

Taking charge

Your congenital heart defect (CHD) was probably diagnosed when you were still a baby or small child. Over the years, your parents, guardian, or other adults have been responsible for your health care, and you may or may not have had a chance to make decisions about your own health.

Receiving the right health care

As you grow up and become an adult, you will become more independent in all areas of your life—learning to drive, choosing your own friends and activities, and deciding what type of education and career are right for you. Your health care is another area in which you will need to take charge.

For years, you may have been with a health care team that specializes in caring for children. As you become an adult, you will need to make the transition to adult health care. This is done so that you receive the care that is right for you.

Many resources (books, pamphlets, people, groups, and videos) are available to help you make the transition to adult care. For example, you may be given a pamphlet that describes your health condition and information you need to know. Some hospitals also have workbooks to help you learn about your health condition.

This section will give you some tips for making the transition to the adult health care system.



GROWING UP

LEARNING TO DRIVE



CHOOSING YOUR
OWN FRIENDS AND
ACTIVITIES



DECIDING WHAT
TYPE OF EDUCATION
AND CAREER ARE
RIGHT FOR YOU



TAKING CHARGE
OF YOUR
HEALTH CARE



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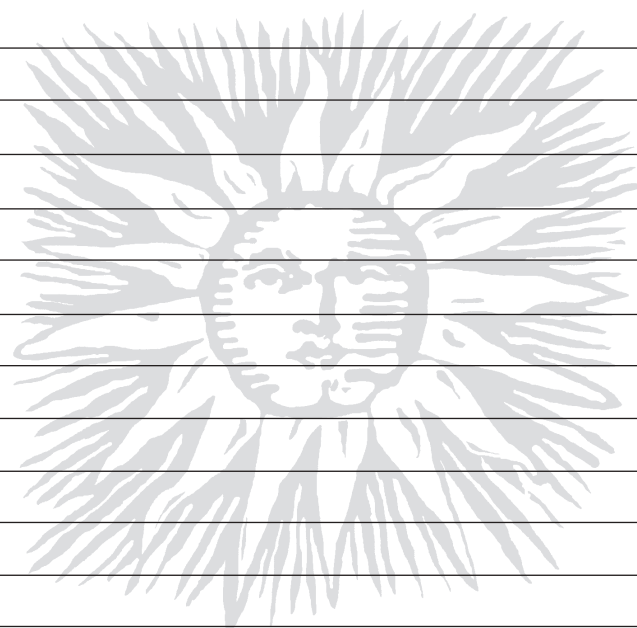
WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY HEART CONDITION?

As you get older, you may start to have more questions about your heart condition. You will likely begin spending more time away from your parents - at school, and with friends. You will be asked to explain your heart condition and answer certain questions about your own care, so you need to be sure you know what to say. Try answering the questions below - if you need to, ask your family and health care team for help. Take this list of questions to your next clinic appointment to make sure the answers are right. Then practice the answers until you feel comfortable with what you are saying.

Questions	Answers
What is my heart condition called?	
How and when was I diagnosed with my heart condition?	
Is there any known cause of my heart condition?	
Do I have any other health concerns that are not related to my heart condition? If yes, what are they called?	
What treatments and surgeries have I had in the past?	
Do I need to take any medications on a regular basis? If so, what are they called and what do they do?	

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY HEART CONDITION? - CONTINUED

Questions	Answers
Are there any medications I should not take?	
Are there any special precautions I need to take with dental or other medical procedures?	
Are there any activities I should not do? Why not?	
What are the signs and symptoms that would mean I should call or visit my family doctor?	
What tests or procedures am I likely to need on my next follow-up visit with my cardiologist?	
Will I likely need any surgical procedures in the future?	



TREATMENTS, TESTS AND MEDICATIONS

When you understand and follow a treatment plan, you will feel involved and in control of your health condition. Most teens with congenital heart defects face very few, if any, restrictions in their day-to-day life. However, some teens get mixed messages about diet or activity restrictions and you may not be sure which information is right. If so, it is important to talk to your health care team so that you are confident and in control of your day-to-day activities.

