

*Toronto Western*  
Family Health Team  
*Garrison Creek*  
*Bathurst*

# **TW FHT Newsletter**

## **February 2026**

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## Clinic Updates & Reminders

### **Uninsured Services - Non-OHIP Covered Services (Updated Fees)**

Non-OHIP covered services are those services provided to patients that are not covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). The Ministry covers all insured medically necessary services provided by physicians, however, it does not pay for services that are not medically necessary.

Examples of non-OHIP covered services include: writing sick notes, cosmetic procedures, charges for missed appointments, completing forms for daycare or school, insurance, legal or employment purposes, or if your health card is not valid on the day of your appointment.

[Visit our website for a full list of updated uninsured services.](#)

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## **Smoking Cessation Program at TW FHT**



### **Thinking About Quitting or Reducing Smoking or Vaping? We Can Help.**

The Toronto Western Family Health Team offers a free, supportive [Smoking Cessation Program](#) to help patients quit or reduce smoking, vaping, or using other nicotine products.

The program is designed to make quitting easier with personalized support, practical tools, and medication options.

### **What the program offers**

Our team works with the [Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation \(OMSC\)](#), a proven approach that helps people quit successfully. We provide:

- One-on-one support from a trained Smoking Cessation Counsellor
- Your choice of appointment type: in-person, virtual, or phone
- Access to a free supply of nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges (if appropriate)
- A personalized quit plan that fits your lifestyle
- Up to six follow-up sessions to keep you on track

### **Who can join**

You must be a current TW FHT patient to register for this program.

## How to join

If you are interested in joining this program, you can:

- [Sign up online](#) or call the clinic at 416-603-5888
- Ask your healthcare provider for a referral

You Don't Have to Quit Alone.

Whether you have tried before or are thinking about quitting for the first time, we are here to support you. Small steps can lead to big changes!

[Smoking Cessation Program - TW FHT](#)

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## Health Promotion: Health Topics

### Wear Red Canada: Women's Heart Health

(Adapted from Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance)



Wear Red Canada happens every year on February 13. This is a national campaign that helps raise awareness about women's heart and vascular (blood vessel) health.

The goal is to encourage Canadians, especially women, to stay informed, take action and look after their heart health.

**Did you know?**  
**80% of heart disease in women can be prevented.**

## Why It Matters

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women around the world and the top cause of early death in Canadian women.
- Around the world, 1 in 3 women lives with heart disease.
- Women remain under-studied, under-diagnosed, under-treated, and under-aware. This means that heart problems in women, is often found too late.

## Key Messages

**Heart disease is the #1 cause of death in women.**

Rates of heart disease continue to rise, and it remains the number one cause of death for women.

**Women's heart attack symptoms are often missed.**

More than half of women's heart attack symptoms are not recognized. Women often present with 3 or more symptoms that are different than chest pain. Such as, jaw or back pain, nausea, shortness of breath, or unusual tiredness.

**Heart disease may look different in women than in men.**

Women may experience different types of heart disease, and certain heart conditions are more common in women.

**Women face unique risk factors.**

Risk of heart disease in women increases due to pregnancy complications, early menopause, autoimmune diseases, smoking, and diabetes. Many of these risks affect women more than men.

**Heart disease can often be prevented.**

Prevention includes regular physical activity, nutritious eating, stress management, avoiding tobacco and vaping, limiting

alcohol intake, and having regular health checks. See below for details.

## **Prevention of Heart Disease in Women:**

Heart disease is often preventable, and daily habits play an important role in maintaining heart health. Here are some ways to protect your heart:

### **1. Stay physically active**

Being active helps improve your blood flow, lowers blood pressure, and supports a healthy weight. Walking, cycling, dancing, or structured exercise programs can all help.

Try [FitnessTO](#) for a wide range of affordable drop-in and registered fitness classes through the City of Toronto.

### **2. Eat a balanced, heart-healthy diet**

Choose foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and heart-healthy fats. These foods help regulate cholesterol, blood sugar, and inflammation.

Check out [heart healthy eating resources](#).

### **3. Manage your stress**

Long-term stress affects sleep, hormones, and blood pressure. Strategies like mindfulness, relaxation exercises, physical activity, and social support can all help reduce its impact.

