

HEART MATTERS

AN ORGANISATION DEDICATED TO FIGHTING THE
'EVERY WOMAN' DISEASE



Trending:
A Healthy Heart



♥ Her Heart

DIGITAL MAGAZINE
ALL THINGS HEART HEALTH

SUMMER 2024
ISSUE NO.10

WWW.HERHEART.ORG



Welcome to our Spring Her Heart Magazine. In this edition, we discuss seasonal living, enjoying summer, reducing stress in the holiday season and a recap of the Her Heart Conference.

We endeavour to keep you informed about all matters related to heart disease in women. You can expect a new edition of the Her Heart Digital Magazine to land in your inbox seasonally.

Our community is at the centre of all that we do and this magazine has been crafted with this in mind. We value your opinions and would love to hear your thoughts and receive feedback!

Please share these with us at hello@herheart.org

With Love,

Dr Linda Worrall-Carter

CEO & Founder



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OUR VISION



Her Heart is Australia's only not-for-profit (NFP) focused on the prevention of women's heart disease.

Her Heart speaks to women, about women, and for women.

We know from the research that heart disease in women is largely preventable. Her Heart aspires to educate and empower women to take control of their lives and make the necessary changes to decrease their risk.

At Her Heart, we are dedicated to empowering women with the knowledge improve their heart health, as well as increasing awareness in health professionals.

Our mission is to:
Improve the heart health of Australian women and reduce the death toll

Continue to be the 'go-to' place for women to access accurate information

To make women's heart health a top priority in the health, government, business and community sectors.



THE ART OF SEASONAL LIVING

Sunshine, sand, and a summer of self-care in Australia

Living seasonally is about syncing your lifestyle with the natural flow of the seasons, embracing the unique benefits each one offers, and making simple adjustments to thrive in any climate. From the gentle quietness of winter to the lively energy of summer, every season offers an opportunity to slow down and live intentionally.

For our readers in the Northern Hemisphere, winter is a time to slow down, recharge, and embrace the cozy comforts of the season. Wrap yourself in a warm knit jumper, light a candle, sip tea, and take the opportunity to rest deeply.

Meanwhile, for our Australian readers, summer has arrived, bringing sunshine, longer days, and rising temperatures. It's a season full of energy and activity, but also important to be mindful of how heat can affect our hearts. High temperatures increase the risk of dehydration, elevate heart rate, and lower blood pressure, placing added stress on the heart. A few simple changes to your routine can help you stay healthy and enjoy the season.

Adapting to Summer in Australia

Summer's vibrant energy often means busier days filled with social events, outdoor activities, and holiday plans. To thrive during this season, focus on hydration, eat light, refreshing meals, and prioritise movement. Seasonal produce like watermelon, mangoes, and leafy greens not only keep you cool but provide the nutrients your body needs to stay energised.

Incorporate gentle exercise, like early morning walks or swimming, to enjoy the benefits of movement without overexerting in the heat.

Being prepared is key to enjoying outdoor activities safely. Here's what to pack in your summer bag to protect your health and make the most of your day.

What to Pack in Your Summer Bag?

Sunscreen (SPF 50+) – Australia is the skin cancer capital of the world, making sun protection non-negotiable. Reapply every two hours if you're outside.

Sunglasses – Protect your eyes from UV rays with a good-quality pair (prevents cataracts).

Reusable Water Bottle – Staying hydrated is critical, especially in the heat. Aim for 8 cups of water daily, but if you have a heart condition, consult your GP for personalised advice.

Wear a hat – Keep your head and face shaded to reduce the risk of sunburn and heat exhaustion.

Hand Sanitiser – Good hygiene is important all year round.

Embrace the warmth and energy of summer by staying prepared and looking after your health. Find time to slow down and enjoy simple joys like a sunrise walk or beachside picnic. Stay hydrated, care for your heart, and make the most of the sunshine!



Staying Active in the Summer Heat





Exercising in the warmer months is a great way to stay healthy and enjoy the beautiful Australian outdoors. But with the heat, it's important to stay mindful of how it affects your body and take necessary precautions to overheat as it can place a strain on your heart (increases your heart rate and blood pressure). Whether it's bike rides, swimming, or hiking, there are plenty of activities to choose from that support cardiovascular health, all while having fun in the sun!

If you're planning a bike ride, remember to cover up with long sleeves, wear a helmet, and apply sunscreen to protect your skin. Cycle in the cooler hours of the morning or evening to avoid the midday heat.

