

# Women must recognize their own heart disease risk

Heart health isn't just an issue for men, doctors warn

Johanna Weidner, Record staff

**CAMBRIDGE** — Women vigilantly protect the men in their lives from heart disease, but often overlook their own symptoms out of a mistaken belief the disease mostly strikes middle-aged men.

"The most recent studies show women grossly underestimate their own risk for heart disease," said Cambridge cardiologist Dr. Shekhar Pandey.

"This is an equal opportunity killer."

Men and women can learn about how to reduce the risk of heart disease, including a personalized risk assessment, and get practical tips on healthy living at the free annual Healthy Heart Day being held in Cambridge this Saturday. Speakers include a dietitian, kinesiologist, exercise physiologist, stress councillor, yoga instructor, family doctor, cardiologist and cardiac nurses.

The focus of this year's event is women, but anyone can benefit from the expert advice, said Pandey, who organizes the event now in its eighth year.

People from across Waterloo Region are invited to join, including both young and old and people with or without heart disease.

"Unfortunately we're all at risk for heart disease," Pandey said.

He said 70 per cent of men and 65 per cent of women will suffer a cardiovascular event, including heart attack and stroke. Thankfully, Pandey said, it's never too late to take action to reduce the risk.

"Change at any age has an impact," said Pandey, who founded the Cambridge Cardiac Care Centre.

Even little changes are beneficial. For instance, a person who cannot completely quit smoking would still reduce heart disease risk by at least dropping to fewer cigarettes a day.

"Small steps actually have a cumulatively major impact," he said.

The best part is that adopting healthy habits to avoid heart disease also lowers the chances of cancer and other chronic diseases.

Pandey would like to see improved awareness about heart disease in women, especially since it can be more damaging and deadly for a woman compared to men of the same age.

"I really do think of it almost as a conspiracy. Both women them-

## Event information

► Healthy Heart Day is being held on Saturday — April 21 — from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School on Saginaw Parkway.

► Experts will talk about how to reduce heart disease risk and share practical tips on healthy living. There will also be demonstrations on stress reduction and exercise. People can also get a personalized risk assessment.

► There will be door prizes, light snack and refreshments.

► Register by emailing your name and phone number to healthyheartday@rogers.com or call 519-624-3511 after 5 p.m.

► There is a walk before starting at 7:30 a.m.

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selves and their health care providers often underestimate the impact of cardiovascular disease in women," he said.

Heart disease in women can be more aggressive, although Pandey said it's not really clear why. Part of the reason may be simply that women's hearts are smaller, which means less plaque buildup is needed to cause problems because the arteries are already more narrow. Some risk factors also have a

greater impact on women, including smoking and diabetes. Certain health issues found only in women, such as polycystic ovary syndrome and the pregnancy related conditions gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia, can also boost risk.

Pandey said women focus so much energy on taking care of their family, that their own health is neglected. Yet women who look after themselves, making time for balanced eating, physical activity and stress reduction, help the whole family by instilling healthy habits.

"When women take care of themselves, they actually take care of their whole family," Pandey said.

One session at the Saturday event will focus on family health. Encouraging healthy habits early is crucial considering the health problems now plaguing children because of little exercise and poor diet, including high blood pressure and early onset type 2 diabetes.

"Things we used to see in 50-year-olds we're now seeing in 10- and 12-year-olds," Pandey said. "We're seeing the tip of the iceberg. It's looming."

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## MP believes local CBC radio station will go ahead

Joanne Shuttleworth

**GUELPH** — Guelph MP Frank Valeriote certainly understands why people would be skeptical that the CBC will continue with its plan to open a regional radio station in Kitchener this year given that the federal government has cut its operating budget by 10 per cent — \$115 million — over the next three years.


But the opposition Liberal MP has it on good authority, he says, that the plans for a regional radio station that will serve listeners in Guelph and Wellington County as well as Kitchener and Waterloo Region will go ahead.

"I do understand the concern, so that's why I asked," Valeriote said in a phone interview over the weekend. "And I'm told that the station will be postponed by a few months, but that it will still go ahead."

The CBC announced last week that 256 jobs in English-language programming will be lost over the next three years, part of a total of 650 positions being eliminated across the entire corporation. There will be sweeping cuts in programming in both television and radio.

Valeriote said he's received many calls and emails from residents who want a local CBC radio station and he's been in contact with CBC to ensure Guelph and Wellington County will be included in the Kitchener station's news coverage. "The CBC provides a voice for the region and highlights the people and the issues that would otherwise not have had a voice," he said. "That resonates with a lot of people."


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