

Improving Health: *My Way*

Chronic Disease Self-Management Program for
Newfoundland and Labrador

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A Self-Management Program for People Living With Chronic Conditions

February is Heart Month. An estimated 1.6 million Canadians are living with heart disease or the effects of a stroke and these conditions remain the leading causes of death and hospitalization in Canada (Heart and Stroke Foundation).

Cardiovascular diseases and related risk factors are prevalent in the Western region of Newfoundland and Labrador. Have you or someone you know been affected by heart disease or stroke? Have you thought about taking a more active role in your health? The Improving Health: *My Way* program can help you learn to be healthier by modifying behaviours and improving your health status. The six session self-management program is offered free of charge in communities throughout the province for people living with chronic conditions. The program is taught by trained leaders who are living with chronic conditions every day and have decided to take a more active role in their own health.

There are many risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Some of these risk factors cannot be changed. However, there are some risk factors that can be modified. The Improving Health: *My Way* program can provide people with the skills that they need to reduce some of these risk factors. Participants will learn how to make lifestyle changes such as eating healthier by increasing their vegetable and fruit consumption, choosing foods lower in fat and reducing sodium intake, being more physically active every day, and reducing stress. Evidence shows that a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and can reduce further damage from many chronic conditions. How you live everyday can affect your symptoms, your overall health and your quality of life. Other chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity put people at risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke and many people live with one or more of these chronic conditions. The Improving Health: *My Way* program can help people living with these chronic conditions as well as many others.

Forty six Improving Health: *My Way* workshops have been completed in the Western Health region since 2011. Workshops have been offered in communities from

Port Saunders to Ramea and in between with over 400 community members completing the program. Participants who have completed the program noted that they made changes to their eating habits, exercised more, used relaxation techniques to deal with pain, frustration and depression and began to take a more active role in their health care.

If you have heart disease, have had a stroke, have another chronic condition that may put you at higher risk for heart disease or stroke or want to adopt a healthier lifestyle, please consider registering for the next Improving Health: *My Way* workshop in a community near you. You can become a participant and begin to manage your own chronic condition, go on to live a healthier life and prevent future chronic conditions.

To register or find out more information about upcoming workshops, please contact Victoria White, Regional Chronic Disease Self-Management Coordinator at (709) 637-5000 extension 6689 or email selfmanagement@westernhealth.nl.ca. More information about chronic disease and the Improving Health: My Way program can be found at <http://www.westernhealth.nl.ca/healthmyway>

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