

# Living Well with AIMGA

VOL. 2: LET'S HAVE A HEART TO HEART!



Compiled by AIMGA's Health and Wellness Team

## HEALTHHUB FOR NEWCOMERS

Health Matters! Wellness Matters! Diversity Matters!



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# FEBRUARY: Let's Have a Heart to Heart!

Heart Disease, also known as ischemic heart disease or coronary heart disease, refers to the buildup of plaque in the heart's arteries that could lead to one of the following: heart attack, heart failure, or death. Heart disease is quite common, as it is the 2nd leading cause of death in Canada ([Health Canada](#), 2022). This month is Heart Month, which is an opportunity to highlight the importance of cardiovascular health as well educate ourselves and others to reduce our risk of cardiovascular disease. February's newsletter will focus on this education and awareness, providing you with essential information and tips to take care of your cardiovascular health.



## VIDEOS



[1. Beating the World's Biggest Killer](#)



[2. The Link Between Heart Health and Mental Health](#)

# RED FLAGS

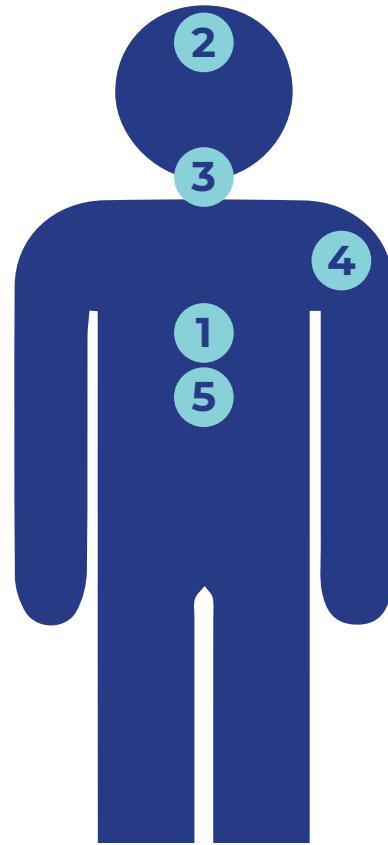
- Look out for the following signs and symptoms to know when to seek emergency care
  - Chest pain, pressure or tightness, or a squeezing or aching sensation in the center of the chest
  - Pain or discomfort that spreads to the shoulder, one or both arms, back, neck, jaw, teeth or occasionally upper abdomen
  - Sudden shortness of breath, worsening shortness of breath
  - Fatigue (activity intolerance)
  - Rapid heartbeats/skip beats (palpitation)
  - Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting
  - Nausea, vomiting and possible indigestion / prolonged reflux
  - Waking up from sleep unable to catch your breath
- The discomfort is often described as a “pressure or chest heaviness”, but some people don’t have chest pain or pressure at all. Women tend to have more vague symptoms (e.g., nausea, back or jaw pain)
- If you think you’re having a heart attack, you can do the following to mitigate risk:
  - Call 911 immediately for help or tell someone and ask them to get help right away
  - Chew 2 tablets of baby aspirin (most effective within 30 min of the first symptom)
  - Avoid driving yourself to the hospital
  - Take Nitroglycerin if prescribed prior
- If you think someone else is having a heart attack you can do the following:
  - Call 911 immediately for help
  - Begin CPR (if person is unconscious). If the person isn’t breathing or you don’t find a pulse, begin CPR to keep blood flowing
  - Push hard and fast on the center of their chest in a fairly rapid rhythm (about 100-120 compressions per minute).
  - If an automated external defibrillator (AED) is immediately available and the person is unconscious, follow the device instructions for using it.

Sources: [American Heart Association](#), [Mayo Clinic](#), Health Canada, [American Heart Association](#)



# HEART ATTACK WARNING SIGNS

- 1 Pain or discomfort in chest
- 2 Lightheadedness, nausea, or vomiting
- 3 Jaw, neck or back pain
- 4 Discomfort or pain in arm or shoulder
- 5 Shortness of breath



Learn more at [Heart.org/HeartAttack](#)

Source: [American Heart Association, 2021](#)

# HOT TOPIC:

## Let's Get Active About Our Heart Health!



Ischemic heart disease or disease of the vessels that supply your heart with blood and oxygen is the second leading cause of death in Canada. It is the most common type of cardiovascular disease. Some people think that it is just a disease “older people” get; others picture a man clutching his chest, as often seen in movies, when they imagine what a heart attack might look like. This is in fact, not always true.

Your heart is made up of muscle, and its job is to pump blood around the entire body. Think about if you are running a marathon; after some time, you get tired and you want to stop and rest. Once you rest, you can go on. The heart, on the other hand, cannot do this. It is pumping blood 24 hours a day to keep you alive.

