

Heart Disease in Older Adults

More Canadians are affected by heart disease as they get older. About two-thirds of Canadians who live with Ischemic heart disease are 65 years or older.

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Types of Heart Disease

Heart disease describes a range of conditions that affect the heart, including:

Coronary artery disease - caused by the buildup of fats, cholesterol, and other substances in and on the walls of your heart arteries. Coronary artery disease or atherosclerosis is the most common kind of heart disease.

Vascular disease - similar to coronary artery disease but extends to the blood vessels outside the heart and can occur anywhere in the body.

Arrhythmias - abnormal heartbeats that can start in different parts of your heart and occur irregularly, too fast, or too slow.

Congenital heart disease - a problem with how your heart forms before birth, preventing normal blood flow through your heart and to the rest of your body.

Cardiomyopathy - conditions that affect your heart muscle, causing it to be less efficient at pumping blood to the rest of the body.

Heart valve disease - conditions that prevent one or more of the valves in your heart from operating right. There are different types of heart valve disease: stenosis, regurgitation, prolapse, and atresia.

Congestive heart failure - condition that occurs when the heart cannot pump blood effectively, resulting in inadequate blood supply to the body. Over time, blood and fluids can accumulate in the lungs and legs.

Prevalence in Canada

According to 2017–2018 data from the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System:

- 1 in 12 Canadian adults aged 20 and over live with diagnosed heart disease
- Every hour, about 14 Canadian adults aged 20 and over with diagnosed heart disease die

The death rate is:

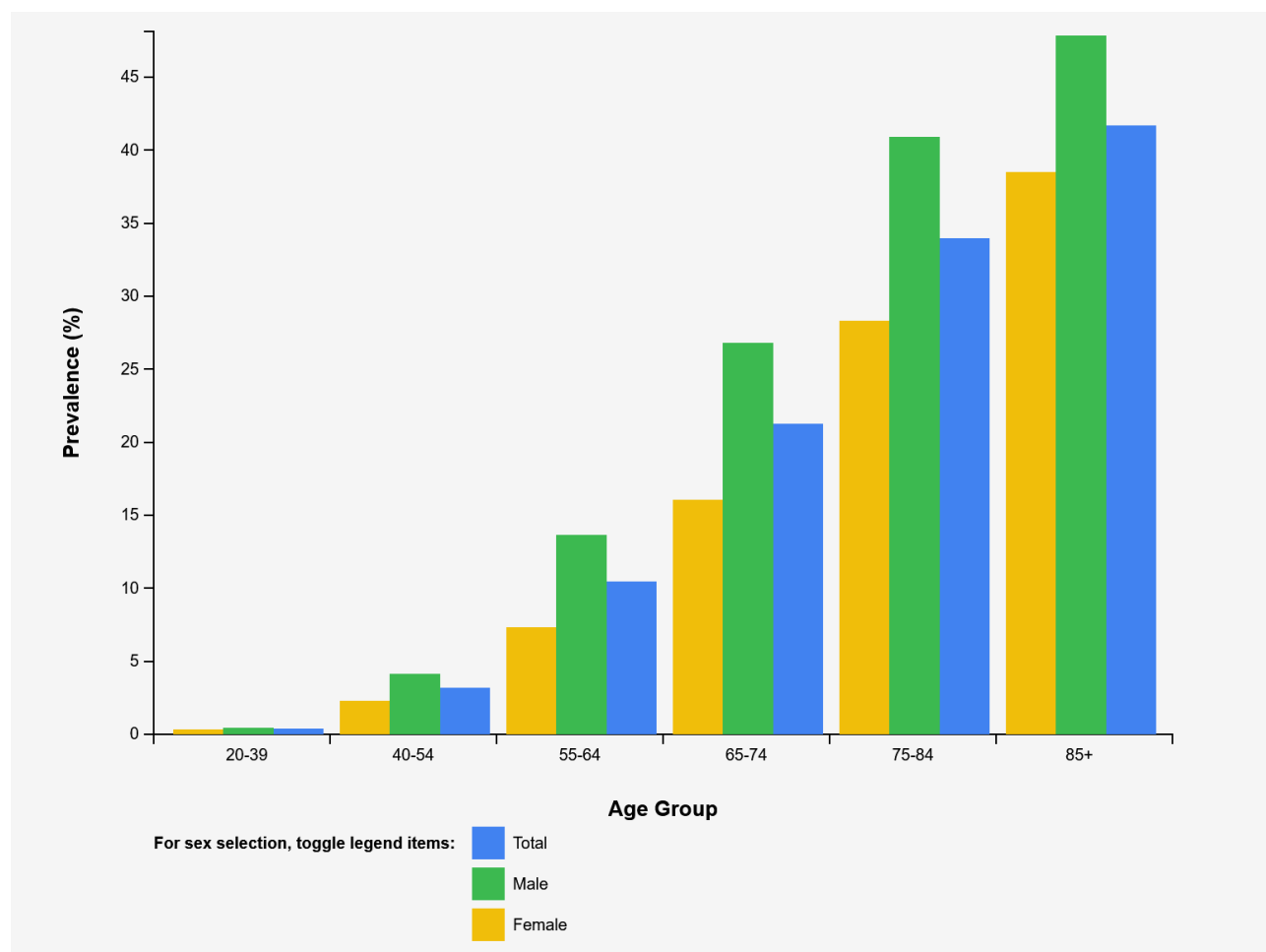
- Over 6 times higher among adults age 40+ with diagnosed heart failure versus those without.