For swimming, don't forget to wear a rash shirt for extra sun protection. Swimming is a low-impact exercise that's great for your heart and joints. Challenge yourself to swim for 20-30 minutes, making sure to stay hydrated and listen to your body's signals.



When it comes to hiking, it's always a good idea to bring a buddy along for safety. Start early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid the midday sun. Make sure to bring a water bottle, wear breathable clothing, and pace yourself along the trail to keep your heart rate steady. A moderate 30-45 minute hike is perfect for improving cardiovascular health while you enjoy nature.

Challenge yourself this summer to try one of these heart-healthy activities, just remember to stay cool, hydrated, and listen to your body. Be sure to tag us [@HerHeartAustralia](https://www.instagram.com/HerHeartAustralia) in your heart-healthy summer activities, we'd love to see how you stay active and take care of your heart this season! Use the hashtag [#HeartHealthySummer](https://www.instagram.com/HeartHealthySummer) and don't forget, if you have a heart condition, please consult your doctor to ensure these activities are suitable for you.



The Inaugural Her Heart Conference 2024

We hosted our inaugural Her Heart Conference on Friday, October 25th, in Sydney, and what an incredible day it was! Here's a beautiful group photo of all our attendees.

Thank you so much for your support and for joining us in raising awareness for women's heart health. We hope you had a valuable experience, and we are grateful to each of you for contributing to the success of this event.

For those who missed out, we've put together a recap on the next page! We are also excited to share that we are working on something special to bring this important information to our community in 2025.



“The Health system has been developed for a 50 year old white man from Pennsylvania” - The Hon. Ged Kearney

On Friday, October 25th, 2024, Her Heart hosted its inaugural conference, bringing together over 150 attendees and 20+ expert speakers for a truly inspiring day. The event focused on advancing women’s heart health, tackling challenges, sharing solutions, and exploring new opportunities.

The conference began with a Welcome to Country from A/Prof Vicki Wade, acknowledging the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, followed by an engaging opening from our Founder, Prof. Linda Worrall-Carter. Dr. Linda spoke to what Her Heart has achieved since it was established in 2015.

Debra Clare, Her Heart community ambassador, inspired the audience with [her personal story](#) of heart disease, highlighting how she was searching online about her symptoms and came across Her Heart. She spoke to the impact this had on getting her seen by a specialist but unfortunately it was too late.

The Hon. Ged Kearney, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health gave the Opening Federal Address speaking to medical misogyny and the need for a health system that truly supports women.

Her Heart Advisor and International Plenary speaker - Prof. Noel Bairey Merz captivated the crowd with insights from the WISE Study, highlighting important sex differences in heart disease.

Prof. Gita presented the renowned Women’s Health Study and cardiovascular risks in reference to a woman’s life-course. Others such as Dr. Karen Phillips and A/Prof Clare Arnett addressed critical issues like atrial fibrillation and heart failure in women.

Dr. Jennifer Collier discussed practical strategies for tackling health inequalities faced by women in regional and remote Australia, including a compassionate approach to patient care, upskilling, creating welcoming spaces, and improving access to cardiac rehabilitation and telehealth services.

One of the most impactful presentations of the day came from Aunty A/Prof Vicki Wade, who shared an inspiring talk on the strength, determination, and resilience of Aboriginal women, From Koort for the Koort. She also highlighted a sobering reality: two First Nations people die each week in Australia from Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD).



Dr. Neil Johnson, Founder & Director of the [Global Heart Hub](#) presented findings from the Global Heart Hub Consensus statement.

The feedback from attendees and speakers was overwhelmingly positive: *“What an amazing conference to be part of. I loved every minute of it, the innovation, the passion, and the speakers’ knowledge.”*

Although we couldn’t cover every session here, we’re excited to announce that all the talks will be available in our Her Heart membership in 2025. Stay tuned for more information!

We are grateful to everyone who attended and made this event a success. We look forward to 2025 which will be in Melbourne!

Talking with an expert

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In this interview, we had the privilege of speaking with [Sophie Scott OAM](#), the MC of our inaugural Her Heart Conference. Sophie, an accomplished author, keynote speaker, and former ABC medical reporter, shares advice on managing stress and its impact on health.

How do you think stress affects women, and why should they be especially mindful of it?

Stress is your response to what's going on around you, particularly when there is a threat or challenge. Acute stress is OK but when stress becomes chronic, you really start to see an impact on your health. Prolonged stress can lead to too much cortisol and other stress hormones which can disrupt many of your body's functions. This can put women at higher risk of a range of health problems including heart problems.