Write down all the important things you do to keep yourself as healthy as possible. It is your list; so include everything *you* think is important. We suggest you write it in pencil so you can keep it up-to-date.

TODAY'S DATE: _____ UPDATED: _____

List	What can I do?
Medications (dose and schedule)	
Medications to avoid	
Activities/fun	
Exercises	
Activities to avoid	
Treatments	
Diet	
Things I can do to keep myself healthy	

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

ADVOCACY: YOUR RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING

Making the transition to adult care involves taking on more and more responsibility for your own care. Learning how to advocate or stand up for yourself and your rights takes time to develop. You have the right to be involved in decisions that affect you and your health. This may feel awkward at first, especially if your parents have been the ones who have made decisions for you in the past. Remember - you have time to learn from them and others about what questions you need to ask and what things to consider in making important health decisions.

Rights	Your Ideas
YOU HAVE THE RIGHT: ■ To be safe from all types of abuse.	
■ To be taken care of and have enough food, clothing, shelter and medical care.	
■ To go to school and take part in cultural and recreational activities.	
■ To have a say in decisions that are made about you.	
■ To be fully informed about what is happening to you, with information that is clear, helpful, and easy to understand.	
■ To advocate for yourself (the strongest form of advocacy is self-advocacy) - speaking for yourself in dealing with those who are making decisions about you. When you can't advocate for yourself for whatever reason, you have the right to ask someone to help you say what you need.	
■ Along with the people who care about you, to be involved in decisions that affect you.	

* Adapted from *Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate*, Vancouver, BC, Canada as cited in *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Health Conditions*, 1999.

CHOOSING YOUR OWN FAMILY DOCTOR

As you grow older and think about moving away from home, you may think about choosing a different family doctor than the doctor your parents see. A family doctor is interested in your specific condition as well as all your general health needs. A family doctor who lives in your own community will know about programs and services that can support your plans. The following steps can help you choose a family doctor:

Choosing a family doctor

1. Ask your family and friends for names of suggested doctors.
2. Think about the type of doctor you would like; male or female, the location of his or her office, someone who understands your language or culture, and the types of patients he or she sees.
3. Shop around - make sure your doctor meets "your" needs. You may want to talk to other teens with CHDs to see if they have a family doctor that they recommend.
4. Make an appointment as a "new patient", and have your medical card ready to give the receptionist with your phone number and address.
5. On your first visit remember your medical card and any information about yourself you might need, including phone number, address, specialist information, and medical history.
6. Ask questions (is this doctor right for me?):
 - Is the doctor experienced with my condition?
 - What days of the week does this doctor work?
 - What hospital does this doctor admit to in case of an emergency?
7. Ask yourself:
 - Am I comfortable with this person?
 - Is this doctor listening to me?
 - Do I understand the answers to my questions?
 - Am I treated with respect?
 - Is this doctor interested in me and what is happening in my life?
 - Is this a person I can learn to trust?
 - Is this a person I can contact if I feel in danger from myself or others?
 - Is this a person who welcomes my ideas and suggestions?
 - Will information be kept private between the doctor and myself?

MY CHOICE: DR. _____

OFFICE HOURS: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

ADDRESS: _____

RECEPTIONIST'S NAME: _____

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

Talking to the rest of your health care team

Your team may have many doctors other than your family doctor. Keep track of the names of these health care professionals, how they can support you, and how to contact them, by filling in the health care professional directory (Who's who on your health care team) in the Directory in the Record Keeping section, page 13-4.

As you start to become more involved in your own health care, there are several questions you may want to ask to help you get ready for adult health care.

Let these health care professionals know that you want to talk to them about:

- your condition, treatments and medications,
- being involved in and making health care decisions,
- your abilities and plans for the future at school or in the job market,
- school, friends, dating, and relationships,
- videos, books, and pamphlets that teach about your heart condition and about becoming more independent,
- choosing an adult medical specialist, and what is expected of you as an adult patient.

