

Message from Parliamentary Secretary Linda Larson



This February, we recognize Heart Month, an important time to learn more about heart health.

Cardiovascular disease is a common term used for a number of medical conditions that affect the heart and/or blood vessels. Coronary heart disease, heart failure, hardening of the arteries and irregular heartbeat are all examples of cardiovascular disease.

Despite the fact that in many cases cardiovascular disease can be preventable through physical activity, healthy diet and lifestyle changes, this is still the second-leading cause of death in B.C., claiming approximately 6,000 British Columbians a year.

Risks for developing cardiovascular disease include: smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and obesity, as well as risk factors that we cannot control such as age, gender, ethnicity and family history.

Though government is committed to supporting British Columbians by providing state-of-the-art cardiac care to thousands of patients per year, each of us must also do what we can to prevent getting cardiovascular disease in the first place.

These three lifestyle changes can dramatically reduce your risk and can help keep your heart healthy:

- **Quit smoking:** Smoking is linked to virtually all major causes of death and disease in Canada and quitting smoking is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of heart disease or stroke. B.C.'s Smoking Cessation Program and QuitNow services provide 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week advice and support in quitting and free smoking cessation aids. Please call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or visit: www.quitnow.ca for more information and to get started.
- **Physical activity:** No matter how busy life gets, it is important to remember that getting out and doing some activity is better than doing none at all. With each step you take you are doing your heart a favour and are helping to increase your overall health. For tips on what physical activity might be best for you call the Physical Activity Line toll-free 1 877 725-1149. Email: info@physicalactivityline.com Website: www.physicalactivityline.com.
- **Healthy eating:** A diet high in fruits, vegetables and fibre and low in sodium and saturated and trans fat is ideal for getting the nutrition your body needs and for keeping your heart healthy. To speak to a registered dietitian or to order a free copy of the Healthy Eating for Seniors handbook, please call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. You may also download a PDF copy of the handbook from the SeniorsBC website at: www.gov.bc.ca/seniorshealthyeating. More information and interactive tools designed to help you make informed healthy food and beverages choices are available by visiting: www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/eating.

Starting this month, commit to keeping active and make your heart health a priority.



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For more information about government programs and services for older adults please visit the SeniorsBC website at: www.SeniorsBC.ca.

Yours truly,

Linda Larson
Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors to the Minister of Health