



Empowering women to take control of their health:

Our vision to address women's unique risks for heart disease and stroke through **awareness, assessment and action**

A Case for Support

Beat health inequity.





Creating a lifesaving call to action for women's heart and brain health

Heart disease and stroke are the number one causes of premature death in women, claiming tens of thousands of lives across Canada every year. And while the problem – and effort has gone into solving it – is massive, there is still much more to be done.

We know women face unique risk factors that endanger their heart and brain health across every life stage, all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and even socioeconomic status. However, a lack of education and awareness among women, healthcare providers and the general public about these sex- and gender-specific risks has created significant barriers to effectively evaluating and safeguarding women's health, now and into the future.

But we are changing this. Through our ongoing public awareness and education efforts, Heart & Stroke has already made significant progress in bringing much-needed attention to women's heart and brain health. Now, we are ready to take this to the next level, with a lifesaving call to action that capitalizes and expands upon the work done so far to make an impact across a woman's entire health journey – from awareness to assessment to action.

Through a comprehensive, multi-year initiative launching alongside International Women's Day in March 2024, Heart & Stroke will be the catalyst for shining a bright spotlight on women's specific risks and empowering them to become champions of their own heart and brain health. Through public awareness and education, we will continue informing women about the unique challenges that are putting their health and lives at risk. Through innovative assessment tools and resources, we will enable them to recognize and understand their own risk factors and symptoms. And through strategic partnerships with corporate, community and healthcare partners, we will amplify our impact to prevent and manage heart disease and stroke for women across Canada.

With the support and collaboration of generous donors and strategic partners who share our vision, Heart & Stroke has committed **to investing \$5 million in making this initiative possible**. By working together to expand and evolve our efforts, we can create a future where women are empowered to take control of their own heart and brain health and, in spite of their unique risks, live longer, healthier, and happier lives.

Together, we will **beat health inequity** and make this future possible.



A heartbreaking reality

Although 9-out-of-10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke, sex- and gender-related differences between men and women can mean a vastly different experience.

Important life stages unique to women bring an increased risk of heart disease and stroke – whether early menarche in puberty, complications during pregnancy, menopause, or hypertension, high cholesterol and atrial fibrillation later in life. Established risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol continue to be the most prevalent risk factors in both men and women, while still impacting women differently.

We also know these risks can be uniquely heightened for a number of communities, such as Indigenous, Black or South Asian populations, particularly when considering the systemic barriers they face that create immense difficulties in accessing quality care. Many of these challenges and consequences are also present for women of lower socioeconomic status.

Despite there being more understanding than ever before, **many women are largely unaware of the unique risks they face for heart disease and stroke** and often do not know what they should be looking for or what certain symptoms may mean. A historical gap in research focusing on women's unique risk factors also means many healthcare providers lack the specific expertise and experience needed to adequately assess and address them.

Heart & Stroke has identified a major problem. To properly protect women's heart and brain health, we need to rewrite this story.



32,000

Women die from heart disease or stroke in Canada each year



45%

Higher likelihood of women dying within 30 days following a heart attack than men



34%

More women die of stroke in Canada than men



11%

Of women can name one or more of the women's specific risk factors for heart disease and stroke



53%

Of women who experience a heart attack have their symptoms go unrecognized or downplayed

It's time for change

As the leading national charity dedicated to beating heart disease and stroke, Heart & Stroke is committed to raising awareness about the unique risks women face, while simultaneously working with our partners to drive the research, knowledge translation and systems change needed to ensure these risks are effectively addressed.

During the first phase of our Women's Initiative, we worked to elevate the conversation around women's heart and brain health – and last year alone, we made significant progress in shifting the public's focus towards this topic by capitalizing on critical milestones throughout the year. Through a concerted effort across 2023, including Heart Month in February and Stroke Month in June, we observed an increase in overall awareness and engagement (see right).

We still have more work to do. Heart & Stroke is prepared to build upon our already-impactful public awareness and education efforts and capitalize on our position as the number-one Canadian charity for top-of-mind awareness to take our impact even further.

We need all women in Canada to know their risks, understand them and be prepared to act in response to them. We need information about these sex- and gender-specific risks to be accessible and to reach the women who face the greatest barriers. We need to cultivate sustainable change by prioritizing heart and brain health for women of all ages and backgrounds.

Enough is enough. Heart & Stroke will *put power directly into the hands of women* through the knowledge, tools and resources required to understand their unique heart disease and stroke risks, advocate on behalf of their own health and take action to ensure they and their loved ones continue to thrive.



Looking back at a successful 2023

This past year, Heart & Stroke achieved **exceptional reach and significant results** across Canada through several public awareness deliverables, including:

94 million

Reach of the **System failure: Healthcare inequities continue to leave women's heart and brain health behind** report from February 2023

50 million

Reach of the **Stroke and mental health: The invisible and inequitable effects on women** report from June 2023

10.9 million

Organic social impressions on Heart & Stroke content during Heart Month 2023



Empowering women to take control of their heart and brain health

As part of the second phase of our Women's Initiative, Heart & Stroke will build upon recent successes and bolster our efforts to bring women's unique risk factors to the forefront across Canada with a **comprehensive, multi-year initiative focused on driving awareness, assessment and action.**

This three-year initiative will expand upon Heart & Stroke's ongoing efforts to raise public awareness and education for women's heart and brain health. Through a three-step "call to action," we will facilitate access for all women across Canada to the knowledge, resources, support and opportunities needed to not only understand the risk factors, but also enable them to play an active role in evaluating and managing their own health and even preventing their specific risks.