Preparing for an emergency

As you grow older you will likely be doing more and more activities independently, and your family will not always be with you. When you know what to do and whom to contact if you are sick, your confidence will grow and you will worry less.

Some changes to your health take several hours or days to happen so you may have some warning. However, you may have sudden changes if you have a complex type of CHD or unusual heartbeat rhythms (dysrhythmias). Ask your health care team for symptoms you should be concerned about, particularly those that mean you should contact a health care professional.

Which doctor to call

You need to know which doctor or specialist to talk to for different things. For example, your family doctor may be able to help you with some mild symptoms, but for more severe problems, your cardiologist may want you to contact him or her directly or call for an ambulance by dialing 911 or your local emergency number.

MedicAlert™

Your cardiologist may ask you to wear a MedicAlert™ bracelet or necklace. A MedicAlert™ tells the emergency team that you have a health concern that may affect the care they provide. It also provides critical medical facts about your health condition, a 24-hour hotline number they can call, and your member ID number. This information allows the emergency team to contact the MedicAlert™ hotline for more medical details from your confidential computerized record, including your medications, allergies, physician, and emergency contacts. This can help to avoid life-threatening complications and can play an important role in your survival and treatment. Ask your cardiologist or cardiac nurse more about MedicAlert™ and whether you should think about wearing one.



TALKING IT OUT

Let your health care professionals know that you want to talk to them about:

YOUR CONDITION,
TREATMENTS AND
MEDICATIONS



BEING INVOLVED IN
MAKING HEALTH CARE
DECISIONS



YOUR ABILITIES AND
PLANS FOR THE
FUTURE AT SCHOOL OR
IN THE JOB MARKET



SCHOOL, FRIENDS,
DATING AND
RELATIONSHIPS



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YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN

When you need to get medical care, it helps to have your medical history ready ahead of time. Your cardiac team may be able to give you a “health passport” or summary of your medical history to use to record medical information. If not, fill in the following form in pencil and update it when there are changes.

NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____ DAY/MONTH/YEAR

PROVINCIAL HEALTH CARE CARD NUMBER:

EMERGENCY CONTACT/ NEXT OF KIN:

(List people who know about your condition and would be good contacts in case of an emergency. Provide name, relationship, and contact phone number).

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

FAMILY DOCTORS NAME AND PHONE NUMBER:

PEDIATRICIAN'S NAME AND PHONE NUMBER:

CARDIOLOGIST'S NAME AND PHONE NUMBER:

NAME OF YOUR HEART CONDITION _____

NAME OF YOUR HEART CONDITION:

OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS/ASSOCIATED DISORDERS:
(Include any history of irregular heart rhythms)

(include any history of irregular heart rhythms)

PREVIOUS SURGICAL OR OTHER INTERVENTIONS:
(Include date they were performed and any significant complications)



YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN - CONTINUED

Medical History

ALLERGIES OR DRUG REACTIONS:

MEDICATION RESTRICTIONS:

CURRENT MEDICATIONS:

(Include name, amount, and times taken/day)

1.

2.

3.

4.

FUTURE MEDICAL TREATMENTS OR SURGERY:

CURRENT HEALTH STATUS:

(Include current management plan, potential complications, and plan for next cardiac follow-up appointment)

DESCRIBE ANY SPIRITUAL OR CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT MAY AFFECT YOUR CARE:

DESCRIBE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION YOU WOULD WANT EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU OR YOUR TREATMENT:

(Consider possible situations where you may not be able to talk or communicate your concerns or desires directly)

SUMMARY LAST UPDATED: _____ DAY/MONTH/YEAR

FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOUR BODY

How you see yourself and your body is a big part of your self-esteem—how you feel about yourself. Feeling good about the way you look is especially difficult these days because ads and the media bombard us with images of “the perfect body”. You may be particularly concerned about the way you look because of the effects of your CHD. You aren’t alone. Many teens with CHDs are concerned that they look different than their friends - possibly because they are small for their age, have scars from surgery, have a blue tinge to their skin from cyanosis, or are taking medications that affect their appearance.

