



The Mortar & Pestle

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Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare

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WHAT IS YOUR CARDIOVASCULAR RISK?

Cardiovascular disease causes one third of the deaths in Canada – more than any other illness. February is Heart Month and to celebrate, we are checking in on your heart health.

This month, we are offering Framingham Cardiovascular Risk Assessments.

The Framingham Risk Assessment will tell us whether or not you have a low (<10%), medium (10-20%), or high (>30%) 10 year risk of having a major cardiovascular disease event (I.e. Heart attack). It will also determine if you need to make lifestyle changes or be placed on drug therapy to reduce your risk.

What information is used to assess your Cardiovascular Risk?

During this assessment, one of our pharmacists will check your blood pressure and assess your cholesterol levels (this may require sending you for a blood test if you have not had one recently). Using this information, along with your age, gender, smoking status and diabetes status, your 10 year cardiovascular risk will be calculated.

What happens if you are found to be at risk?

If you are found to be in the medium to high risk categories or have high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol, your pharmacist will help you to make any necessary lifestyle changes. They will also notify your family physician of the findings and make any necessary drug therapy recommendations.

Who should participate in our Heart Health Clinic?

We recommend participating in our screening clinic if you **any ONE** of the following:

- You are **male** and over **40 years of age**.
- You are **female** and **over 50** or **post-menopausal**.
- You have **heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure** or had a **stroke**.
- Your **waist measures more than** 102 centimetres (40 inches) **for men** or 88 centimetres (35 inches) **for women**. For persons of Chinese or South Asian descent, if your waist measures more than 90 centimetres (35 inches) for men or 80 centimetres (32 inches) for women.
- You have a **family history of heart disease or stroke**.



If you would like to have your cardiovascular risk assessed at our heart health clinic, stop by the pharmacy this month on Tuesday's or Thursdays between 10 AM and 4 PM and ask us to check on the health of your heart. Don't wait until you become another statistic!

For more information on heart health visit www.heartandstroke.com

CHOLESTEROL: THE GOOD AND THE BAD

When you have high cholesterol, you are at a higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke. The problem is, you likely don't feel sick. Heart disease is a silent killer, meaning there are no symptoms to warn you that you are sick. The only way to know if you have plaque build up in your arteries is to have your blood cholesterol levels measured by having a simple blood test done.

When you have your "cholesterol levels" measured, typically the doctor or pharmacist is ordering a lipid panel. The lipid panel consists of 4 main components:

- 1) Total cholesterol - the total amount of cholesterol in your blood, including both the good and the bad cholesterol.
- 2) Low Density Lipoprotein (LDL) – this cholesterol is the known as the bad cholesterol. When LDL levels in the blood are too high they lead to plaque build up in artery walls.
- 3) High Density Lipoprotein (HDL) – this cholesterol is known as the good cholesterol. We want HDL levels to be high as HDL carries the LDL away from the artery walls.
- 4) Triglycerides - are the most common type of fat in your body. When elevated they appear to speed up the process of plaque build up in artery walls.

If you are found to have elevated cholesterol or triglycerides, the doctor/pharmacist will recommend changes to your diet and exercise. Dietary changes include avoiding saturated fats and refined carbohydrates and increasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. It is also possible that you may require medication to help lower your cholesterol.

If you are concerned about your cholesterol levels, or would like to know what they are, speak with one of our pharmacists today!

VITAMIN SPOTLIGHT: NIACIN

Niacin (Vitamin B3) is a water soluble vitamin found in meat, beans, cereal grains, fish and other niacin fortified foods. In the early 20th century, niacin deficiency (Pellegra) was common. Symptoms of niacin deficiency include dermatitis, diarrhea and dementia. Many foods are now fortified with niacin and this has virtually eliminated niacin deficiency in developed countries.

In high doses, niacin is currently used to decrease triglycerides and LDL cholesterol as well as increase HDL cholesterol. Niacin should only be used at high doses if recommended by a health care professional. Niacin must be started at a low dose and slowly increased as it can lead to flushing, burning, tingling and sometimes pain without slow dose increases. At Stafford pharmacy we recommend **Metagenics Niatain**. This formulation is an extended release formulation which minimizes many of the side effects of niacin.

If niacin has been recommended to help lower triglycerides or LDL cholesterol, be cautious when purchasing the so called "no-flush" niacin. This "no-flush" niacin sometimes contains a different form of niacin. This formulation does not have the same cholesterol lowering effect.

Niacin should not be used in combination with other cholesterol lowering medications, as it can increase side effects. It may also interact with other medication. Always talk to your pharmacist before starting a vitamin or herbal supplement to make sure that it is safe for you!

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