While taking on the load of caring for others, at the expense of your own wellbeing, might sound worthy, women can face health issues as a result.

What are some specific steps that women can take to reduce stress, especially with the extra demands of the festive season?

One of the sayings I love is "just because you CAN do something, doesn't mean you HAVE to."

Women are so capable and often take on way more responsibility for looking after others than they need to.

Add in the demands of the festive season, and it can become a recipe for overwhelm and overload! One step I like to do is to really think about what would make the festive season special and memorable for you. Is it connecting with your friends and family, sharing some delicious food and getting a short walk in where you can manage it? These are my goals! Be really intentional with



your time, energy and focus so that you can manage stress and enjoy the holiday season.

Many women struggle to find balance during the holidays. What advice would you give to help them prioritise self-care and manage their heart health?

Balance can be tricky to find during the holidays. But ask yourself - how do you want to feel this holiday season? Do you want to wake up feeling energised and excited about the events in your calendar? Or wake up with that feeling of dread in the pit of your stomach, as you brace yourself for yet another event that you wish you had said no to.

You get to decide. Your daily habits and actions will lead to you feeling really good, knowing you are taking time for your own health and wellbeing. My suggestions are to manage your heart health through a Mediterranean diet, regular movement, deep breathing and prioritising connection with people who lift you up!

Talking with an expert

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As someone who leads a very busy life, what daily habits do you prioritise to maintain your heart health?

Motivation for healthy habits can come and go - that's just human nature. So I make a point of embedding habits for my wellbeing so they become so automatic I don't have to rely on motivation.

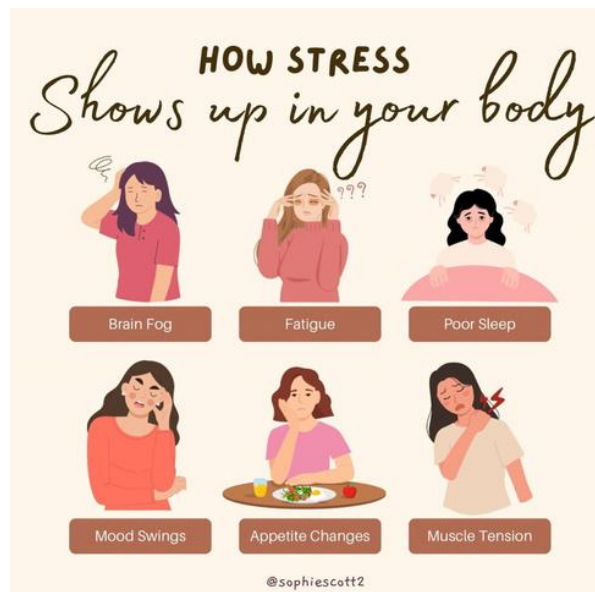
Here's one example. When I wake up every morning, the first thing I do is to have a cup of tea. So I began pairing that regular, daily habit with a new one of meditation. It's called habit stacking and it works! Doing the same new habit over and over builds new neural pathways so you keep the promises you make to yourself. I've done more than 500 days of meditation in a row using this approach. I'm developing a daily interactive online journal to help women with the mindset, motivation and mood to stick to these healthy habits.

Finally, what advice do you have for women reading this magazine who are aiming to start the new year with a healthier, stress-free mindset?

Stress is an evitable part of being alive but it's how you handle what happens to you that makes a difference to your health and wellbeing. Daily habits like meditation, movement and connection act as guardrails against the negative impact of stress. Your body and brain will thank you!

Check out Sophie's Socials

I share more about habits and maximising your mood, mindset and motivation on my website
www.sophiescott.com.au
www.youtube.com/@sophiescotttv



Be sure to visit Sophie's Instagram page [@sophiescott2](https://www.instagram.com/sophiescott2) for more fantastic advice and inspiring graphics like these!

Real stories:

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I was born with Congenital heart disease, so my story may differ a little or a lot from women who are diagnosed later on in life with heart disease. That being said, after undergoing my second open heart surgery at the age of 27 in 2017 for a Valve replacement and a Valve repair, it became very apparent to me that there was very little support available for adults living with a heart condition regardless of how that condition came about.

