



**Competitive Edge**  
PHYSIOTHERAPY & SPORTS CONDITIONING

# FEBRUARY 2021

## FEBRUARY IS HEART MONTH!

Let's talk about your heart! Did you know February is heart month? While we celebrate Valentine's Day in February, we also show some love to our heart health.

### WHAT IS HEART DISEASE?

Heart disease is a group of conditions that affect the structure and function of the heart. **Coronary artery disease** occurs when the arteries harden (atherosclerosis) and it is the most common kind of heart disease known to cause heart attacks and chest pain (angina). **Vascular disease** reduces blood flow to the heart due to problems with other blood vessels. **Arrhythmias** are heart rhythm disorders where the heart beats too slowly or too quickly. **Structural heart disease** are abnormalities of the heart structure (valves, walls, muscles, blood vessels). **Heart failure** occurs when the heart becomes damaged or weakened caused by heart attack or high blood pressure.

**9 out of 10 Canadians have at least 1 risk factor for heart disease and stroke.**

Risk factors:

#### YOU CANNOT CHANGE

- genetics
- family history
- age
- sex
- race/ethnicity

#### YOU CAN CHANGE

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- diabetes
- overweight/obesity
- unhealthy diet
- physical inactivity
- excessive alcohol and/or drug use



Did you know 80% of premature heart disease and stroke can be prevented by changing your behaviours? Healthy eating and exercise play an important role in preventing heart disease and are habits you can change easily. Visit the [Heart and Stroke Foundation](#) to learn more.

Here are some tips to help change your habits so that you can love your heart longer!

## EAT MORE VEGETABLES AND FRUITS



I may recommend this a lot, but that's because we just don't eat enough vegetables and fruits in our diet. Vegetables and fruits are low in calories and fat and are high in fibre so they keep you full longer. They are also **high in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals that play a huge anti-inflammatory role in reducing chronic inflammation, which increases your risk for chronic diseases like heart disease.** Aim to fill half your plate with vegetables and think of the rainbow when you're grocery shopping.

## REDUCE PROCESSED, PREPACKAGED, AND FAST FOODS

The key here is to reduce your salt, sugar, fat and artificial ingredients that raise blood sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol which leads to weight gain and inflammation.

The recommended guideline for sodium is **1500mg/day (for those with high blood pressure) to a maximum of 2300mg/day for adults.** On average we consume about 3400mg/day which is substantially more than the recommendations. Hidden sources of sodium are: cold cuts and cured meats, pizza/cheese, canned soup, bread, precooked meat, seasoning mixes, chips and snack foods. Be mindful of the salt you add during cooking and at the table as 1 tsp of salt = 2300mg sodium. Try spices and herbs to flavour your food.



The recommended guideline for added sugar is **no more than 10% of your daily calorie intake from added sugar.** That means for an intake of 1500 calories/day, the limit is 150 calories from added sugar/day - this is equivalent to the amount of sugar in a can of coke! Added sugar sources are: desserts, baked goods, pop, juice, specialty hot/cold drinks, and alcoholic drinks.

Prepare more meals at home so that you have control of the ingredients going into your food, and the portion sizes you may consume. Spend a few hours on your time off to plan and prepare meals for the week. Bring lunch to work to not only eat healthier but save money! If you have kids, get them involved with meal prep. Pick 1-2 new recipes per week to maintain excitement in your diet.

## EAT MORE SOLUBLE FIBRE

Soluble fibre act like a gel and **binds to cholesterol to prevent it from being reabsorbed into the blood stream.** Reach for more whole grains like old fashion oats, barely, quinoa, wheat berries, lentils, and legumes, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, and psyllium (Metamucil has psyllium).



## ADD MORE FLAVONOIDS TO YOUR DIET

If you're craving chocolate, at least **70% cacao dark chocolate** is a good choice because it has more percent cocoa (that's why it's bitter) which is richer in flavonoids - a nutrient that has antioxidant powers. Limited research has shown that **flavonoids lower blood pressure, improve blood flow and make blood platelets less sticky and able to clot.** Of course you want to be mindful of the other ingredients with the chocolate. Flavonoids are also found in **cranberries, apples, berries, citrus fruits, peanuts and soy, onions, herbs and spices, tea, red wine,** among other foods.



