

GOING UPSTREAM on Cardiovascular Disease

Toward an Ontario Chronic Disease Strategy

ACT EARLIER. IMPROVE OUTCOMES. STRENGTHEN ONTARIO'S SYSTEM.

Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death in Ontario, yet many risks factors can be identified decades before symptoms appear.

Cardiovascular disease includes heart attack, stroke, and heart failure, which place a major burden on patients, families, and Ontario's health system.



Cardiovascular disease is a **leading cause of death and hospitalization in Ontario¹** and can have lasting impacts on the lives and well-being of patients and their families.



Linked to modifiable risk factors including **elevated LDL cholesterol, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and smoking.**



Responsible for over **200,000 emergency department visits** annually in Ontario.²



Costs reach **\$21.2B annually in Canada³**, in direct medical and indirect lost earnings costs.

Too much care happens after a heart attack, stroke, or heart failure has already occurred.

Acting upstream will:



Improve patient outcomes



Prevent heart attacks, strokes, and heart failure before they occur



Support Ontario's priorities on access, **system capacity, and sustainability**

Three Actions to Move Cardiovascular Care Upstream



Implement universal lipid screening and cardiovascular risk assessment

Include cholesterol testing and risk assessment in routine primary care, with universal lipid screening for youth as recommended by the Canadian Paediatric Society.⁴



Embed cardiovascular risk assessment into digital health and EMR systems

Build clinical prompts, risk tools, and care pathways into digital health and electronic medical record (EMR) systems to identify high-risk patients earlier.



Expand community-based prevention programs

Expand pharmacist-, primary care-, and community-led prevention programs that identify cardiovascular risk earlier and connect patients to timely interventions.



Read LSO's vision paper
Going Upstream: Toward an Ontario Chronic Disease Strategy, starting with Diabetes



Read HeartLife Foundation's
National Heart Failure Policy Framework

¹ Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System 2025

² Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. Value-for-Money Audit: Cardiac Disease and Stroke Treatment. December 2021.

³ Heart & Stroke Foundation. (Dis)connected: How unseen links are putting us at risk. 2019.

⁴ Canadian Paediatric Society. Paediatricians call for universal lipid screening in children to catch heart risks early. February 27, 2026.