

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



## VON SMART NEWSLETTER



FEBRUARY 2024

February can be a challenging month with shorter days, reduced sunlight and colder temperatures. Staying active and engaged, especially during the icy chill of a polar vortex, can seem less than inviting! This, of course, is completely understandable and why February is a great month to reflect upon some important topics that will help melt away the winter blues and motivate us to get ready for the warmer months ahead.

One of the topics is related to matters of the heart and not just because of Valentine's Day, red roses and chocolate. February is heart month in Canada where organizations and individuals alike act to raise awareness around the importance of cardiovascular health. Keep reading on to learn more!



### The VON SMART Program

Helping to keep our community dwelling older adults active, engaged and free from falls!

For more information about SMART exercise classes and fall prevention workshops please contact:

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-or-

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## February is Heart Month

As you go through your day, you probably don't spend much time thinking about your heart and all that it's doing. But let's take a few moments to appreciate this life-sustaining organ in your chest.

Here are a few heart-related facts, courtesy of cardiologist [Brian Griffin, MD](#).

1. Your heart beats about 100,000 times per day. During the average person's lifetime, their heart beats more than 2.6 billion times. (Your pulse is a way you can feel your heart beating.)
2. The beating sound from your heart — *lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub* — is from the clap of valve leaflets opening and closing.
3. A typical human heart valve is about the size of a half dollar.
4. Each minute, your heart pumps nearly 1.5 gallons (5.7 liters) of blood. That's a pump flow rate that could fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool in less than a year. (Talk about a gold medal effort!)
5. Location is everything in life, right? That's true for your heart, too. It's located in the front of your chest, slightly behind and to the left of your breastbone. Your ribs offer extra protection for the vital organ.
6. To make room for your heart, your left lung is slightly smaller than your right lung.
7. Your heart weighs somewhere between 7 ounces and 15 ounces (200 grams to 425 grams), or less than a pound. The average male's heart weighs 2 ounces (57 grams) more than the average female's heart.
8. A typical heart pumps approximately 4 tablespoons of blood with each beat.
9. Heart disease is the greatest single threat to your health and the leading cause of death globally. The good news? You can help manage your heart health through dietary choices, regular exercise and stress management.
10. It's true that some heart problems can be inherited. It's also true that you can minimize their impact by managing blood pressure and cholesterol through a heart-healthy lifestyle



**HER HEART MATTERS**  
WEAR RED CANADA • FEB 13

**KEY MESSAGE # 5**

There is a lot we can **all** do to help **reduce the risk**.  
Heart disease is largely **preventable**.



Be active,  
keep moving



Eat a variety of  
healthy foods



Manage  
stress



Live free from  
commercial tobacco  
and vaping



Limit  
alcohol



Get regular check ups  
(test for blood sugars, blood  
pressure and cholesterol)

**To take care of others, you need to first take care of yourself**  
Visit [WearRedCanada.ca](http://WearRedCanada.ca) or your healthcare provider.

Hu, F. B., et al (2000). *New England Journal of Medicine*, 343(8), 530-537  
Yusuf, S. et al (2004). *Lancet*, 364(9438):937-52



CANADIAN WOMEN'S  
HEART HEALTH CENTRE

NATIONAL  
ALLIANCE

## Did You Know?

### Dancing is GOOD for the Heart! Feel the Beat!

Dance is movement that engages the mind and body in an enjoyable way that does not feel like typical exercise. The research is in, dancing offers several health benefits to older adults. Here are just a few:

1. **BETTER CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH** ❤️. Fast or slow dance moves engage different muscles and organs including the heart and lungs.
2. **GREATER STRENGTH & ENDURANCE.** Dancing builds muscle strength in almost every part of the body because you are moving your body in a way that requires your muscles to resist your body weight. It increases your ability to go about daily tasks with ease and less chance of injury or falls due to frailty.
3. **IMPROVED BONE HEALTH.** Movement enhances bone strength because it increases bone mass.
4. **INCREASED ENERGY LEVELS.** Dancing stimulates the production of feel-good hormones, such as serotonin and endorphins.
5. **IMPROVED FLEXIBILITY.** Dance can help you avoid other injuries by keeping your joints lubricated and enabling movement with less physical discomfort.
6. **ENHANCED AGILITY.** As we age, we tend to lose the ability to move quickly. Dance requires rapid responses to fast-changing movement patterns.
7. **IMPROVED BALANCE.** Dance movements change your base of support and challenge brain-body systems engaged in keeping you steady on your feet.
8. **BETTER COGNITION.** Research shows that 1-2 hours of dancing per week can improve focus and dual task activities. Active participation involving the memorization of steps increases brain activity and function. *Did you know, people who dance frequently have a 75 percent lower chance of dementia?*
9. **MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL CONNECTION.** Dancing and listening to music are great social activities. It's all about having fun and sharing this life-giving activity with like-minded people.
10. **BOOSTED CONFIDENCE.** Dance teaches you how to move with intention and a sense of purpose. It heightens your proprioception (sense of position) and can help alleviate the fear of falling.