The year after my surgery, I had gone from being this happy-go-lucky lover of life to mentally and physically struggling with my self-confidence and acceptance. I was diagnosed with anxiety and

Her name was Cara; she too had been born with CHD. Having spent 27 years of my life having known no one in the CHD community, she was a breath of fresh air. Cara's condition was a bit more complex than mine, but we both bonded over talking about our conditions, and how much we both wanted to help spread awareness of how people saw heart disease. She was a real advocate for the heart community and someone I really looked up to. Cara sadly passed away last year a few months after receiving a new heart due

“Your mental and emotional well-being play such a vital role in your heart health, so it's no surprise that stress, anxiety, and depression are common risks for heart disease.”

depression, which was a concoction for disaster, and all I wanted was my old self back. We've all heard the saying 'Laughter is the best form of medicine'. Your mental and emotional well-being plays such a vital role in your heart health, so it's no surprise that stress, anxiety, and depression are common risks for heart disease. Regardless of being born with a heart condition or being diagnosed later on in life, your heart health is imperative.

I was very fortunate to meet a beautiful soul during my healing process after my surgery.

to complications, and I felt alone once more. After the loss of Cara, I was struggling with a lot of work stress. I wasn't exercising, I was eating a lot of junk food, and I wasn't taking care of myself at all. Then one night, I ended up in the hospital after experiencing a severe panic attack. If you are fortunate enough to have never experienced a panic attack, the symptoms can closely mimic that of a heart attack.

Though my condition is not hereditary, heart disease runs in my family. Both of my grandparents on my dad's side, as well as my dad and his brother, have all had heart attacks. It was the most terrifying experience I

have ever encountered, and it was the catalyst for me to make much-needed changes in my life. I made a promise not only to myself but also to Cara to look after myself inside and out and continue to help spread awareness and offer support to women who might be struggling.

We know that life isn't always plain sailing and unfortunately circumstances can happen, leading to detrimental effects on your emotional and physical well-being. Sometimes all we need is that one person who gets it and we can talk to. There are moments where I still feel like I'm recovering, and I think that's because I'm still trying to find the right resources. But I do hope to be more involved with the heart community in any way I can be and offer support to those who may need it. I hope that sharing my story here helps you in some way, perhaps even to share yours.



The Joy of Giving

When we give with love, we create a ripple effect that lasts beyond the holidays.



As the holiday season approaches, the spirit of giving fills the air. It's a time to reflect on the joy and where the act of giving, whether through a thoughtful gift or an act of service, has the power to bring warmth to both the giver and the receiver. This merry season, let's explore a few ways we can share the joy and make a lasting impact on the hearts of others.

Giving Flowers: A Gift with Meaning

Flowers are a timeless symbol of love. They are not only beautiful but also offer emotional benefits, lifting spirits, reducing stress, and fostering a sense of connection.

This December, we're excited to collaborate with Flowers Across, who have chosen Her Heart as their charity of the month. For every [Wildflower Posy Box](#) purchased, 10% of sales will support our mission. It's a meaningful way to share the joy of flowers while giving back and you can even treat yourself to a bouquet, knowing you're supporting a great cause.

Volunteering: The Gift of Time

While material gifts are often a holiday focus, the gift of time is just as valuable.

Volunteering lets us give back to our communities and make a meaningful difference. Whether it's helping at a food bank, supporting a neighbour, or offering your skills, volunteering spreads kindness. This month, consider sharing your time, it's a gift that keeps on giving.

Gifts: Beyond the Material

Sometimes, the best gifts aren't wrapped. Simple acts of kindness, like a heartfelt note or a home-cooked meal, can have a lasting impact. Consider preparing a heart-healthy meal for someone or checking in on a loved one during the holidays. The greatest gift can be simply showing up and offering support.

This holiday season, the joy of giving comes in many forms, whether through flowers, volunteering, or acts of kindness. These gestures create a ripple of love and compassion that lasts beyond the month. Let's make this season about the joy of giving, through actions that uplift and inspire.

Could laughter be the best medicine?

Exciting research led by Professor Marco Saffi suggests it just might be! The study found that people with coronary heart disease who watched comedy shows regularly actually experienced improvements in heart and circulation function.

Laughter helps lower stress, boost oxygen flow, and release feel-good endorphins, promoting relaxation and overall wellbeing

So this holiday season, grab a friend, some unsalted popcorn, and your favourite comedy, share some laughs and make some joyful memories!



