



Press Release  
For immediate release

Second year of the Montreal Heart Institute's Diabetes Prevention Clinic sponsored by  
Sun Life

### **Supporting people with type 2 diabetes throughout the pandemic**

**Montreal, January 14, 2021** – When the pandemic forced gyms to close, it caused some disruption to the plans that had been developed for patients by the team at the Montreal Heart Institute's **Diabetes Prevention Clinic sponsored by Sun Life**. As people with type 2 diabetes are more vulnerable when it comes to COVID-19, it was important they remained safe at home. Fortunately, when public health restrictions were implemented, telehealth was there to make remote monitoring possible. And even though part of the team at the EPIC Center had to be moved to the Montreal Heart Institute to support efforts there, the Clinic's 223 participants made significant progress over the course of the year.

- 60% reduced their waist circumference by an average of 5 cm
- 66% lost weight, with patients losing an average of 4 kg (8.8 lb)
- 48% reduced their circulating insulin levels, with an average absolute reduction of 23.95 mmol/L – a relative reduction of 7%
- 58% reduced their glycated hemoglobin (average blood sugar over 3 months), with an average absolute reduction of 0.005 pmol/L – a relative reduction of 6.8%
- 52% improved their fasting glucose levels, with an average absolute reduction of 0.72 mmol/L – a relative reduction of 7%
- 48% reduced their triglycerides, with an average absolute reduction of 0.24 mmol/L – a relative reduction of 8%
- 24% increased their good cholesterol (HDL), with an average absolute increase of 0.07 mmol/L – a relative increase of 6.6%
- 54.9% of patients completely normalized their fasting glucose and glycated hemoglobin.

#### **Impressive results**

Since its creation in December 2018, the Clinic has seen 223 patients and has conducted more than 17,000 fitness sessions and 1,950 individual meetings. This initiative is one of the many ways Sun Life helps people live healthier lives, which is a central component of the company's purpose. "I'm impressed at how close these participants have come to recovery despite the challenges posed by the pandemic," said Jacques Goulet, President of Sun Life Canada. "The pandemic has highlighted the consequences of diabetes, which can cause severe complications in people with the disease who contract COVID-19. This has underscored the importance of continuing to give people the tools they need to take charge of their health."

"We're pleased that we were able to maintain the Clinic's services even though the EPIC Center's activities had to be suspended. The results we've seen in our patients confirm the positive impact of regular exercise in controlling blood sugar and insulin sensitivity and show that, when combined with a high-quality diet, it can contribute to preventing and mitigating the effects of type 2 diabetes," said Dr. Martin Juneau, Director of Prevention at the Montreal Heart Institute and Supervisor of the Diabetes Prevention Clinic sponsored by Sun Life.

### **Remote workouts and limited resources due to the pandemic**

The majority of the staff at the Montreal Heart Institute had to be redeployed to the hospital to perform various functions relating to the pandemic. As a result, the team at the Clinic was without some of its key players. But this did not stop them from achieving their ambitious objectives, through group seminars and one-on-one meetings. Patients had the chance to meet with a nurse, a nutritionist, a kinesiologist, a physician, and an endocrinologist when needed, along with fitness sessions. With a lockdown in place, technology allowed these important meetings to take place virtually.

When it was no longer possible for patients to use its gym, the EPIC Center made a series of videos available to the public. From the comfort of their own homes, participants can watch and follow along for at home workouts. The short videos provide health tips and feature exercises to do at home or outdoors as a way to improve physical conditioning. This has helped participants stay on track toward meeting their goals.

### **A tailored program to meet growing demand**

It has been proven that with exercise and good nutrition, it's possible to reverse the course of type 2 diabetes. That is the core premise presented to patients of the Montreal Heart Institute's Diabetes Prevention Clinic sponsored by Sun Life. The only one of its kind in Canada, this multidisciplinary program is offered at the Montreal Heart Institute's EPIC Center and is made possible by a donation of \$450,000 from Sun Life. A team of health practitioners meets periodically with participants and gives them the tools they need to make healthy lifestyle changes and improve their health.

