

London-Middlesex Progress Report

Three important modifiable risk factors for heart disease are smoking, physical inactivity and unhealthy eating. The Good Hearted Living Middlesex-London Heart Health Program launched in 1998 encouraged residents of the City of London and Middlesex County to:

- Be Smoke Free,
- Exercise Daily and
- Eat Healthy.

The overall goal of the Good Hearted Living Program was to decrease the incidence of heart disease among London and Middlesex County residents by raising the awareness of specific heart disease risk factors and by promoting and supporting heart-healthy behaviours. This provincial initiative was originally intended as a five-year project. However, recently it received extended funding to March 2008.

A community health status report was undertaken to measure the impact on population level changes in knowledge and behaviours related to heart disease in London and Middlesex County. This report used local data from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) and the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) to assess the progress on Program objectives as of 2003.

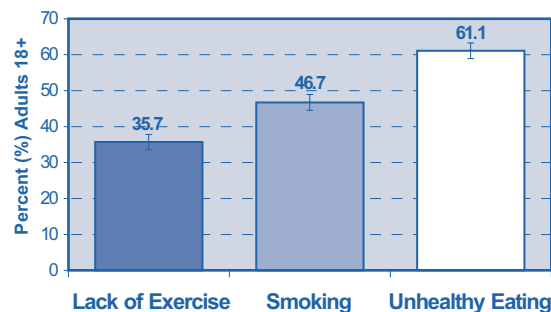


Risk Factor Awareness...

Over three-quarters (77.2% \pm 2.0%) of the adult population of London and Middlesex County identified at least one of three risk factors for heart disease targeted by the Program: smoking, lack of exercise and unhealthy eating. Lack of exercise, the most seldom identified, was selected by only a third of residents (Figure 1).

Overall, only one tenth of residents (10% \pm 1.3%) identified all three risk factors, as contributing to heart disease.

Figure 1: Overall Awareness of Risk Factors
Middlesex-London Health Unit, 2001/02



Source: RRFSS 2001/02, Waves 1-21

Risk factor awareness varied by age. Those over 65 years old were the least likely to identify any of the three main causes of heart disease. Individuals with university or college education were more likely to report all three causes of heart disease (12.9% \pm 2.1%) compared to those who did not finish high school (3.3% \pm 2.2%).

Awareness of smoking as a risk factor was the same for residents of the City of London as for those of Middlesex County. However, residents of London were more likely to identify unhealthy eating (63.2% \pm 2.6%) and lack of exercise (37.1% \pm 2.5%) as risk factors for heart disease compared to Middlesex County (unhealthy eating 55.4% \pm 4.5% and lack of exercise 31.4% \pm 4.2%).

Be Smoke Free...

Nearly half of those over 18 years old in London and Middlesex County reported having never smoked (47.4% \pm 2.1%). Still, almost one quarter of adults were current smokers (23.7% \pm 1.8%). Rates were higher in males (25.6% \pm 2.7%) than in females (22% \pm 2.4%). A lower proportion of youth aged 12 to 19 years old reported being smokers (14% \pm 6.1%). Current smokers were most likely to identify smoking as a risk factor for heart disease (70.7% \pm 4.2%) compared to 46.6% (\pm 4.1%) of former smokers and 35.2% (\pm 3.1%) of those who have never smoked.

Current smokers were less likely to consider unhealthy eating (47.5% ± 4.7%) and lack of exercise (22.1% ± 3.9%) as risk factors for heart disease compared to non-smokers.

Exercise Daily...

Close to half of all London and Middlesex County residents 12 years and older were physically active (24.1% ± 2.7%) or moderately active (21.8% ± 2.3%). Males were more physically active or moderately active (50% ± 3.4%) than females (43% ± 3.4%). Physical activity was lower in older age groups. The most active London-Middlesex residents were those ages 12 to 19 years with 61% (± 9.2%) being active or moderately active.

Over 80% of London-Middlesex residents were aware of the area's walking trails and bicycle paths. Just over half of all residents reported using the trails in the past 12 months (54.7% ± 2.4%). A greater proportion of City of London residents (59.7% ± 2.8%) used the trails compared to residents of Middlesex County (41.9% ± 4.6%).

Eat Healthy...

The recommended daily consumption of fruits (2-4 servings) and vegetables (3-5 servings) is part of a healthy diet and helps prevent symptoms of heart disease. In London-Middlesex consumption of these recommended amounts was more common in women (40.2% ± 3.0%) than men (24.4% ± 2.8%) and was higher in older age groups (46.3%, ± 6.5% for men and women over 65).

One third of adults between 20 and 64 years were considered overweight by Canadian Body Mass Index (BMI) Standards (33.2% ± 2.3%). Adult men (40.8% ± 3.4%) were more likely to be overweight than were women (25.5% ± 3.1%). However, no differences in awareness of unhealthy eating or lack of exercise were observed for those overweight (BMI>27) compared to those with healthy weight (BMI 20-24.9) or some excess weight (BMI 25-27). Similarly, residents who were overweight were as likely to consume the daily recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables (31.5% ± 3.8%) as those with healthy weight status (32.7% ± 3.4%) or some excess weight (35.1% ± 5.2%).

Overall, 43% (± 3.4%) of residents reported that they had heard or read something about Eat Smart!, Ontario's Healthy Restaurant Program. However, only 12% had eaten at a designated restaurant.

Progress on Good Hearted Living Objectives

In 1998 the Good Hearted Living Program set local objectives for London-Middlesex. The following assesses the progress made by the Program as of March 2003:

Achieved

- ✓ Less than 31% of males over 15 will be smokers
- ✓ Less than 23% of females over 15 will be smokers
- ✓ Increased awareness of walking trails

Progress

- Less than 16% of youth (12-19) will be smokers
- At least 53% of males over 15 will exercise regularly
- At least 59% of youth will participate in daily physical activity
- Increased awareness of Eatsmart! Restaurant Program
- Increased awareness and knowledge of risk factors for heart disease

Work Needed

- ▲ At least 48% of females over 15 will exercise regularly
- ▲ Less than 30% of adult males will be overweight (BMI > 27)
- ▲ Less than 23% of adult females will be overweight (BMI >27)

Sources:
RRFSS, Waves 1-21, Middlesex-London Health Unit Area 2001/02
CCHS, Middlesex-London Health Unit Area, 2000/01

Watch for the full report, "Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors- London-Middlesex Progress Report" on the Middlesex-London Health Unit website:
www.healthunit.com or to obtain a copy, call the health unit at 663-5317 ext. 2220.



**Good
Hearted
Living**
Middlesex-London
Heart Health Program