Seasonal Superfoods

Tis the season for cherries, mangoes, peaches, and berries, so sweet and merry! Eating seasonally is not only more nutritious and brightens your plate but also helps cut down costs. Check out the fresh fruits and vegetables in season this summer, offering a tasty and budget-friendly way to support your health and enjoy the season.

Remote Health Checks

Researchers at the University of Tokyo have created a groundbreaking technology that uses artificial intelligence (AI) and a method called photoplethysmography (PPG) to measure blood pressure and assess the risk of diabetes—all without physical contact. PPG works by using light to detect tiny changes in blood flow under the skin. It is the same technology used in fitness trackers to measure heart rate and oxygen levels.

This technology, integrated into video calls or smartphone apps, allows healthcare providers to evaluate patients remotely. It could improve healthcare access, enabling early detection of conditions like hypertension and diabetes, especially in remote areas.

[Learn more about this innovative study and its potential to reshape healthcare.](#)

Reflections

What a year it's been! I am beyond grateful to so many people for a year of highs (and lows! ... where I learnt a lot!) but overall it's been a year of significant growth for Her Heart. Highlights include our inaugural Her Heart Conference in Sydney, which was a great success. We have had some incredible new partnerships, including the Sisterhood Foundation. I also had the privilege of working with the National Cardiac Registry around Sex Differences and presented at the Launch of their Annual report. As I look toward 2025, I'm inspired to dream bigger, refine our goals, and plan how we'll continue making a difference in women's heart health. I encourage you to take a moment for reflection as well!



A/Prof Deanne Riddington (Deputy Chair), Prof Linda Worrall-Carter (Founder) and Ailish Barry (Marketing & Comms Coordinator) at a recent lunch!

What I have been reading!

As a child I was never a big reader (my mother used to say I couldn't sit still long enough to read!) but over the years I have made up for it. I'm now an avid reader and find it especially relaxing at night. It's a great way to decompress as the action of reading from a hard back book actually helps you fall asleep.

I recently read *Wifedom* by Anne Funder. It's a compelling read about George Orwell's wife - Eileen Blair who clearly had significant input into *Animal Farm* but on the whole was ignored by Orwell or only referenced in his life as "my wife". She led an extraordinary life and its worth a read. Two quotes from the book stood out to me:

“

Reams of women's magazines offer advice to overburdened women on "self-care" or "juggling the load" as if the problem is personal and can be solved by yet MORE effort on our part - leaving the system that makes us and takes from us untouched.

- ANNE FUNDER, *WIFEDOM* (P.72)

“

So women are said to have the same human rights as men, but our lesser amounts of time and money and status and safety tell us that we do not.

- ANNE FUNDER, *WIFEDOM* (P.277)

Gratitude to You

While this has been an amazing period of growth and outreach, I'm looking forward to taking some well-deserved time off to recharge over the holidays. I need to practice what I preach - about not being able to "pour from an empty cup"! I am looking forward to spending quality time with my family. It's a rare treat to have everyone together (with one daughter overseas and another interstate!) so I can't wait to make special memories.

I also want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our incredible community, you make everything we do possible. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful, relaxing, and wonderful holiday season!



HER HEART KITCHEN: Brandy Snap Baskets

Celebrate the festive season with this quick and easy Brandy Snap Baskets recipe, loaded with berries and fruit, created by [Leah Itsines](#). We originally shared this recipe in December 2021, and one of our board members made them for our end-of-year catch-up, they were absolutely delicious!

You'll need:

- 10 pre-made brandy snap baskets
- 300ml thickened cream
- Vanilla ice-cream (as much or as little as you like!)
- 1 tablespoon icing sugar
- 1 cup frozen mixed berries
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 tablespoon brandy (if desired)
- 2 candy canes, crushed (for a little minty Christmas crunch!)

Method:

1. Beat thickened cream with an electric mixer in a large bowl until fluffy. Add icing sugar (and a splash of brandy, if desired) just before soft peaks form. Chill until ready to serve.
2. Let frozen berries defrost on a plate (avoid adding water to prevent sogginess).
3. Arrange brandy snap baskets on a serving plate. Fill half with ice cream and the other half with cream, or mix and match as you like. Top with berries, crushed brandy snaps, and a sprinkle of crushed candy canes for a festive touch!



The berries are rich in antioxidants!

While this dessert isn't typically considered heart-healthy, it's all about balance and moderation. It's perfectly fine to enjoy something sweet occasionally.

The berries are rich in antioxidants, and you can make it lighter by swapping the cream and ice cream for healthier alternatives like Greek yogurt or low-fat options..



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