# CHOOSE HEART HEALTHY FATS

Heart healthy fats are **unsaturated fats that reduce bad cholesterol (LDL) and increases good cholesterol (HDL)**. Examples are extra virgin olive oil, avocado and its oil, walnuts, flax, hemp and chia seeds, beans/legumes and fatty fish (salmon, sardine, herring, mackerel). They contain omega-3 fatty acids, which have anti-inflammatory properties. Saturated fat will increase your bad cholesterol, to lower it, choose more leaner cuts of meats/poultry, low fat dairy, and non-hydrogenated margarine instead of butter.



# LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE AND TOBACCO USE

Excessive alcohol intake can increase your blood pressure and thus contribute to the development of heart disease. **Limit your alcohol drinks to no more than 2 drinks per day up to 10 drinks per week for women, and 3 drinks per day up to 15 drinks per week for men.**



Smoking contributes to the buildup of plaque in arteries which can lead to blood clots and reduces the amount of oxygen in blood. This means your heart will have to work harder to supply the body. **Smokers are 2x more likely to have a heart attack or stroke and are 2x more likely to die from them.** To help quit smoking, first find the source of why you smoke (e.g. to manage stress, depression or anxiety, help you concentrate or control appetite, or for social reasons because your family or friends do it). Within 24 hours of quitting, your risk of having a stroke or heart attack reduces.

# MOVE MORE!

Exercising helps maintain a healthy weight, improves metabolism, strengthen bones, improve immune system and improves your mood. It's no wonder it plays an important role in your health! Exercising doesn't have to mean going to the gym, using weights, or buying workout equipment.

Simple ways to move more include:

- Taking the stairs instead of elevator/escalator - start with 1 flight of stairs and soon you'll be ready for 2!
- Park your car at the far end of the parking lot
- If you take public transit, get off at the stop before your destination and walk the rest of the way
- Doing housework
- If you have a dog, take brisk walks to get both of your hearts in good shape
- Schedule an after-dinner walk with your family to create quality time together
- In winter: sledding/tobogganing, ice skating, snow shoeing, skiing, building snowmen/snow forts

No matter how you choose to move, aim for a goal of **at least 150 minutes each week** or 20-30 minutes per day.







# OATMEAL FLAX CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

## PREP TIME

Prep 25 m | Cook 10 m | Total Time 35 m

Makes 48 servings

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup old fashion oats
- 1/2 cup ground flax seeds
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup non-hydrogenated margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 3/4 cup 70% Cacao Dark Chocolate Chips (or darker)

## PROCEDURE

- 1 Preheat oven to 375 °F (190 °C).
- 2 In a medium bowl, combine the flour, oats, flax seeds, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
- 3 In a large bowl, cream the margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla, mixing well.
- 4 Gradually beat in flour mixture. Stir in chocolate chips.
- 5 Drop heaping tablespoons of dough onto lined baking sheet, leaving 2-inches apart each cookie. Gently press down on the heap to flatten, as they don't spread a lot.
- 6 Bake for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool for 1-2 minutes on baking sheet, then remove to wire racks to cool completely. Store in an air-tight container for up to 3 days.

## NUTRITION INFORMATION

*Per 1 serving (1 cookie, 20g each)*

**Calories** 90

**Fat** 5.7 g

**Saturated** 1.7 g

**Polyunsaturated** 1.5 g

**Monounsaturated** 0.8 g

**Sodium** 56.3 mg

**Carbohydrates** 11 g

**Fiber** 1.4 g

**Sugars** 5.5 g

**Protein** 1.5 g

**Vitamin A** 5.1%      **Calcium** 7.1%

**Potassium** 15 mg      **Iron** 5.5%

## TIPS

You can add 1/2 cup chopped walnuts along with the chocolate chips for extra fibre. If you're not a fan of chocolate, you can substitute it with 3/4 cup raisins or other dried fruits or nuts. This recipe is full of heart healthy ingredients, and makes a great dessert when you're craving something sweet!