Our call to action

1 AWARE

"I know there are women's specific risk factors for heart disease and stroke."

We will translate lifesaving research to mobilize knowledge on risk factors across a range of high-impact channels, reaching women where they are already active and receptive to our messaging.

2 ASSESS

"I know my own specific risk factors for heart disease and stroke."

We will create a catalogue of innovative, technology-enriched tools and resources that allow women to identify, assess and eventually act upon their unique risk factors across life stages and other identifiers.

3 ACTION

"I am taking action to manage or prevent my known risks."

We will enable the health system supports required for women to capitalize on their awareness and knowledge and take an active role in preventing and managing risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

Our approach

To mobilize our call to action and realize our lifesaving vision for addressing women's unique risk factors for heart disease and stroke, Heart & Stroke will employ the following tactics:



Health Promotion

Initiating a **paid media campaign** that leverages paid, earned and social media (incl. influencers) to grow awareness, educate women on their unique risk factors and drive traffic to our online hub.



Knowledge & Tools

Establishing an **enhanced online women's risk factors hub**, creating a user-centric journey where women can access information and assess their own risk factors and symptoms.



Strategic Partnerships

Collaborating with **corporate, community and healthcare partners** to create tangible opportunities that equip women to address, prevent and manage heart disease and stroke.

Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond

As an important first step in mobilizing our call to action and driving awareness, assessment and action for women's heart and brain health, Heart & Stroke will launch the first phase of a three-year public awareness and education effort on **March 4, 2024**, in tandem with International Women's Day on March 8.

Our goals

Through this public awareness and education effort, Heart & Stroke will aim to:

- Grab the attention of women across Canada in our target audiences and motivate them to want to learn more about women's (and their own) unique risk factors for heart disease and stroke;
- Directly link women to relevant and trusted information on our online hub to help them understand and manage their unique risk factors, assess their own health and feel confident and empowered to make their own decisions regarding next steps; and,
- Create a rallying point for our corporate, community and healthcare partners to amplify and build off our messaging to engage directly with their own stakeholders.

Our framework

Through critical insight derived from direct consultation and focus groups, Heart & Stroke has developed a strategic framework for how we plan to implement this effort, how we will maximize its impact for women at risk and how it will complement and support our full call to action:

Who will we **target**?

We will bring awareness and education to all women in Canada, focusing on unique risk factors that affect them at key life stages – particularly those in their reproductive years and menopause, or from marginalized communities, where knowledge today can impact the rest of their lives.

What will it **look like**?

We will focus on strong, empowering, positive and down-to-earth messaging while representing women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and all age groups. We will highlight the importance of self-advocacy and self-assessment by providing women with evidence-based tools and resources.

How it will it **work**?

We will create value through compelling content and resources packaged via our website and digital health partners. Information will disseminate to the broader public through mass-media campaigns while community champions engage marginalized communities.

What is **success**?

We will assess our performance over the next three years and guide our evolving strategy using the following key success measures: reach and engagement, audience reaction and satisfaction, growth in knowledge, changes in behaviours and overall mission impact.

By reviewing the results of each phase of this initiative and iterating our approach, this effort will also lay the foundation for Heart & Stroke to continually build our messaging, improve our outreach and elevate the impact of our efforts. Along with learnings derived from the other strategic priorities of the Women's Initiative – including our work to enable research innovation through the Heart & Stroke Research Centres of Excellence and empower Canada's top researchers through the Personnel Awards – we will align the content on our Women's Risk Factors Hub to match the unique needs of all women in Canada while helping them take control of their own health.



An opportunity to make an impact

We cannot do this alone. Heart & Stroke is looking for the support of individuals, organizations and institutions ready to address the sex- and gender-specific disparities in heart and brain health and help us deliver upon **our commitment to investing more than \$5 million to make this initiative possible.**

To this end, we have created opportunities for donors and corporate, community and healthcare partners to show their support across our call to action – from awareness to assessment to action – and ensure we have the resources, capital and partnerships required to achieve and exceed our intended impact. Though there are two options presented below, each of these avenues represents countless possibilities for how visionary leaders can work with Heart & Stroke to shine the spotlight on women's unique risk factors, empower women to become champions of their own health and, ultimately, **save lives.**



Make an investment

Make a transformational gift to help Heart & Stroke realize the full vision for this call to action to address women's unique and specific risk factors for heart disease and stroke – over life stages and within marginalized communities.



Become a partner

Work collaboratively with Heart & Stroke to deliver the greatest impact in driving awareness, assessment and action; partnerships can include (but are not limited to):

- Donations of in-kind media to assist in the dissemination of awareness work on women's risk factors to a wider audience;
- Amplification of messaging through various channels (i.e., print, digital, television, social media, etc.) or provincial and national campaigns;
- Targeted asset distribution, specifically to marginalized communities and equity-deserving groups;
- Employee giving and corporate matching opportunities; or,
- Innovative assessment tools, community outreach and healthcare delivery initiatives to support and empower women in evaluating preventing and managing their risks.

Join us in empowering women to take control of their own heart and brain health.

Through a comprehensive, multi-year initiative to drive awareness, assessment and action, we can **beat health inequity** by shining a spotlight on women's unique risk factors and paving the way for all women in Canada to prevent, manage and overcome heart disease and stroke – once and for all.

We would be pleased to discuss opportunities and ideas for how you can support this initiative in a way that aligns with your philanthropic goals and helps make our vision for the future for women's heart and brain health possible.

Beat health inequity.
heartandstroke.ca