## Monthly Feature: VON SMART Instructor



### WELCOME MEGAN!

Hi there!

My name is Megan Viselli and I am the newest fitness instructor with the VON SMART program. I have always had a passion for helping others maintain a healthy lifestyle all while having fun doing it, so I felt that this would be a perfect opportunity for me to be part of this program!

Prior to working with VON, I was a rehab assistant for a chiropractor and physiotherapist for 7 years where I had a lot of training working with all types of patients to strengthen and improve their range of motion so they can live a healthy life pain free. I have also been a dance instructor since 2005 and been dancing since 1994 at Darcy's School of Dance in Kingsville. I am always moving and love bringing out the best in everyone whether it's in the dance studio or helping others exercise.

When I am not working, you can find me playing games and having dance parties with my daughter or watching the Detroit Lions game with my husband and our dog. Family time is the best time!

Looking forward to being a part of this amazing team!



## Resources

### McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

Judo for older adults: Learning to fall (safely)

[www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org](http://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org)



The article discussed the significant risk of falls among Canadians aged 60 and above, highlighting the potential serious consequences such as fracture, loss of independence, and diminished self-confidence. Falls are identified as the leading cause of hospitalization for older adults in Canada, with individuals with osteoporosis facing an even higher risk.

The article introduces judo, a martial art developed in Japan, as a potential solution for preventing fall-related injuries among older adults. Judo, known as the “gentle way,” is described as offering various benefits, including injury prevention when falling and improvements in physical and mental health. The martial art places emphasis on techniques for safe falling called ukemis, which involve protection the head, bending the legs, rolling, and slapping the ground.

The piece references a recent evidence synthesis that examined 15 studies on the effects of judo on adults aged 45-78. The studies, conducted in various settings such as judo clubs, healthcare facilities, nursing homes, or workplaces, reported positive outcomes. For older adults, judo was found to enhance physical performance, functional autonomy, balance, strength, gait performance, flexibility, and the learning of fall techniques. In middle-aged adults, an increase in bone mineral density, particularly in women receiving treatment for osteoporosis, was demonstrated.

The article suggests that judo classes, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, 1 to 3 times a week, and conducted over 5 weeks to 24 months, could be beneficial for fall prevention. These classes may focus on throws, body rotation, balance training, and specific techniques for older participants.

The importance of practicing judo in a local judo club with multiple instructors and protective mats is highlighted, based on the effectiveness observed in one study. The article concludes by encouraging individuals, if their health allows, to consider incorporating judo into their routine to improve functional autonomy, maintain skills, and enjoy social interactions.

Sometimes it takes open minds and out-of-the-box thinking when it comes addressing falls in older adults. This appears to be the approach with the group pictured below who are learning to demystify the fear of falling and become familiar with the ground.

Judo Quebec teaches participants, some in their nineties, break-fall techniques that can mean the difference between falling with or without injury.



## VON SMART UPDATES:

We are excited about our new partnerships with Essex County Library LaSalle Branch and Harrow Health Centre! VON SMART Exercise classes will be offered on a weekly basis at these locations. Details are as follows:

Essex County Library, LaSalle Fridays @ 9:30am  
5950 Malden Road, LaSalle ON

Harrow Health Team, Fridays @ 11:00am  
1480 Erie Street South, Harrow ON

### REGISTRATION REQUIRED

For more information or to register, please call:  
519-254-4866 Ext. 6239

**NO CLASSES ON FAMILY DAY  
FEBRUARY 19<sup>TH</sup>**

