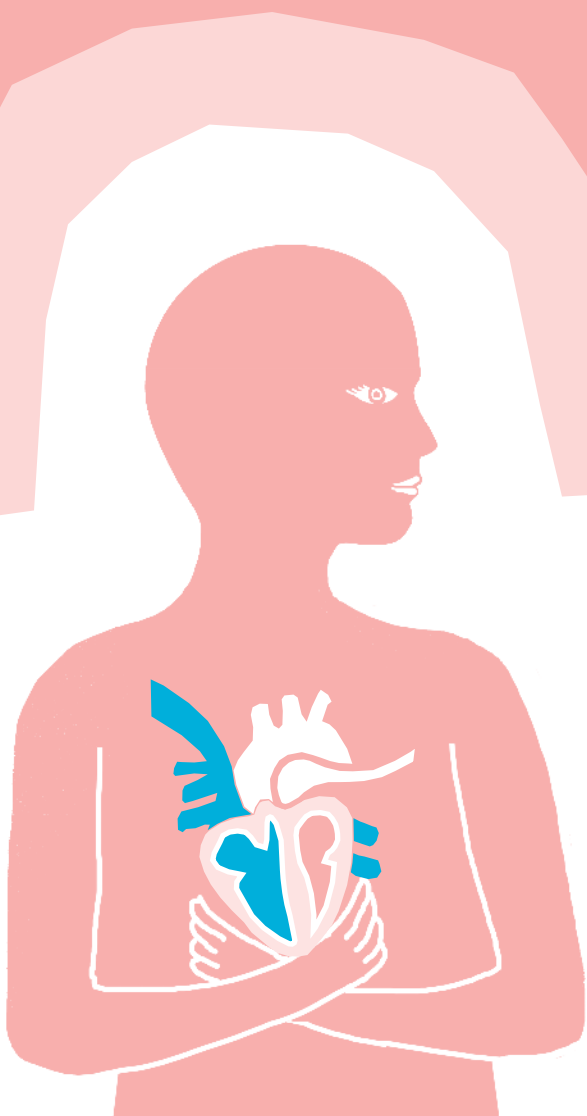


Promoting Health
in Everyday Environments

WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH



The ways in which streets, neighbourhoods, towns and cities are built and maintained can influence everyone's heart health.

This is especially true with regard to how everyday environments make it easier (or harder) for women to eat well and be physically active: healthy foods and regular activity protect and promote healthy hearts.



This brochure looks at how environments affect **what we eat and how active we can be**. It also contains ideas about how people can work together for changes in the built environment that will increase access to healthy foods and enable physical activity for everyone. Some useful resources for further information are also listed.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTHY EATING



Healthy eating helps to maintain heart health. And what we eat is related to the built environment in which a person lives.

This means:

- Universally accessible places** for everyone to shop no matter how mobile they are.
- City zoning** that favours support for local shops selling “good” and healthy foods.
- A minimum of –if any– fast-food restaurants** in residential areas.

It is possible to find and eat healthy foods in an urban environment, for example:

- Foods can be grown** for the entire family in collective community gardens, or on rooftops or balconies.
- Community centres** can sponsor shared meal planning and preparation activities.
- Cafeterias at work and in schools** can be required to provide tasty, healthy foods.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Being physically active also helps to maintain heart health. And how active we can be is related to the built environment in which a person lives.

