



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Eat Well, Be Active

What you can do



Let's Make Cancer History

1 888 939-3333 | cancer.ca

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Cancer and Risk
3	What is cancer?
4	Reducing your risk
5	Eat Well
6	Mix it up – choose vegetables and fruit every day
8	Go for high-fibre foods
9	Choose healthy fats
10	Limit how much alcohol you drink
11	Limit red meat and processed meats
12	Use less salt and sugar
13	Cook and prepare food with care
16	Food Issues
21	Be Active
22	Goals to work towards
25	Helpful Hints
25	At the grocery store
27	At home
30	At work or school
32	When you're going out
34	How to read the labels
36	Resources
36	Canadian Cancer Society
36	Suggested websites

Cancer and Risk

Every day we learn more and more about what causes cancer. But cancer is complex and there is no magic formula – or diet, or exercise, or lifestyle – to follow that means you definitely won't develop it.

This doesn't mean that nothing can be done. Research shows that up to 35% of all cancers can be prevented by:

- eating well
- being active
- maintaining a healthy body weight

We're not trying to say that doing this is easy – but it may not be as hard as you think. Making healthy changes doesn't mean you have to give up all your favourite foods or start running marathons. The key is to focus on what you add to your life, not what you take away.

Even small changes to what you eat and how active you are can make a difference to your risk of cancer. Eating well and being active will have an impact on how much you weigh, which also affects your risk of developing cancer of the breast, colon and rectum, esophagus, kidney, pancreas and uterus. A healthy body weight will mean different things to different people – healthy bodies come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Your doctor can help you understand what is a healthy body weight for you.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease that starts in our cells. Our bodies are made up of millions of cells, grouped together to form tissues and organs such as muscles and bones, the lungs and the liver. Genes inside each cell order it to grow, work, reproduce and die. Normally, our cells obey these orders and we remain healthy. But sometimes the instructions get mixed up, causing the cells to form lumps or tumours, or spread through the bloodstream and lymphatic system to other parts of the body.

Tumours can be either *benign* (non-cancerous) or *malignant* (cancerous). Benign tumour cells stay in one place in the body and are not usually life-threatening.

Malignant tumour cells are able to invade nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body. Cancer cells that spread to other parts of the body are called *metastases*.

The first sign that a malignant tumour has spread (*metastasized*) is often swelling of nearby lymph nodes, but cancer can metastasize to almost any part of the body. It is important to find malignant tumours as early as possible.

Cancers are named after the part of the body where they start. For example, cancer that starts in the bladder but spreads to the lung is called bladder cancer with lung metastases.

Reducing your risk

There is no single cause of cancer but some factors appear to increase the risk of developing it. These are known as *risk factors*. Some risk factors cannot be changed. For example:

- your age
- your family history of cancer (*heredity*)

There are some risk factors related to everyday choices that you can change. You can choose to:

- Be a non-smoker and avoid tobacco smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Be physically active every day.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol use.
- Reduce your exposure to UV (ultraviolet) rays from the sun and artificial tanning equipment, like tanning beds.
- Know your body and report any changes to your doctor or dentist.
- Follow health and safety instructions when using hazardous materials at home and at work.

Making changes to lower your risk doesn't mean that you won't get cancer – but it does mean that your chances of getting it are smaller.

Eat Well

Eating well begins with eating a variety of foods each day to get the nutrients you need for good health. Following *Canada's Food Guide* is a great place to start. Making healthy food choices will help you maintain a healthy body weight, eat more fibre and less salt and sugar.

Making healthy food choices may seem overwhelming, or at least a lot of work. In terms of making food choices, we probably have more options than ever before. But modern life is busy – making it very tempting to pick up cheap fast food regularly or reach into the freezer for a processed meal, rather than shopping for, and then cooking, a healthy meal of fresh grains, vegetables and a small, lean portion of meat. As you start to change your habits slowly, these tips may help:

- Make small, gradual changes to your eating habits.
- Choose processed foods less often.
- Cook and eat at home more often. This can help control the portion size as well as the amount of salt and the amount of fat you eat.
- Plan menus and make a shopping list. Look at weekly store flyers to take advantage of specials.
- Be aware of when you eat and why. Listen to your body and eat when you are hungry.
- Slow down and enjoy every bite. It takes 20 minutes for your brain to get the message that your stomach is full.
- Cook in batches and fill your freezer with your own healthy, ready-made (not processed) meals.
- Remember to drink plenty of water.
- Talk to a registered dietitian or your doctor if you feel you need extra help to change your eating habits.