Heart disease affects men and women differently.

- Men are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack than women
- Men are newly diagnosed with heart disease about 10 years younger than women.

As Canadians age, more of them are affected by heart disease. Approximately two-thirds of Canadians live with Ischemic Heart Disease, and over 80% of those with heart failure are aged 65 and older.

CHART: Ischemic Heart Disease by Age Group (Canada 2012-13)



Source: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/datalab/heart-disease-blog.html>

What are the risk factors for heart disease?

Risk factors for heart disease in older adults include:

1. The natural aging process causes the heart and blood vessels to stiffen.
2. High blood pressure is the most common risk factor for individuals over 75.
3. Elevated cholesterol levels.
4. Use of tobacco products and other substances.
5. Sedentary lifestyle and poor dietary choices.
6. Family history of heart disease.
7. Conditions such as type 2 diabetes and obesity.
8. Sleep issues, including sleep apnea and insomnia, which can negatively impact heart health over time.

Can heart disease be prevented?

You can reduce your risk of certain types of heart disease by following these guidelines:

1. **Maintain a healthy weight** for your body and actively manage conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.
3. **Keep active** - Adults aged 65 and older should aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week, divided into sessions of at least 10 minutes. They should also include muscle and bone-strengthening exercises at least twice a week.
4. **Work on lowering your stress levels.** If you're experiencing stress, talk to your healthcare provider, especially if you have risk factors like obesity or high blood pressure.
5. **Heart-healthy eating** involves a balanced mix of foods consumed regularly. It emphasizes whole grains, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and healthy fats, while being

low in unhealthy fats, salt, and added sugars.

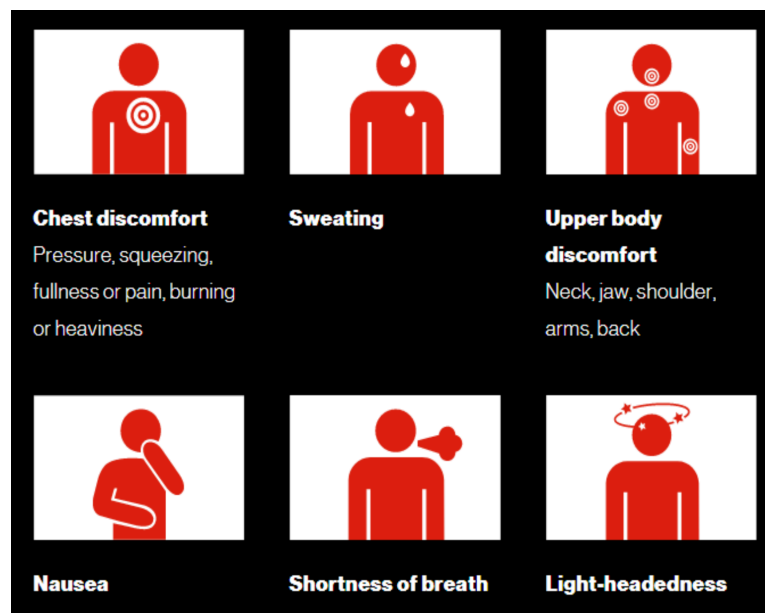
6. **Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol consumption.**

Signs of a Heart Attack

Heart disease can lead to serious medical emergencies, such as heart attacks, strokes, and cardiac arrest. It is crucial to recognize the signs of a heart attack and a stroke.

A heart attack may present symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, and pain that radiates to the arm, jaw, neck, or shoulders. Other possible symptoms include nausea, vomiting, and feelings of anxiety.

CHART - Signs of a heart attack



Source: <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/heart-disease/conditions/heart-attack>

Good News

According to the Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System data from 2000–2001 to 2017–2018:

- the number of Canadian adults newly diagnosed with heart disease declined from 217,600 to 162,730
- the death rate, or the number of deaths per 1,000 individuals with a known heart disease, has decreased by 21%

Research suggests that the decline in heart disease is due to advancements in prevention and treatment, including reduced smoking rates, better hypertension management, widespread statin use to lower cholesterol, and the timely administration of thrombolysis and stents in cases of acute coronary syndrome to limit or prevent heart attacks.

Sources:

Heart Disease in Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/heart-disease-canada.html>

Heart Disease

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-disease/symptoms-causes/syc-20353118>

Heart Disease

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24129-heart-disease>

Types of Heart Disease

<https://www.heartandstroke.ca/heart-disease/what-is-heart-disease/types-of-heart-disease>

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for ages 65+

https://www.heartandstroke.ca/-/media/pdf-files/healthy-living/csep_guidelines_handbook.pdf?rev=-1

How to follow a heart healthy eating pattern

<https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/healthy-living/healthy-eating/heart-healthy-eating-pattern>

Decline in Cardiovascular Mortality: Possible Causes and Implications

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5268076/>

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