The heart is sometimes unable to do this because the arteries providing the heart with blood flow and oxygen get blocked. When blood cannot reach the different parts of the heart, a section of the heart gets tired and will not be able to function properly or be able to provide adequate blood to the various organs in the body. This is then felt like a pain in your chest. Some people, however, do not feel the same type of pain, such as people with diabetes, or those who have had a heart transplant. Even women and men tend to have different types of pain!

Heart disease can impact people of various ages, genders, and ethnicities, although some may be at higher risk than others, such as those with Diabetes. In terms of its presentation, it varies widely across different groups. It impacts men and women differently in terms of its presentation, treatment, and recovery. In fact, many research studies are ongoing, investigating exactly how different a heart attack presents in women versus men. Some risk factors you are born with and cannot change (e.g., age, gender, family history, certain ethnicities such as Indigenous, African, or South Asian), and other factors are things we can change by altering some habits and/or seeking help (e.g., high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, tobacco/excessive alcohol use, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, depression, and stress).

The good news is you can reduce your risk of acquiring ischemic heart disease. Taking care of yourself is an essential part of this process, like eating well and maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular daily exercise ( $\geq 150$  minutes per week), getting adequate sleep, avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol use, and practicing self-care and maintaining a positive mental health.

In conclusion, take the stairs instead of the elevator, avoid those sugary treats, do not immediately sit down after you eat, go for regular walks (at least 30-minutes) around your home or within your apartment/condo building, and do these types of preventative strategies with your family and friends. This will improve your mood and keep you motivated. We are better together than we are alone. Help your friends and family live longer lives with you, and with healthier hearts.

**Sources:** [Heart & Stroke, 2023](#); [Alberta Health Services, 2023](#), [Institute of Medicine, 2010](#); [Mayo Clinic, 2021](#); [Health Canada, 2022](#); [Public Health Ontario, 2023](#); [Mancini et al., 2014](#)



## TIPS & RESOURCES

- [Cardiac Arrest vs Heart Attack](#)
- [Heart Disease: Exercise and the heart](#)
- [Learn How to Use a Defibrillator](#)
- [What are AEDs?](#)
- [Heart Disease in Canada – Facts](#)
- [Heart Month - Canada.ca](#)
- [Women-specific info](#)
- [What is heart failure?](#)
- [Take care of your heart with better nutrition](#)
- [Moving towards a heart-healthy life](#)
- [Heart Disease: Signs & Symptoms](#)
- [How to Lower your Cholesterol](#)

## MYTH OR FACT?

**Sources:** [Harvard Health, 2013](#), [Health Canada](#), [American Heart Association](#)

Click on each myth bubble to find out true, evidence-based information.

**"If you have heart disease, you shouldn't eat fat / fatty foods."**

**"Heart disease is really a man's problem"**

**"I'm too young to worry about heart disease."**

**"If you have smoked for many years, you can't reduce your risk of heart disease by quitting."**

**"I should avoid exercise after having a heart attack."**



# HEALTH REMINDERS!

- Have you exercised today? The W.H.O. recommends at least 150 minutes/per week of exercise. Why not add a balanced diet to it while you're at it? Your heart will thank you.
- Maintaining regular clinic checkups (at least once a year) is helpful for the early detection of heart diseases. Book an appointment with your primary care physician today.
- De-stressing is heart love. Find ways to relax daily like listening to music, journaling, meditating, or yoga.
- Save a life today. Update your First Aid and Basic Life Support (BLS) skills and always be aware

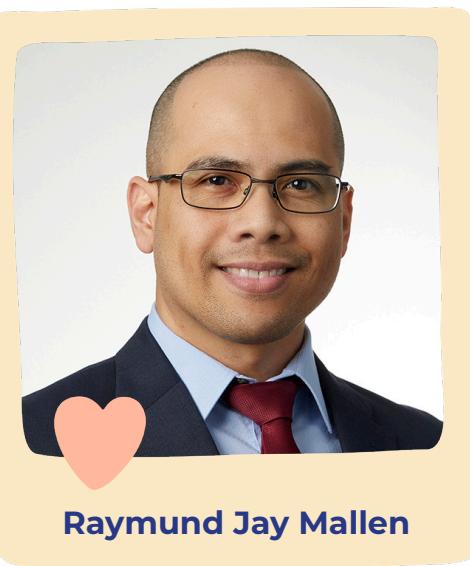
of the location of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) around you and make sure it works.