It is often helpful to get opinions from your peers or health care professionals involved in your care about how you might be able to understand and change or accept your appearance. The table below may help you think through your concerns. Write down the things you are worried about, and then write your ideas about how you can either change your appearance or deal with your concerns.

I wish I could change my...	Here is my idea!
Skin	
Face	
Size	
Incision	
Body	
Arms	
Legs	
Other	

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

Questions about sex

Learning about how your body develops and changes is part of your sexual health. You may already have heard a lot of mixed information about heart problems affecting sex. Sometimes this information is about adult heart disease - don't believe everything you hear. Talk to the health care team, ask about sex and CHDs, and check whether what you've heard from other people is correct. Write down any questions you have and ask a trusted member of your health care team to go over them with you. You can ask that you and your specialist have some time *alone* for part of your appointment if you don't want a parent there.

Questions you may want to ask the specialist/cardiac care team

- How will my CHD affect the way I change and develop?
- How will my CHD affect puberty?
- How will the medications I take affect the way I develop?
- How will puberty affect the medications I take?
- Will I be able to have children if I choose to?
- Do I need to consider different forms of birth control because of my CHD or medications?
- How will pregnancy affect my CHD and my health?
- How will my CHD affect my pregnancy?
- Will my children have a CHD?

Feeling connected

Even if you have a great family and many friends, you can still feel different and alone. One way to help you feel less alone is to get "connected" with others who have a similar health condition. Ask members of your cardiac team if they are aware of any resources for peer support for youth with CHDs. Some possible connections are listed below.

Peer support groups

Peer support groups or associations for youth with CHDs, allow you to:

- make new friends,
- connect with others who may share your concerns and questions,
- find information about your heart condition and how to control it,
- share interests,
- have some fun.

Another teen

Consider a one-to-one connection with another teen with a CHD. Your cardiologist, clinic nurse, child life specialist, or social worker may be able to connect you with another teen who has had similar experiences and who shares similar interests.

Websites

There are websites just for teens with health concerns and CHDs. Some websites include chat rooms or links to other teens with similar interests.

Magazines

Magazines or newsletters provide information for people with similar health conditions.

Summer camps

Summer camps for teens with a CHD are a great chance to have fun with peers who share similar experiences.

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.



FEELING CONNECTED

ASK YOUR CARDIAC TEAM TO PROVIDE YOU WITH RESOURCES FOR PEER SUPPORT



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EXPRESSING YOURSELF

Sometimes writing things down or keeping a journal can help you think through your feelings and remember what you learn. See if writing down your thoughts helps you.

Here are some ideas you may want to write about:

Who can I talk to for advice, help and support? _____

How can I meet people and make friends? _____

I can get information about my condition and programs from... _____

I would describe my friends as... _____

I know I am not alone because... _____

Planning your future

Your heart condition may mean that you cannot take part in some activities or certain jobs. It is important to talk to your school teachers or employer about your heart condition to ensure your safety and the safety of others. It is good to be honest about your condition and what you can reasonably do.

Questions for you

Q: Who needs to know about my heart condition and why?

- Teachers/Professors
- School Nurse/School Health Unit
- Principal/School Administrator
- Coaches/Counsellors

Q: What is it about my heart condition that I need to share?

Q: What potential actions do they need to be prepared for?

Questions others may ask you

Employers, teachers and your peers may have questions for you. Discuss the questions below with your family and health care team, and be prepared to answer them if asked:

- What is the name of my heart condition? Do I have any related or unrelated health concerns (for example, a history of seizures)?