Help others while helping yourself

While you're making changes to your own habits, you can also help make changes happen in your own community. Healthy choices should be easy choices – for everyone. For example, you might start up a local breakfast program or support local efforts to make sure that schools offer healthy food choices.



Mix it up – choose vegetables and fruit every day

Variety is important for good health, so mix up your choices as much as you can. Vegetables and fruit are:

- excellent sources of vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals
- high in fibre (to keep your digestive system healthy)
- low in fat and calories

A diet that includes a variety of vegetables and fruit instead of higher-fat, higher-calorie foods can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. People who are overweight are at greater risk for cancer and other health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

What is a serving?	What does it look like?
A medium-size piece of vegetable or fruit	tennis ball
250 mL (1 cup) salad	fist
125 mL (½ cup) raw, cooked, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit	computer mouse
125 mL (½ cup) fruit or vegetable juice*	small juice glass (3 shot glasses)
60 mL (¼ cup) dried fruit	golf ball
Fruit candies, vegetable chips and fruit jams or spreads do not count as a serving.	

* If you do reach for juice, check that the label says 100% juice. Fruit drinks, cocktails or punches do not count as real fruit juice because they contain only a small amount of real fruit or vegetable juice along with sugar and water.

Non-starchy vegetables and cancer risk

Research shows that a diet high in non-starchy vegetables may reduce your risk of some cancers such as stomach, mouth and throat. Eating lots of these vegetables will also help you maintain a healthy body weight, which reduces the risk of a number of cancers. Examples of non-starchy vegetables include:

- artichokes
- bok choy
- broccoli
- cabbage
- carrots
- eggplant
- lettuce
- okra
- rutabaga
- spinach
- turnip

Other non-starchy vegetables, such as garlic, onions and leeks (*Allium* vegetables), may also reduce the risk of stomach cancer. Garlic may protect against colorectal cancer.

Fruit and cancer risk

Research shows that a diet high in fruit may reduce your risk of some cancers such as lung, stomach, mouth and throat. Eating lots of fruit will also help you maintain a healthy body weight, which reduces the risk of a number of cancers.

Concern about pesticides

In Canada, the vegetables and fruit you buy are regulated and monitored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. If lab tests show that vegetables and fruit contain pesticide residue over the allowable levels set by Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will investigate. If needed, they will recall the food from the market.

The benefits of eating more vegetables and fruit far outweigh the risks from pesticides. To make sure your vegetables and fruit are clean:

- Wash them well under clean, running tap water. Rinse packaged and prepared produce even if it's marked *prewashed*.

- Throw away outer leaves of cabbage, lettuce and other leafy vegetables.
- Scrub well and peel them. Unfortunately, peeling vegetables and fruit (such as potatoes and apples) may also reduce the amount of nutrients and fibre.

Go for high-fibre foods

Healthy eating includes plenty of fibre. Fibre is the part of plant foods that your body cannot digest. Fibre is what puts the bulk in salads, the crunch in carrots and broccoli and the chewiness in whole grain breads.

Health Canada recommends that adult Canadians get 21 to 38 grams of fibre each day for good health.

There are 2 types of fibre: *insoluble* and *soluble*.

Insoluble fibre

This type of fibre cannot be digested by our bodies, but it does provide bulk to the stool to help prevent constipation. It also helps you feel full. Sources of insoluble fibre are whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, and vegetables and fruit.

Soluble fibre

Our bodies can partially digest this type of fibre. Soluble fibre may help to lower blood cholesterol. Sources of soluble fibre are oats and legumes. Examples of legumes include:

- *beans*: black, kidney, lima, white, pinto, garbanzo (chickpeas), soybeans
- *peas*: yellow and green split peas (not fresh green peas)
- *lentils*: yellow, red, green



Fibre and cancer risk

Research shows that a diet high in fibre protects against colorectal cancer. Eating plenty of fibre may also help you maintain a healthy body weight, which reduces the risk of a number of cancers.

Choose healthy fats

Everyone needs some fat in their diet – it's the kind of fat you choose to include that's important. Unsaturated fats can be a healthy fat choice. Saturated fats and trans fats (hydrogenated fats) are potentially harmful fats.

Healthy fats – unsaturated fats

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature. They are found in avocados, nuts, seeds, non-hydrogenated soft margarines, oils like olive oil, corn oil, canola oil and sunflower oil, and salad dressings that contain these oils.

