know when it will be your turn to benefit from another's kindness. It's a nice way to be proactive and to help someone who is in need now."

We believe that what Ann-Marie, Steve and the thousands of volunteers across the country do is remarkable. It's

their commitment towards volunteering that allows the Heart and Stroke Foundation to continue moving forward in its work to reduce the impact of heart disease and stroke. The difference you make is truly remarkable.

## A Weighty issue



## Visit us online for fresh thinking about your health



The Heart and Stroke Foundation is committed to helping Canadians lead a healthy lifestyle. That's why when you're out this Heart Month, why not let donors know about our Web site, [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca). You'll find information that really does make a difference. For example, the Web site offers a number of health information resources, including an easy BMI test to see how you rate on the healthy weight scale, fresh thinking about healthy lifestyles, valuable interactive risk-assessment tools, exercise plans, wise food choices and healthy eating tips.

### Tell donors about healthy tools available online

Check out these valuable sections at [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) by clicking on Healthy Living:

**MANAGE YOUR STRESS** — How do you cope? Each of us has our own way of responding to stress. Understand your personal style and how to create strategies that work for you to reduce stress levels.

**GET ACTIVE** — Learn why physical activity is so important to your family's heart health. Manage this risk factor with these tips on active living.

**INTERACTIVE TOOLS** — Take a quiz. Get instant feedback! Our quizzes and assessment tools are a great way to learn more about your heart health.

**FAMILY HEALTH** — Medical experts and health professionals have helped us develop practical information and guidance for your entire family. Check out our special resources for women, children and patient caregivers.

**HEART-HEALTHY RECIPES** — Try our delicious heart-healthy recipes! From Hoisin-Glazed Chicken Satays to Apple Crisp Strudel, find an idea for every course.

In today's fast paced, fast food world, managing spiraling weight gain is a topic that is of growing concern to Canadians, and one in which the Heart and Stroke Foundation is playing an important role.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation points out that over 56% of Canadians are physically inactive. Plus, the convenience of calorie-dense foods – as opposed to healthier choices such as vegetables and fruit – in fast food restaurants, convenience stores and gas stations makes it even harder for Canadians to make healthy choices.

As a result, Canadians are heavier now than ever before – and that has serious consequences for long-term health and well-being. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Annual Report Card on Canadians'

Health, the increasing number of overweight and obese Canadians now poses one of the

greatest threats ever to public health in this country.

"The prevalence of this serious health risk is almost exactly what we faced with tobacco use 30 years ago – when half of Canadians smoked," says Dr. Anthony Graham, cardiologist and Heart and Stroke Foundation spokesperson. "Since that time, smoking rates have dropped by half – at the same time, we are confronted by the reality that almost half (47%) of Canadians are overweight or obese."

Obesity is an issue that we're trying to help Canadians do something about. You see, we believe the more informed you are, the more healthy choices you can make.

### Increasing fibre can lower risk of coronary heart disease

With this subject on so many people's minds, it's a great opportunity to let donors know that the Heart and Stroke Foundation Web site offers a range of articles and tools on healthy eating,

living, and weight management. One such article discusses introducing more fibre into your diet. "Dietary fibre is a group of carbohydrates found in plants," says Rosie Schwartz, dietitian for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. "Because your body can't break it down, it does not add calories to your diet. Whole grain foods – those that contain the outer core, bran and germ component parts of the grain – are rich in fibre."

Refined grains, such as white flour, have been processed to remove the component parts of the whole grain. The result is that refined grains are more quickly digested and can therefore leave us hungrier than if we ate the whole-grain counterpart. This increases the likelihood of overeating. It seems that increasing your fibre intake not only helps control weight, it can also lower cholesterol and your risk of coronary heart disease. But, increase your fibre intake slowly and be sure to accompany fibre-rich meals with lots of water.