- When was my heart condition diagnosed?
- What causes CHDs? Is it contagious?
- Has my heart defect been repaired? When?
- Am I still receiving treatment for my CHD?
- Has my specialist discussed the possibility of further surgeries or tests in the future?
- Am I currently taking any medications related to my heart condition? If yes, can they affect my ability to concentrate, stay awake, drive a vehicle, or participate in certain activities?
- What signs or symptoms indicate that I need medical help?
- What, if any, are my emergency instructions?
- Who should be contacted in the event of a health emergency?
- Do I have any activity restrictions?
- Will I need any changes or help so that I can participate in school or work?



* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Here are some questions others may ask you:

WHAT IS THE NAME OF MY HEART CONDITION?



WHAT CAUSES CHDS?



WHAT SIGNS INDICATE THAT I NEED MEDICAL HELP?



WHAT ARE MY EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS?



DO I HAVE ANY ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS?



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PLANNING YOUR FUTURE - ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Some types of CHD can affect many parts of a person's life. You may want to ask your family doctor or cardiologist if you need to restrict your activity. (Refer to page 7-13 for additional resources)

■ My health condition does not warrant any activity restrictions.

■ I should avoid activities such as _____

because _____.

■ I should not sky dive or deep sea dive because _____

_____.

■ I should not drive a _____ because _____

_____.

■ I should not participate in strenuous weight lifting activities because _____

_____.

■ I should not participate in contact sports such as _____

because _____.

■ The following careers or jobs, _____

are not recommended because, _____

_____.

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

What kind of medical insurance do I need?

You will need your own insurance when you are no longer covered by your parents/guardian. It is important to apply for coverage in advance so that you aren't faced with big bills. You may also qualify for additional community or government assistance, depending on the type of heart defect and how it affects your day-to-day activities.

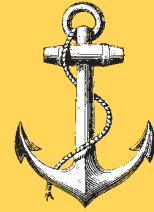
Here are some questions to ask about insurance plans and benefits:

- On what date does my parents'/guardian's medical insurance no longer cover me?
- What services am I entitled to through their plan?
- How do I get continued medical, dental, and extended health insurance?
- What medications are covered by my province's drug plan?
- Are there other ways to get coverage for these medications?
- What other benefits and services can I apply to receive?
- Travel: transportation, education programs, disability tax credits.
- Other insurance plans to consider and enquire about include:
 - Travel Insurance
 - Life Insurance
 - _____

Some Helpful Hints:

- Start looking for answers before you are 18 years old.
- Have your parents/family members let you read their insurance policies.
- Write down the answers to these questions.
- Talk to your social worker about insurance plans and benefits.
- Collect brochures that explain how the plans work.
- Talk to your pharmacist and social worker about ways to pay for your medications.
- Ask them how much the medications cost without coverage so that you are aware of costs.
- Think ahead. Make sure you have medical coverage before you take a trip.

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.



INSURANCE HINTS

LOOK FOR ANSWERS
BEFORE REACHING 18



HAVE YOUR PARENTS
LET YOU READ THEIR
INSURANCE POLICIES



COLLECT BROCHURES
THAT EXPLAIN HOW
THE PLANS WORK



ARRANGE HOW TO
PAY FOR MEDICATIONS
WITH YOUR
PHARMACIST AND
SOCIAL WORKER



MAKE SURE YOU
HAVE MEDICAL
COVERAGE BEFORE
YOU TAKE A TRIP



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HOW TO BE HEALTHY

BE SMOKE FREE



BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE



KEEP A HEALTHY BLOOD PRESSURE



EAT A HEALTHY, LOW-FAT DIET



MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT



CONTROL YOUR STRESS



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What can I do to be heart healthy?

Be smoke-free

Smoking increases the chance of getting all major forms of heart disease and stroke, and people with CHDs are very much at risk. Smoking is more dangerous based on the number of cigarettes smoked per day, how long a person smokes, the age when a person starts smoking, and how a person inhales.