Join one of our [health education workshops](#) to learn stress-reduction skills.

### **4. Avoid tobacco and vaping**

Not smoking or vaping is one of the best ways to protect your heart. Women who smoke have 3 times the risk of heart attack compared with men who smoke.

Need help quitting smoking or vaping? [Register online](#) to get help from one of our smoking cessation counsellors.

### **5. Limit alcohol consumption**

Drinking less alcohol helps control blood pressure, manage

weight, and lowers the risk of heart rhythm problems and heart muscle damage.

Find ways to decrease your alcohol intake. You can start by taking these steps.

## **6. Get regular health checkups**

Routine monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar helps detect early changes in order to help prevent heart disease.

Book a Preventative Care Visit with your PCP.

## **7. Prioritize your health and start conversations**

Talking openly about heart health helps increase awareness and encourages others to act.

### **Online Resources:**

- [What is Wear Red Canada? - CWHHA](#)
- [Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance \(CWHHA\)](#)
- [Women | Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)

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## **Behavioural Activation**



Have you noticed your mood is lower during the winter months? Even if you don't meet the criteria for seasonal affective disorder, a type of depression related to changes in seasons, it is common to have less energy or motivation in the winter.

One effective practice for seasonal depression is **behavioral activation**.

**What is behavioral activation?**

Behavioral activation (BA) is a specific CBT skill that focuses on engaging in meaningful or pleasurable activities, even when motivation is low.

The core idea is that action comes before motivation. We often wait to feel motivated before we do something, but it actually works the other way around.

By changing what you do, your mood and energy gradually improve.

## How it works

Low mood often leads to avoidance (staying in bed, cancelling plans, procrastinating). Avoidance may feel good temporarily, but it worsens mood over time.

BA breaks this cycle by scheduling and doing activities anyways. It is recommended to start with small tasks first, and gradually build from there.

### Examples:

- Staying in bed all day:
  - BA: Get up, shower, move to the couch
- Letting dishes and laundry pile up:
  - BA: Wash just 3 dishes or set a timer for 5 minutes
- Skipping the gym due to fatigue:
  - BA: Take a 10 minute walk instead
- Doomscrolling (spending excessive amounts of time consuming negative news):

- BA: Put phone away and watch one uninterrupted TV show before getting your phone again

### **Support for BA:**

Mood tracking and activity scheduling are very helpful BA tools. You can find free mood tracker and activity scheduling PDF worksheets online, or you can use an app ([Moodivate](#), [MoodMission](#), [Boost Me](#), [Daylio](#)).

Remember, you don't need to feel better to do better; doing better helps you feel better.

Written by Social Worker Michelle Burandt

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## **Upcoming Health Education Workshops**

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### **Gut Health 101: Nutrition Workshop for Digestive Health (Online)**



Gut Health 101 is all about understanding and taking care of your digestive system! Learn about the common digestive issues and share tips for keeping your digestive system running smoothly.

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

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## Balanced Eating Basics (Online)



Are you unsure of what to eat for good health and to meet your nutritional needs? Find out what balanced meals and snacks are. Learn how healthy eating can reduce the risk of disease.

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

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## Dealing with Depression (Online)

MENTAL



HEALTH

Learn about Major Depressive Disorder including signs and symptoms, treatments and self-care strategies.

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

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## Diabetes 101



Are you or a loved one living with diabetes? Empower yourself with the knowledge to manage your condition effectively!

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

## Patient & Family Learning Centres (PFLC) / Libraries



**UHN** Canada's Hospital

UHN Patient & Family Learning Centres/ Libraries offer reliable and up-to-date health information to patients, their families, community members and staff.

You can choose from resources in audio, video and electronic formats. We also have resources in different languages to meet your needs.

**Get Health Education Resources**

### What digital skills do you want to learn about?

Technology is always changing, and we want to make learning engaging and meaningful. Tell us what digital skills or topics you would like to learn more about. Your ideas will help us create workshops that fit your interests.

[Patient and Family Centres and Libraries - UHN](#)

**Take this survey now**

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up-to-date health information

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