Omega-3 fat is a type of unsaturated fat found in oily fish such as salmon, herring and mackerel. You can also add omega-3 fat to your diet by choosing canola oil, flaxseed and flax oil, other seeds, walnuts and soybeans.

Less healthy fats – saturated and trans fats

Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature. These fats are found in animal sources of food such as meat, poultry, butter and cheese. They are also found in tropical oils like coconut, palm and palm kernel oils.

Trans fats are found in foods that are made with or cooked in partially hydrogenated fat. Some crackers, potato chips, baked goods, deep-fried fast foods and margarines contain trans fats.



How much fat?

Health Canada recommends that adult Canadians get 20 to 35% of their total calories from fat each day. The total amount of fat you eat comes from fat that occurs naturally in foods (such as meat and milk) as well as *added fat* (such as oil or margarine). The key is to:

- Choose healthy fats more often than saturated fats.
- Limit added fat to 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 tablespoons) of healthy fat each day.

Fats and cancer risk

Foods and drinks with added fats (such as processed foods) are usually high in calories. Eating a lot of these foods makes it easy to have more calories than you need, which means you are more likely to put on weight. Being overweight puts you at higher risk for certain cancers, so try to eat these foods less often.

Limit how much alcohol you drink

Alcohol is high in calories and has no real nutritional value. It fills you up when you could be eating and drinking something healthier. Long-term heavy drinking can cause many health problems, such as liver damage, heart disease, stomach ulcers and blood vessel disorders.

Some research suggests that small amounts of alcohol may be good for your heart, but there are other ways to benefit your heart health (for example, stopping smoking, reducing the amount of saturated fat that you eat, being more active), without increasing your risk of other health problems.

Alcohol and cancer

Research shows that drinking alcohol increases the risk of developing several types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, colon and rectum, esophagus, larynx, liver, mouth and pharynx. And the more alcohol you drink, the more you increase your risk.

So if you choose to drink alcohol, limit the amount you drink.

For women: less than one drink a day*

For men: less than two drinks a day

A drink is:

- one 350 mL (12 oz) bottle of beer (5% alcohol)
- one 145 mL (5 oz) glass of wine (12% alcohol)
- one 45 mL (1.5 oz) spirits (40% alcohol)

*Pregnant women should avoid alcohol.

Limit red meat and processed meat

Red meat refers to beef, pork, lamb and goat. It is a valuable source of several nutrients, in particular protein, iron, zinc and vitamin B₁₂. But many of us eat much more of it than our bodies need, which can increase our risk of cancer and make it hard to maintain a healthy body weight.

Processed meat refers to meats preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by the addition of preservatives. Examples include ham, bacon, salami, hot dogs and sausages.

Red meat and cancer risk

Research shows that a diet high in red meat increases the risk of colorectal cancer.

If you do eat red meat, choose the leanest meat and trim any visible fat before cooking. Try to limit the amount of red meat you eat each week to 3 servings. A serving is 85 grams (3 ounces) when cooked – this is smaller than a deck of cards. Choose poultry or fish more often. Make up the rest of your meal with vegetables and healthy grains.

Processed meat and cancer risk

When meat is preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by the addition of preservatives, cancer-causing substances can be formed. These substances can damage cells in the body, and lead to the development of colorectal cancer.

Research shows that eating processed meat increases the risk of colorectal cancer. Save processed meat for special occasions, such as ham for a holiday dinner or a hot dog at a sporting event.

Use less salt and sugar

Salt

Our bodies need some salt to help maintain our balance of water (*hydration*). Also, table salt is fortified with iodine, which you need for good health.

But in general, Canadians eat more salt than they need. Too much salt is linked to high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and stroke. Much of the salt we eat comes from processed food such as breakfast cereals, soups, sauces, bread, processed meals and snack foods (where it may be listed as *sodium*). We also add salt to our food at the table or in cooking.

Salt and cancer risk

Research shows that eating too much salt and salty food may increase your risk of stomach cancer.

Sugar

Most Canadians eat too much sugar. Sugars occur naturally in foods such as fruit, milk, honey and syrup. However, most of the sugar we eat has been added to food to make it taste sweet. Sugar is added to many types of food, such as:

- soft drinks and juice drinks
- cookies, candy, cakes and pastries
- jams and marmalades
- ice cream

The ingredients list will tell you whether a food product is high in added sugar. If terms like *sugar*, *glucose*, *honey*, *corn syrup*, *fructose*, *maltose* or *dextrose* are listed, sugar has been added. If you see one of these near the top of the list, you know the product is high in added sugar.

