

MY Heart IN MY Hands

A Step by Step Guide to Hosting a *Gathering of the Hearts*

A *Gathering of the Hearts* is a fun, educational, and empowering mini-event. During a *Gathering of the Hearts*, women join together with their female friends, relatives, coworkers, or community members to view the *My Heart in My Hands* video presentations, participate in educational activities about risk factor reduction, and share their experiences with making heart healthy lifestyle changes.

It takes approximately 45 - 60 minutes to watch each video and participate in its activity. There are 4 video categories in total. A *Gathering of the Hearts* that includes all 4 categories will require 3 hours, perfect for those who can set aside a morning, afternoon, or evening for their *Gathering*. A *Gathering of the Hearts* can also be broken down into 4 shorter sessions that each cover one category, a great option for groups that meet on a regular basis. If you will only be holding a One Time *Gathering of the Hearts*, watch Video Presentation 1: Women and Cardiovascular Disease and play the corresponding activity: Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factor Activity: Fact or Fiction.

Step 1: Create a Guest List

Make a list of all of the women that you think will benefit from and enjoy an educational, fun and empowering *Gathering of the Hearts*. **My Heart in My Hands** is particularly relevant to women who are 40 and older, as women who are older than 40 have a greater risk of developing heart disease and stroke. However, the gatherings are relevant to younger women too, as risk factors for heart disease and stroke can start when women are young and build up over time. Don't leave anyone out!

Besides your family and friends, look to groups that you are involved in when deciding who to invite to your *Gathering of the Hearts*. Examples of groups include the workplace, places of worship, volunteer groups, social clubs, walking groups, book clubs, and community centres. Based on where you are hosting your *Gathering of the Hearts*, you may choose to encourage women to bring their friends or offer invitations to all women who live in the community.



heartandstroke.ca/myheartinmyhands

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Step 2: Choose a location

A *Gathering of the Hearts* can be held in many different locations. Your choice will depend on how many women will be attending the gathering and the locations that are available in your community.

All that you really need is enough room for everyone to sit down and a screen on which you can play the video presentations, such as a SMART Board or a television that is connected to a laptop or desktop computer by an HDMI cable. A projector can also be used if you have access to one.

Step 3: Make it fun

Decide on fun ways to engage your guests. Just a few examples include:

- Request that all of your guests wear red!
- Make your gathering a mother/daughter event!
- Ask everyone to bring a heart healthy appetizer or snack. Sample and swap healthy recipes!
- Be active as a group! Request that everyone wear their exercise clothes and go for a walk or follow an exercise video together before starting the video presentations.
- Make it clear that stress is an uninvited guest! Request that everyone wear comfortable clothes such as pyjamas. Take turns demonstrating simple stretches or lead your guests through several calming deep breaths (a simple yet effective stress buster).

Regardless of the theme or activities that you choose, the most important part of a Gathering of the Hearts is to empower women to make their heart health a priority by reducing their risk factors for heart disease and stroke. This is achieved through education, lifestyle modification, and the support that women provide to each other to live healthier lives. There is certainly power in numbers; when women help and motivate each other, the sky's the limit!

Step 4: Choose a time

Decide on a time for your gathering that makes sense for the majority of the women on your guest list. For example, if your guests work during the day, plan for an evening event.

Step 5: Invite your guests

The next step is to send out invites. Fill in the details and email your guests a PDF version of the invite (under Heart Mentor Toolkit section) a few weeks before the gathering. Take this opportunity to spread the word; word of mouth is a powerful tool. Tell your friends, family members, and neighbours that heart disease and stroke is a leading cause of death for women in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Share the event on social media. Explain that it is within our power to change that statistic and encourage them to host their very own Gathering of the Hearts.

Step 6: Gather your materials

Once you have received all of your RSVPs, print the number of handouts that you will need (plus a few extras just in case). These can be found under the Heart Mentor Toolkit and include copies of the:

- Fact Sheet
- Signs Of Heart Attack And Stroke
- Matters of the Heart
- Questions To Ask Your Doctor
- Recipes from the nutrition video (optional)

Also make sure to download the 4 video presentations from the Heart Mentor Toolkit section of www.heartandstroke.ca/MyHeartInMyHands

*To request the video files, please contact info.nl@heartandstroke.ca

Step 7 (Optional): Pick up food or refreshments

Providing food and refreshments is completely optional. We do not intend for you to incur any costs from being a Heart Mentor.

