

## Healthy Heart, Healthy Body

The heart is an amazing organ. This muscle is the powerhouse that keeps us alive and helps us function at our best as athletes. A strong heart not only promotes a longer, better quality of life, it propels us up the stairs with our groceries and it enables us to finish a marathon with a personal best.

### How does the heart work?

The deoxygenated, blue blood received by the heart is pumped into the lungs to be reloaded with oxygen. From here the oxygen-rich, red blood returns to the heart and is pumped out to our cells and muscles, delivering oxygen and nutrients, and removing waste products for disposal.

### Did you know?

- Every heartbeat pumps about ¼ cup of blood for a total of over 9,000 litres per day
- The heart has the ability to beat over 3 billion times in a person's life.
- The average heart is a bit larger than a fist and weighs about the same as an apple
- Women's hearts beat a bit faster than men's; the average woman has a heart rate of 78 beats per minute, the average man 70 beats per minute

When we exercise, we strengthen our heart muscle. A strong, fit heart pumps out more blood with each beat resulting in a slower heart rate and a more efficient delivery of nutrients to the body. And a healthy diet helps keep our blood vessels plaque free, lessening the risk of heart attack and stroke.

What more can you do to “❤ your heart”?

Share your heart healthy habits at #TriFitHealthyHeart

The following are 8 heart healthy habits that may surprise you:

- Get the right amount of sleep. Most people need between 7-8 hours to achieve the protective effects of sleep
- Cuddle. Physical contact reduces stress by releasing oxytocin, which reduces blood pressure.
- Laugh a little. Laughter can dilate blood vessels, increasing blood flow and reducing blood pressure.
- Turn off the TV. Watching more than 4 hours of TV per day increases risk of death by heart disease by 80%.
- Have a cup of joe. Coffee has been linked to lower risk of heart rhythm issues.
- Get a dog. Man's best friend can help lower stress, blood pressure and manage weight.
- Go meatless. Studies show a vegetarian diet can decrease heart disease risk by 32%
- Visit the water cooler. Sitting can lead to health concerns, so head to the water cooler to stay hydrated and break up your day.

For additional resources, visit [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



Sources:

<http://www.northshore.org/link/dc3cb35bf5b14eb4bf53951cd74360d4.aspx?id=81525>,

<http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20572496,00.html>