

# HEALTHY HEART NEWS

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St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital's Cardiovascular Institute is committed to you and our community. We pride ourselves on being an engaged partner with the many constituencies that we serve. As part of our commitment to meeting your heart health needs, we have developed this quarterly newsletter filled with information that can improve the quality of, and in some cases, help save your life. If there are topics that you would like to see covered in future editions, please e-mail Beverly Keefer, Director of Cardiovascular Services, Cardiac Cath and Interventional Radiology at [bkeefer@slchospital.org](mailto:bkeefer@slchospital.org).

## STAYING WELL DURING WINTER MONTHS

Brrr... it's cold outside! The winter months and frosty cold weather can be tough on our bodies! It is important to take care of ourselves all through the cold season.

*Follow these tips on how to stay healthy no matter what the weather outside is —*

1. **Get the right amount of sleep** — The recommendation is for 7-9 hours of sleep a night.
2. **Eat a good breakfast** — Breakfast is the most important meal of the day no matter the time of year. Eating a good breakfast helps boost the intake to help you feel fuller and avoid unhealthy snacking.
3. **Drink more milk** — Milk and other dairy products provide a calcium boost and help strengthen your immune system which is handy in the winter when you are more likely to catch a cold.
4. **Keep drinking water** — You're less likely to feel thirsty in winter than in summer months, but not drinking can raise your risk of dehydration. Staying hydrated is important all year long!
5. **Eat more fruits and vegetables** — Maintain a healthy diet all year round to maintain a healthy weight.
6. **Get moving** — Despite the temptation to stay under a warm blanket it is important to exercise each day.
7. **Wash your hands often**

Maintaining a healthy life style all year round boosts the body's resistance to serious illness and can add years to your life. Committing to living a healthy lifestyle can not only extend life expectancy, but has also been connected to overall happiness!

## COLD WEATHER & CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Cold weather is hard on the heart. Blood vessels constrict, which raises blood pressure. Frigid temperatures increase the strain on the heart, and too much physical exertion can worsen the burden and cause heart problems. The winter season usually brings snow. People with cardiovascular disease should avoid sudden exertion like lifting a heavy shovel full of snow. Even walking through heavy snow or snow drifts can place a strain on the heart.

*To help make snow removal safer — remember to:*

- Give yourself a break. Take frequent rest breaks during shoveling so you don't over-stress your heart.
- Pay attention to how your body feels while resting. If you are experiencing any pain discomfort in your chest — do not resume the activity and call for help.
- Don't drink alcohol before or immediately after shoveling. Alcohol may increase a person's sensation of warmth and may cause a person to underestimate the extra strain on the heart
- Consult a doctor if you have a medical concern with your heart in order to determine how much exertional activity you should be doing. Prescribing physical activity in the right "dosage" is a highly effective prescription for the prevention, treatment and management of many of the most common chronic health conditions encountered in clinical practice.
- Be aware of the dangers of hypothermia

Many people are not conditioned to the physical stress of vigorous outdoor activities and do not know the potential dangers of being outdoors in the cold weather. All people need to take certain precautions to avoid hypothermia. It is important to dress warm, and wear layers of clothing. This will trap air between the layers and form a protective insulation. It is important to wear a hat or a scarf. Keep your hands and feet warm too, as they are quick to lose heat.



## HOLIDAY STRESS: HAVE A PLAN!

Nutrition and diet are always important to talk about in terms of cardiac health, but it is especially key during the holidays. Studies suggest there is an increase in cardiac events during the winter months with a peak around the holiday season. In addition, there are significantly more admissions to the hospital due to a cardiac event following Christmas Day when compared to other holidays. This could be related to overeating, emotional stress of the holidays, less time for exercise, or postponing doctors' appointments to make time to celebrate the holidays.

Taking the time to think about your heart health prior to the holiday will help keep you on track for a happy healthy season. Beware of holiday parties as special holiday events often bring extra helpings of high-fat foods. Remember to exercise, even in the hustle and bustle of the season, but don't let all the extra holiday commitments prevent you from getting enough rest.

Remember that the New Year is just around the corner! Lay out realistic steps for the months ahead to help keep you healthy throughout the year.

## ENJOY GUILT FREE HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Worried enjoying a traditional holiday meal and party foods with family and friends will destroy healthful food habits nurtured all year? The good news is any foods, even beloved holiday dishes, can fit into a healthful eating plan with practice and planning.



For starters, trying to lose weight during the holidays may be a self-defeating goal.

Instead of trying to shed pounds, strive to maintain your current weight.

### PARTY PREGAME

Prepare small, lower-calorie meals during the day so you can eat celebration foods without overdoing your calorie intake for the day. Enjoy a small, low-calorie snack such as fruit or whole-grain toast before you head out the door to curb hunger and avoid overeating at the party.

### UPON ARRIVAL

Remember, conversation is calorie-free, and you may eat less if you settle into the festivities instead of heading straight to the buffet. Ask for sparkling water and lime, which doesn't supply calories, and start mingling.

### POST-TIME ACTIVITY

Balance "party calories" with more physical activity. Even though it may be cold outside, these everyday activities can take only 10 minutes at a time, and will help you get moving during the holidays.

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Play actively with your kids, grandkids or pets.
- After dinner, take a walk with your family — even if it's just around the block.
- Catch up with housework: wash the windows, vacuum or sweep