The Diabetes Prevention Clinic's mission is to turn the tide on diabetes through early detection and healthy lifestyle strategies. The program meets a growing demand for preventive services for patients with diabetes, prediabetes, and chronic conditions that currently affect 1 in 3 Canadians. Cardiovascular disease is the most common complication and leading cause of death in patients with type 2 diabetes.<sup>1</sup> Studies show that type 2 diabetics who make lifestyle changes, including a high-quality diet, regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, no tobacco use and moderate alcohol consumption, can reduce their risk of premature death from cardiovascular disease.

**Diabetes is the 5th-leading cause of premature death in the world.** Hyperglycemia from the onset of diabetes has multiple adverse effects on cardiovascular risk factors, including atherosclerosis, hypertension and dyslipidemia. These issues, together with the damage hyperglycemia causes to small blood vessels, mean that type 2 diabetes increases the incidence of coronary heart disease by 2 to 4 times.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sun Life in the community**

At Sun Life, we are committed to building sustainable, healthier communities for life. Community wellness is an important part of our sustainability commitment and we believe that by actively supporting the communities in which we live and work, we can help build a positive environment for our Clients, employees, advisors and shareholders. Our philanthropic support focuses on health, with an emphasis on diabetes awareness, prevention, and care initiatives through our Team Up Against Diabetes™ platform; and mental health, supporting programs and organizations with a focus on building resilience and coping skills.

We also partner with sports properties in key markets to further our commitment to healthy and active living. Our employees and advisors take great pride in volunteering over 13,000 hours each year and contribute to making life brighter for individuals and families across Canada.

[Learn more about Sun Life in the community.](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://observatoireprevention.org/2018/06/28/un-mode-de-vie-sain-reduit-les-complications-cardiovasculaires-du-diabete-de-type-2/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://observatoireprevention.org/2017/02/02/complications-cardiovasculaires-diabete/>

**About the Montreal Heart Institute**

Founded in 1954, the Montreal Heart Institute constantly strives for the highest standards of excellence in the cardiovascular field through its leadership in clinical and fundamental research, ultra-specialized care, professional training and prevention. It is home to Canada's largest cardiology research centre, cardiovascular prevention centre, and cardiovascular genetics centre. The Institute is affiliated with the Université de Montréal and has more than 2,000 employees, including 245 physicians and more than 85 researchers. [www.icm-mhi.org/en](http://www.icm-mhi.org/en)

**About the Montreal Heart Institute Foundation**

Created in 1977, the Montreal Heart Institute Foundation raises and manages funds to support the realization of the Institute's innovative and priority projects and to fight cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the world. Its philanthropic events and its donors' contributions have enabled this leader in cardiovascular health to become the largest cardiac research centre in the country. Over the years, the Montreal Heart Institute Foundation has raised more than \$309 million in donations. Its 26,032 donors have made it possible to make important discoveries and to support the Institute's specialists, professionals and researchers to provide state-of-the-art care to tens of thousands of patients in Quebec. [fondationicm.org/en](http://fondationicm.org/en)

**About the EPIC Center**

The MHI's EPIC Center is the largest centre for cardiovascular disease prevention in Canada, with more than 4,500 registered members. The Center has just over 100 employees and is part of the Prevention Branch of the Montreal Heart Institute. The centre is for healthy people who wish to stay that way (primary prevention) as well as for patients who have had a cardiac event (rehabilitation and secondary prevention). The staff includes physicians, cardiologists, an internist, emergency physicians, a physiologist, visiting professors, nurses, nutritionists, kinesiologists and rescuers. [www.centreepic.org](http://www.centreepic.org)

- 30 -

**Montreal Heart Institute Foundation**

Camille Turbide

514-755-5354

[camille.turbide@gmail.com](mailto:camille.turbide@gmail.com)

**Sun Life**

Mylène Bélanger

438-341-3884

[mylene.belanger@sunlife.com](mailto:mylene.belanger@sunlife.com)