Three agents in tobacco smoke that contribute to cardiovascular disease are tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide. Tar is left as particles in the lung. Nicotine is the addictive part of cigarettes that makes it so hard to quit. Nicotine also stimulates the sympathetic nervous system, which leads to an increased heart rate, increased heart muscle contraction, increased sugar or glucose release, increased insulin production, narrowed blood vessels (or vasoconstriction) and damage to the inner arterial wall. Nicotine damages the inner wall of the artery by stimulating further plaque development and increasing platelet stickiness, which means less blood flow to the heart muscle. Carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen going to tissues throughout your body, including your heart and brain.

Tobacco smoke worsens heart, lung, and allergic conditions of/of all Canadians who have those kinds of conditions. Non-smokers are affected too. New studies show that second-hand smoke contains more dangerous toxins than the smoke inhaled by the smoker.

Be physically active

Regular physical activity is an important part of daily life for teens. The average Canadian child or youth watches television for more than 26 hours per week. This is above the 25 to 30 hours they spend sitting in school.

Three types of activities are needed to keep the body healthy: endurance, flexibility, and strength. Doing a variety from each group, and activities that use the large muscle groups, such as walking and swimming, gives you the most health benefits. You don't have to do rigorous sports or training to improve your health. However, the greater the activity level and amount, the greater the benefit.

To get the benefits of cardiovascular exercise, you need at least 60 minutes of mild physical activity every day or 30 minutes of moderate activity four times per week to stay healthy or improve health. The length of time you need to spend on an activity depends on how much effort you put into it. You can also do 60 minutes of exercise spread over the day in 10-minute sessions.

Regular physical activity raises high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels in the body, makes the muscles of the body more efficient, improves circulation, and increases the diameter of the coronary arteries. These effects help keep the heart muscle fit and able to efficiently supply oxygen to the rest of the body. Exercise can also help you manage stress, control your blood pressure, and keep a healthy weight.

Before starting any exercise program, you should check with your doctor about the activity level that is safe for you.

Keep a healthy blood pressure

Blood pressure is a measure of the force of blood on the walls of an artery as the blood is pushed from the heart. High blood pressure (hypertension) causes the arteries to become stiff and narrow, causing the left ventricle to work harder. Hypertension starts in men and women between the ages of 15 and 24. Children, even young babies, can have high blood pressure because of a disease (such as diabetes) or the use of some medications.

Hypertension has no symptoms. It is sometimes called the “silent killer” because there are often no warning signs until there is a serious problem. The only way to know your blood pressure is to get it measured with the right equipment. You should have your blood pressure checked at least every two years, or more often if your doctor recommends it. Keep a record of your blood pressure. You and your doctor can decide if any treatments are needed to keep your blood pressure healthy. To receive a free blood pressure wallet card, call your local Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Eat a healthy, low-fat diet

A healthy diet has a variety of foods, and is high in fibre and low in fat.

To promote health and prevent disease:

- **Enjoy a variety of foods.** The four food groups in the current *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* each provide different nutrients, and when eaten on a daily basis, give you a healthy balance.
- **Select cereals, breads, other grain products, vegetables, and fruits.** By eating from these food groups, your fat intake is automatically low. Choose whole grain products or enriched foods.

- **Choose lower fat dairy products, leaner meats and foods prepared with little or no fat.** Dairy products with a lower percentage of milk fat (M.F.) or butter fat (B.F.) give you the protein and calcium necessary for health (for example, 2%, 1% or skim milk for coffee or drinking). Trim visible fat from meat and choose lower fat cooking methods such as roasting, broiling or baking. Note: A reasonable portion of cooked meat is the size of a deck of cards, about 50 to 100 grams.

- **Limit salt (sodium) intake.** Eating foods high in salt, or adding a lot of salt to your food can cause some people to develop high blood pressure. Your doctor will tell you whether you need to control your salt intake to control your heart condition.

