



## About The Heart Truth Campaign media backgrounder

### What is The Heart Truth?

The Heart Truth is a national public health education campaign to raise awareness that heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of death for Canadian women.<sup>1</sup>

The Heart Truth campaign educates women about identifying their risks and warning signs of heart disease and stroke, and shows them how to take charge of their heart health by making lifestyle changes that can reduce their risk by as much as 80 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

The Heart and Stroke Foundation launches The Heart Truth campaign on February 4, 2008. The campaign will run for three years, targeting women over the age of 40, and across ethnicities and backgrounds through education and outreach activities.

### Why focus on women's heart health?

The Heart Truth is that heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of death for Canadian women. While one in three women die of heart disease and stroke, only one in eight know it's their most serious health concern.<sup>3</sup>

Heart disease is still widely perceived as "a man's disease" and women often fail to make the connection between risk factors, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, and their own chance of developing heart disease.

Today, the need is greater than ever for awareness around women's risk of heart disease and stroke. Women's death rates have been climbing steadily for decades, even as men's rates of death from heart disease and stroke have declined. The number of deaths from heart disease and stroke is now virtually the same between women and men.<sup>4</sup>

### Who is The Heart Truth campaign trying to reach?

The Heart Truth is aimed at healthcare practitioners and Canadian women of all ages and backgrounds. It is especially aimed at women 40 to 60 years old, whose risk increases as they age.<sup>5</sup> And for older women, it's never too late to take action and protect their health. Even women who have heart disease can improve their heart health and quality of life.

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## **What are the goals of The Heart Truth campaign?**

- To increase awareness that heart disease and stroke is the leading cause of death among Canadian women
- To increase awareness of the risk factors and the warning signs that can lead to heart disease and stroke
- To encourage women to talk openly with their doctors and take preventative action to control their risk factors
- To empower women to take charge of their heart health, including seeking the services they need if symptoms occur

## **How does The Heart Truth campaign raise awareness?**

The Heart Truth campaign delivers a life-saving message to Canadian women and their healthcare practitioners through:

- [www.thehearttruth.ca](http://www.thehearttruth.ca), featuring heart health information, patient assessment tools, and educational materials to promote greater awareness and better heart health
- A leadership council comprised of Canadian female thought and community leaders
- A Heart Truth fashion show at Toronto Fashion Week
- Outreach materials, including an online community action kit with a speaker's guide to promoting heart health and DVD featuring personal stories of female heart disease survivors;
- A print advertising campaign and national public service announcements on TV, plus nation-wide distribution of pamphlets, postcards and posters
- Canada-wide sale of The Heart Truth red dress pins so every woman can wear one in support of Canadian women's heart health

## **Who is behind The Heart Truth campaign?**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada is launching The Heart Truth campaign with the generous support of founding sponsor Becel and contributing sponsors the Bay, Chatelaine, Ocean Spray, Pfizer and Shoppers Drug Mart, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon.

## **How does The Heart Truth support other Canadian health strategies?**

The Heart Truth campaign is an investment in health promotion and disease prevention that fits with Canada's Integrated Strategy on Healthy Living and Chronic Disease.

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The Heart Truth also supports the objectives of the newly announced Canadian Heart Health Strategy, which has a strong focus on combating economic, geographic, ethnic or gender-related disparities that affect people's access to disease prevention and treatment.

### **Is The Heart Truth campaign active elsewhere?**

The U.S. Heart Truth campaign launched in 2002 by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute and proved that it's possible to make a big difference in women's awareness levels. In under three years, the American Heart Truth campaign, on which the Canadian campaign is modeled, increased women's awareness of their risks by 23 per cent.

### **How does the red dress symbol fit into the campaign?**

The red dress was launched in the U.S. as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness at New York's Fashion Week in February 2003. Eighteen months after the launch, one in four American women identified the red dress as the national symbol for women's heart disease awareness. The Canadian campaign is leveraging this awareness by using the red dress as the icon for The Heart Truth campaign to remind women to take charge of their heart health.

### **Sources:**

1. *Investing in Canada's Future 2003-2004*, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), 2004
2. *How to make sure the beat goes on protecting a woman's heart*, Johnson PA, Manson JE - *Circulation*, 2005; 111: e 28-33
3. Harris/Decima Televox National Telephone Omnibus, December 2007
4. Statistics Canada, deaths, summary list of causes, 2004
5. [www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com), Risk factors you can't control