A potluck is a nice option because everyone brings something to share with the group. You may choose to encourage your guests to bring heart healthy snacks and a copy of the recipes that they used; that way, you can sample and share! Follow this link for a list of heart healthy recipes. Similarly, you can ask your guests to bring a mug and their favourite kind of tea.

Step 8: Know your role

Your guests may have questions after the presentations. You are not expected to be able to answer questions; instead, we encourage you to keep the conversation about cardiovascular disease and the importance of risk factor reduction going with women that you know. It is also important to make it clear to your guests that you are a community facilitator and not a health professional or a representative of Heart & Stroke. Refer women to their physician whenever possible for qualified answers to their health-related questions.

There is no need to fear presenting. We do not expect you to give PowerPoint presentations. We have made being a host easy for you by equipping you with 4 video presentations with voiceovers so that all you have to do is press play! We recommend that you play the videos in the following order with an activity break in between each one. Have fun with it!

Please familiarize yourself with the simple activities and their instructions before your Gathering of the Hearts. These can be found under the Heart Mentor Toolkit section of heartandstroke.ca/MyHeartInMyHands

VIDEO 1: Women and Cardiovascular Disease (CVD).

Begin by playing video 1. It includes valuable information about women and cardiovascular disease and its risk factors. It also features the powerful stories of three women living in Newfoundland and Labrador who have personal experiences with CVD.

Ask women if they have any personal experiences that they would like to share. Proceed to play the the women and cardiovascular activity *CVD Factor Fiction* to test their knowledge about risk factors and signs of cardiovascular disease.

VIDEO 2: Healthy Eating

Play video 2. This presentation is about how to read food labels, a skill that can help you to make healthier choices while grocery shopping. Embedded in the presentation is a video of a tour of a local grocery store, led by a local Registered Dietitian. She gives examples of what to look for in food labels and gives helpful tips for serving proper portion sizes and making healthier choices. She then gives step-by-step instructions for making easy, heart healthy recipes that the entire family can enjoy.

Have a conversation with your group around nutrition. Ask the women to share their challenges and successes with eating healthy. Then play one or both of the healthy eating activities: *Label Reading Team Trivia* and/or *Label Reading Practice*.

VIDEO 3: Physical Activity

Now it's time to play video 3. This presentation breaks down the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and discusses tips for overcoming barriers to being active. Embedded in this presentation is a video of a local physical activity expert who discusses the importance of physical activity with regards to women's cardiovascular health and explains that being active doesn't need to be complicated.

Have a conversation about physical activity. Ask the women to share their challenges and successes around getting adequate amounts of physical activity. Proceed to play *Physical Activity Trivia: True or False*.

Video 4: Stress Management

Play the final video. This informative presentation gives valuable tips for managing stress in our daily lives. Embedded in this presentation is a captivating video from a local mental health advocate, who explains that our experiences of stress are based on how we react to a situation. If time permits, play the short mindfulness video. A local expert who has a 500-hour teacher training certification in yoga therapeutics, discusses the importance of mindfulness (being present in the moment) in the management of stress and demonstrates a simple deep breathing exercise.

Have a group conversation about the ways that women are managing stress in their lives. Then tell your guests to get comfortable and relaxed as you proceed to read the Progressive Relaxation Script to your guests.

*A note about the printed materials. You can give out the printed materials anytime during your Gathering of the Hearts. We ask that you please remind your guests to fill out the online feedback form as soon as possible.

Step 9: Thank your guests

Before your guests leave, remind them about the Health e-tools section on the website. It contains links to helpful resources that will help your guests eat healthy, be active and manage stress. Also try to encourage your guests to hold their own Gathering of the Hearts in order to keep spreading the word. Please tell anyone who is interested that all of the information about becoming a Heart Mentor is available at www.heartandstroke.ca/MyHeartinMyHands

Give your guests a heartfelt thank you for coming and for making their heart health a priority.

**Please take a few moments to fill out the feedback form and tell us about your experience as a Heart Mentor.*