- **Limit caffeine intake.** Caffeine is found in coffee, colas, tea, and chocolate. For people who are sensitive to caffeine, it can aggravate heart conditions such as a racing or irregular heartbeat, especially with large amounts. Canada's *Nutritional Recommendations* suggest that you have only up to four cups of regular coffee per day.

Your cardiac team may recommend dietary choices that are helpful for your heart condition.

Maintain a healthy weight

For overweight people, the heart has to work harder. Most people can keep a healthy weight by having a balance of regular physical activity and healthy eating.



EATING HEALTHY

ENJOY A VARIETY
OF FOODS



SELECT CEREALS,
WHOLE GRAIN BREADS,
OTHER WHOLE GRAIN
PRODUCTS, VEGETABLES
AND FRUITS



CHOOSE LOWER
FAT DAIRY PRODUCTS,
LEANER MEATS
AND FOODS



LIMIT SALT INTAKE



LIMIT CAFFEINE INTAKE



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GETTING YOUR LICENSE

YOU MAY NEED
ADDITIONAL MEDICAL
INFORMATION FROM
YOUR DOCTOR



CERTAIN
MEDICATIONS MAY
PREVENT YOU FROM
GETTING A LICENSE



SHOULD YOUR
MEDICAL CONDITION
CHANGE, TALK WITH
YOUR DOCTOR TO
MAKE SURE THERE
ARE NO SITUATIONS
THAT WOULD AFFECT
YOUR DRIVING



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Control your stress

People with high levels of stress or continued stress have higher blood cholesterol levels, increases in blood pressure, and have platelets that are more likely to clot (clump together inside the blood vessels). Stress-filled lifestyles also make it difficult for people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

The first step in reducing and managing stress is to figure out what is causing it. Situations that cause stress are called stressors. These may be major events (for example, changing jobs), or daily hassles (for example, traffic jams).

To begin managing stress, you need to be able to face it, note your reaction to it, and try to change your reaction.

Some suggestions include:

- regular physical activity,
- relaxation techniques,
- sharing feelings,
- managing time,
- eating a balanced diet,
- participating in other activities that are enjoyable,
- confronting the person or situation that is causing the stress.

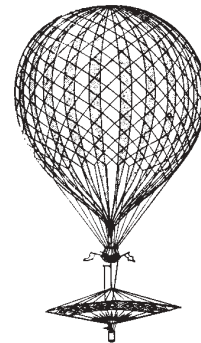
A health care professional can give you advice on how to manage stress. Information is also available from your local Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Getting a driver's license

Most teens and adults who have a CHD can drive a vehicle. However, because of your history of having a heart condition, you may need additional medical information from your doctor so that you can get a driver's license. Some people on certain medications or with a history of seizures may not be allowed to drive a vehicle.

The following checklist may help you prepare for getting your driver's license.

- According to your family doctor and heart specialist, is there anything about your health condition that would prevent you from getting your driver's license?
- If your family doctor is not sure, contact your local Motor Vehicle Branch for further information,
- If your medical condition changes after you have a driver's license, talk to your doctor to make sure that there are no situations that would affect your driving.



Maintaining your heart health: minimizing your risks

One of the hardest parts of growing up is peer pressure. It is part of every teenager's junior and high school years. Peer pressure often pushes teens into doing things they might otherwise not do, such as smoking, drinking, and doing drugs. For teens with a CHD, these choices can have very harmful effects.

As a teen with a CHD, you need to avoid doing things that will put your health at risk, such as smoking, which makes your heart work harder and reduces the amount of oxygen available to you; and drinking and taking street drugs, which can interfere with your heart medications and have negative effects on your overall health.

Here are some effective ways to resist negative peer pressure:

- Remember that it is possible to say "no" and still have friends. Say "no" and mean it.
- Practice assertiveness skills. Rehearse for the times when you will have to say "no" in a difficult situation.
- Practice responses you can use to resist smoking or drugs, such as, "No thanks, I want to keep my body healthy" or "I don't want to pollute the air and make people breathe in my second-hand smoke" or just say, "No thanks".
- Explore your own fears of being different. Saying "no" can make you feel different, and it is scary to face possible ridicule and rejection. Think about what makes a true friend, and how daring to be different can

be mature and courageous.