- Do you have a family history of high blood pressure, or are you simply concerned about your blood pressure levels? If yes, purchase a blood pressure monitor today and/or monitor your levels regularly.
- If you have previously suffered from a heart attack, have essential health information close by so that medical staff can treat you in the event of another medical emergency. Carry personal health information with you at all times and have it posted somewhere visible, as you may not be able to tell first responders this information yourself.



## IMG SPOTLIGHT

**Raymund Jay Mallen (MD)** was born and raised in the Philippines and migrated to Canada in 2013, settling in Calgary since then. Raymund finished Medical Laboratory Technology as an undergrad course, which served him well when pursuing his medical education. He worked as a rural health physician in the remote southern part of the Philippines for a few years before pursuing his specialty training in Internal Medicine. Raymund then practiced in his specialty in a rural area for a year before moving to Canada. He worked as a clinical assistant in a Sleep Medicine Specialty Clinic before landing his current job as a clinical assistant in a Cardiology Clinic.



**Raymund Jay Mallen**

### Skills gained from AIMGA:

AIMGA has taught me the most important skill of all – effective communication. Through MCAP, I've come to realize several very valuable things pertaining to effective communication, such as empathetic listening, clear and concise use of words, collaboration, and effective organization of the vast information provided. These proved extremely helpful in my NAC-OSCE, MMI, FMProC, CV creation, CaRMS application and making personal statements. I would liken AIMGA as a beacon of light guiding IMGs out of the darkness.

### Biggest lesson learned and advice for other IMGs:

Dream in light years... challenge miles... walk step by step. Trust the process and never ever listen to negativity. Instead, surround yourself with people who not only see your potential but who also help you nurture it to fruition. Be humble enough to admit there is still a lot to learn. And be insightful enough to realize that what is being taught by those who came before us is designed to hone us to better fit the system. And always ask for guidance to our loving and generous God who has the best plans for us.

# INITIATIVES/ OPPORTUNITIES



- Volunteer with Heart and Stroke Foundation!  
Volunteer | [Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)
- Join the conversation; follow #HeartMonth on social media
- Volunteer with St. John Ambulance - there are more than 15,000 dedicated front-line St. John Ambulance volunteers across Canada, in every province and territory! [Community Services](#) | [Become a Volunteer | St John Ambulance \(sja.ca\)](#)
- [#HerHeartMatters: the Importance of Heart and Vascular Disease Prevention and Recovery](#)
- [All in for Heart Month - University of Ottawa Heart Institute](#)
- [Feb 13, 2023 | Wear Red Canada: Ask the Experts! Together, Overcoming Barriers in Women's Heart Health](#)
- University Hospital Foundation: <https://givetouhf.ca/heart-month/>
- MyHealthAlberta: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=zp3482>
- Canadian Cardiovascular Surgery: <https://ccs.ca/>
- Alberta Blue Cross: <https://www.ab.bluecross.ca/resources/health-wellness/care-navigation/heart-disease.php>
- Cardiac Services BC: <http://www.cardiacbc.ca/health-info/coping-support>
- Health Link BC: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating-physical-activity/conditions/heart>
- Happy Hearts Vancouver: <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/happy-hearts-program.aspx>
- Island Heart: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/heart-health-services/cardiac-risk-reduction-rehabilitation-program-heart-health>
- Health Link BC: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/seniors/health-safety/disease-and-injury-care-and-prevention/heart-disease-and-strokes>
- Centre for Cardiovascular Innovation: <https://cci-cic.org/>
- Canadian Women's Heart Health Centre: <https://cwhhc.ottawaheart.ca/summit>
- Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance: <https://bit.ly/m/CWHHAlliance>
- Top 10 Dietitians in Canada on Instagram: <https://dietitiandirectory.com/blog/top-10-canadian-dietitians-on-instagram/>

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH



## FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Join AIMGA in honouring the legacy of Black people in Canada and their communities this month. This year's theme is "Ours to tell". This theme represents both an opportunity to engage in conversation and a commitment to learning more about the stories Black communities in Canada have to tell about their histories, successes, sacrifices and triumphs; Black history is Canadian History. No matter where you live, we urge you to learn more about these communities and how they continue to help shape Canadian history. Join us in amplifying the essential contributions of Black people by getting involved: educate yourself through a related podcast or novel, visit a Black History museum, watch Black history documentaries and movies, or learn about Black music history by listening online.



[February is Black History Month - Canada.ca](#)

[Black History Month digital toolkit - Canada.ca](#)

[Proud of our History - Black History Month](#)



## A Special Thanks Goes Out To:

Rafiat Abdulgaffar, Keshandi Thompson, Eiman Elhadi, Raymund Jay Mallen, and Winifred "Winny" Ebhomien for their additional contributions.



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