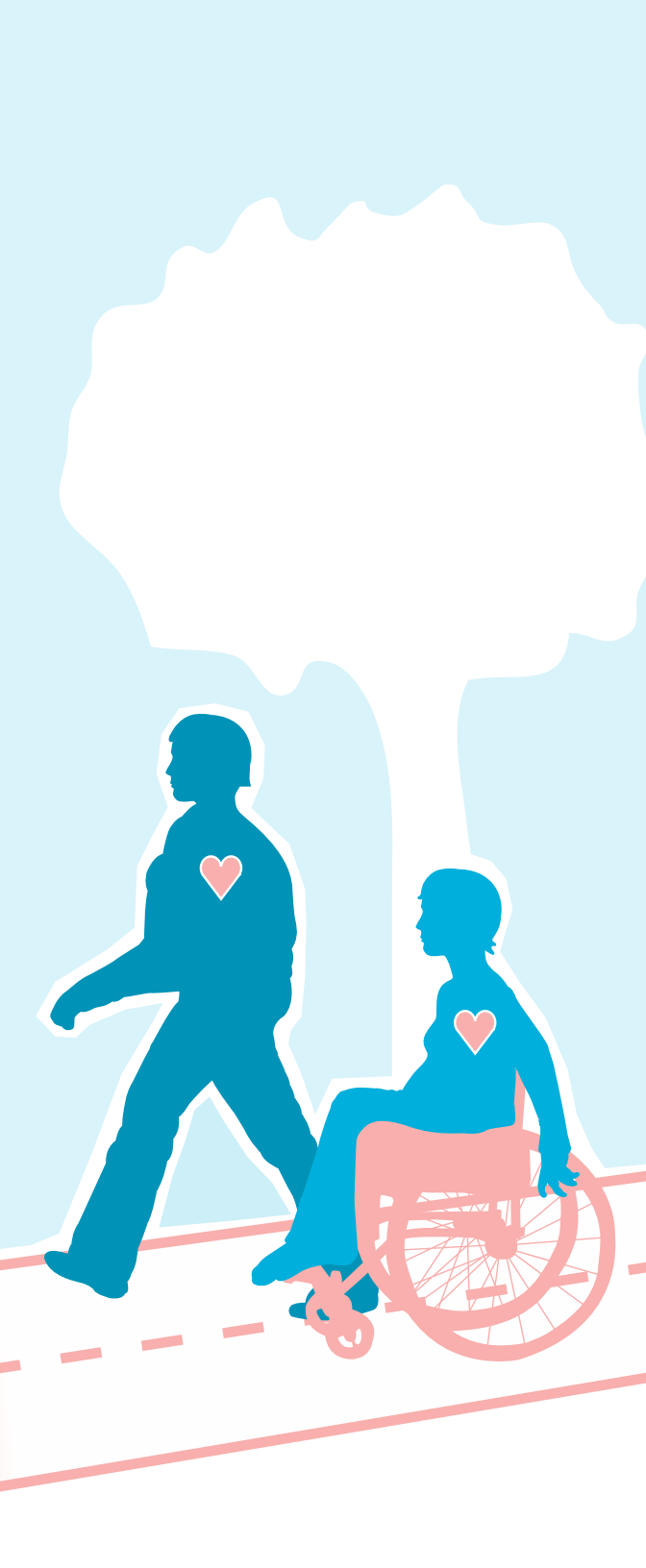
This means:

Public stairwells need to be kept safe and clean so people use them instead of taking escalators or elevators.

Community centres should offer free programs so all women can join with others to swim, dance, lift weights, or practice yoga or tai chi; they should have lever handles for opening doors, wide interior doorways, and right and appropriate lighting.

Being physically active is possible for everyone no matter their age or ability if public spaces in the built environment follow universal design principles.¹





THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HEART HEALTH

Local governments must ensure that all neighbourhoods are built in ways that help to increase everyone's access to good food and ability to be physically active, cornerstones of healthy hearts.

Join with neighbours and community organizations to see how your neighbourhood encourages actions that will protect the heart health of all residents. And then be sure to demand improvements where necessary.

Some things to look for:

Sidewalks—Sidewalks should be wide and smooth enough to accommodate strollers, canes, walkers, and wheelchairs.² They should be well-lit so streets are safer for women.

Accessible public transit stops—Being close to public transit stops helps keep adults physically active:³ people tend to walk and move more when using public transportation.

Fresh food boxes—Affordable fresh food boxes should be provided in every neighbourhood to ensure everyone can easily obtain healthy food.

Grocery stores—Local grocery stores should be encouraged to carry fresh fruits and vegetables. These neighbourhood stores should carry local produce – and they should be located where everyone can go to shop safely.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

* **Eco-Access**

www.ecoaccess.info

* **The Center for Universal Design**

www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

* **Québec Government du: Kino Québec**

www.kino-quebec.qc.ca (*french only*)

* **Santé et services sociaux Québec:**

Physical Activity

[www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/sujets/santepub/
physical_activity.php](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/sujets/santepub/physical_activity.php)

* **Centers for Disease Control: Healthy Places, Designing and Building Healthy Places**

www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces

COLLECTIVE GARDENING

* **Action Communiterre**

www.actioncommuniterre.qc.ca

* **Rooftop Gardens**

www.rooftopgardens.ca

ENDNOTES

- 1 Definition of Universal Design: The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design (The Center for Universal Design: www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/).
- 2 Feldman E, Mishkovsky N & Kohler C. 2003. "Active living for Older Adults: Management Strategies for Healthy and Livable Communities," Leadership for Active Living, San Diego. September 2003, Item Number 4300.
- 3 Rodriguez DA & the Active Living Research staff. 2009. "Active Transportation: Making the Link from Transportation to Physical Activity and Obesity," Active Living Research, Roberto Wood Johnson Foundation, activelivingresearch.org.

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