- Think of ways to feel good. Choose hobbies, interests and activities that make you feel good about yourself.

Think of ways you might handle the following situations...

- Your friends are smoking at school and they might think you are uncool if you don't "try one".
- Your house is smoke-free. When your friends visit, they say if you don't let them smoke, they won't bother visiting.
- You go to a friend's house for a party. All the older kids are smoking. They ask you if you want to try, and offer you a cigarette.
- Your friends invite you to stay for dinner and they are smokers.
- Your dad and mom have agreed only to smoke outside. When you go to watch TV, one of them is smoking in the TV room.
- You have a smoke-free home. Your aunt comes to visit, and when your parents are

PEER PRESSURE

YOU CAN SAY "NO" TO
SMOKING AND STILL
HAVE FRIENDS

PRACTICE
ASSERTIVENESS
SKILLS

PRACTICE RESPONSES
TO RESIST SMOKING
OR DRUGS, SUCH AS,
"NO THANKS, I WANT
TO KEEP MY BODY
HEALTHY"

THINK HOW DARING
TO BE DIFFERENT CAN
BE MATURE AND
COURAGEOUS



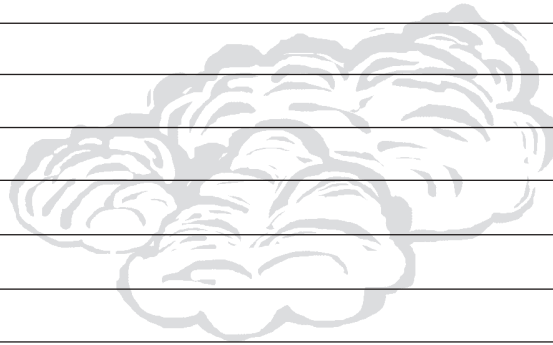
Finding answers. For life.

MEDICATIONS DO NOT MIX

If you take more than one medicine, your doctor and pharmacist are very careful to make sure they can be mixed safely. Medications prescribed to help your health condition may not mix well with other medications, herbal remedies, or street drugs. These drugs can have even more serious or life-threatening effects if you have certain types of CHDs. Your friends may offer you drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes, or cocaine. Find out what these drugs can do to you and the effects they will have on your health. Ask your doctor or pharmacist. Make a list of your medications, then answer the questions below:

What over-the-counter medications should I avoid?
Why?

What herbal remedies, vitamins and naturopathic therapies should I avoid?
Why?



I take the medications listed below:

What would happen if I mix them with:

	Alcohol	Cigarettes	Marijuana	Other
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

GRADUATION CHECKLIST

Before you leave for the adult world, double check that you have everything packed and ready to go.

Here is a list for you to review

- ① I am comfortable with my family doctor.
- ① My family doctor is aware that I am changing specialists.
- ① I have transferred to an adult clinic/specialist, and know the contact information.
- ① My personal copy of my health records is up-to-date.
- ① I have questions ready to ask the adult health care team.
- ① I understand what I need to do about insurance.
- ① I have a social plan for making new friends and connecting to groups or clubs.
- ① My school information is up-to-date.
- ① I understand my restrictions on driving and other activities.
- ① I have answers to my questions about sexual health and family planning.
- ① My volunteering/employment records are up-to-date.
- ① I have information about any transportation benefits and services I may need or am entitled to.
- ① I understand what medications I am on, how to take them, and I am aware of any side effects, long-term effects, and combination effects.
- ① I understand what to expect as an adult when it comes to right to information, informed consent, and treatment.
- ① I have thanked the pediatric team and given them a warm good-bye.

* Adapted from *Getting On Trac: A Workbook For Youth Living With Chronic Conditions*, 1999.

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NOTES

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