Heart disease and stroke are the major causes of illness, disability, and death in Canada and Manitoba, and they exact high personal, community, and health care costs.

Ten Manitobans die each day from heart disease and stroke.

According to the most recent data, approximately 73,800 deaths in Canada are attributable to cardiovascular disease each year.

In 2001, the mortality rate in Manitoba for heart attack was 47.6 deaths per 100,000 people. In Manitoba, 2840 people per year are hospitalized as a result of stroke. This leads to roughly 700 deaths annually.

Eight in ten Canadians have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD), and 11% have three risk factors or more. Approximately 30% of men and women in their twenties are overweight, and 18% of Manitobans are obese (compared to the National average of 15.5%). Twenty percent of Manitobans currently smoke, and the largest proportion of smokers is among men and women 18-34 years old. Manitobans with high blood pressure equal 14.3% of the population (compared to the National average of 14.4%).

One of the most alarming trends is the growing prevalence of risk factors among young Canadians. More than 58% of Canadian children and youth are not active enough for optimal growth and development, and get less active as they grow older. Almost 30% of teenagers are physically inactive.

Many of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease – smoking, lack of exercise, being overweight, high blood pressure – are also common to many chronic diseases like cancer and diabetes. If we can stop people from developing these risks, it will have a huge impact on our healthy system, now and in the future.

Along with the young people who are already at risk, we have more people than ever living with heart disease and stroke.