Sugar and cancer risk

Foods and drinks with added sugar have lots of calories but usually contain few nutrients. Eating a lot of these sugary foods makes it easy to have more calories than you need, which means you are more likely to put on weight. Being overweight puts you at higher risk for certain cancers, so try to eat these foods less often.

Cook and prepare food with care

It's not just *what* you eat – it's how you cook and prepare it. For general good health, it's important to prepare, cook and store food with care to kill harmful bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. Also, as we learn more from research, there are ways you can prepare – or *not* prepare – your food that affect your cancer risk.

Prepare and store foods safely

- Keep foods refrigerated to stop micro-organisms from growing.
- Thaw meat, poultry and seafood in the microwave or refrigerator, not on the kitchen counter.
- Wash your hands before you start handling foods. When handling foods, wash your hands often.
- Always wash raw vegetables and fruit in clean running water.
- Rinse packaged and prepared produce even if it's marked *prewashed*.
- Wash all plates, utensils and cutting boards that touched raw meat or poultry with hot soapy water before using them again.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw foods and cooked foods.
- Foods that need to be kept in the fridge or freezer should be stored as soon as you return home from grocery shopping.

- If you're concerned about using plastic storage containers, store foods in glass ones. Or choose plastic containers with recycling codes 2, 4 or 5 clearly marked on the bottom.
- Do not use plastic storage containers to heat up food in the microwave unless they are labelled as *microwave safe*.
- Do not eat foods showing signs of mould. (The mould in blue cheese is safe to eat.)

Aflatoxin and cancer risk

Aflatoxin increases the risk of liver cancer. Aflatoxin is produced by a certain fungus that can grow on a wide range of foods including cereals, oilseeds, spices, and tree nuts as well as milk, meat and dried fruit. Cereals and nuts such as peanuts, pistachios and brazil nuts are of most concern. To stop this fungus from developing, store peanuts and natural peanut butter in the refrigerator. Never eat nuts that smell musty, look mouldy or are shrivelled, discoloured, or damaged.

Cook to safe temperatures

- Cook meat, poultry and seafood thoroughly to destroy any germs that could cause disease.
- Use a food thermometer to check when meat and poultry are done. Recommended internal cooking temperatures are:
 - > Ground beef, pork or veal: 71°C (160°F)
 - > Ground chicken, turkey: 80°C (176°F)
 - > Beef and pork, medium: 71°C (160°F)
 - > Chicken, turkey pieces: 77°C (170°F)
 - > Whole chicken, turkey: 82°C (185°F)
- When cooking in a microwave oven, make sure the food is cooked all the way through.
- When re-heating leftover food, make sure it reaches 74°C (165°F).

Cooking temperature and cancer risk

Research shows that cooking meat, poultry and fish at high temperatures (by frying, broiling or barbecuing) may increase your risk of cancer. To reduce your exposure to cancer-causing substances that form at high heat, you can:

- Cook these foods at lower temperatures by braising, stewing, steaming or roasting more often. Use high-temperature cooking methods such as barbecuing, broiling or pan frying less often. If you're concerned about cooking with Teflon and other non-stick cookware, do not use this type of cookware on high heat.
- Marinate meat, poultry and fish before cooking. Studies have shown that marinating these foods can prevent the formation of cancer-causing chemicals. Use an oil-free marinade that contains a strong acid like lemon juice or balsamic vinegar.
- When barbecuing, choose lean cuts of meat, poultry and seafood over higher-fat meats. Trim off visible fat. This will reduce the amount of harmful chemicals that develop from the smoke created by burning fat.
- Barbecue slowly and keep the food away from the hot coals so that flames are less likely to engulf the food to prevent charring.
- Try grilling vegetables, veggie burgers and fruit slices. Most experts agree that plant-based foods do not form the cancer-causing substances when cooked at high heat.

Food Issues

Some concerns that you may have about food issues are outlined below.

Acrylamide

Acrylamide is a chemical that appears in certain foods that have been cooked at high temperatures (above 120°C, or 250°F). Levels of acrylamide seem to increase the longer the foods are cooked. High levels of acrylamide have been found in French fries, potato chips, cookies, coffee, processed cereals and bread.

Some possible risks to Canadians were identified when acrylamide was reviewed under the federal Chemicals Management Plan. Although research is not yet able to tell us for certain if there is a link between cancer and the levels of acrylamide in food, the federal government is trying to develop ways to reduce the amount of acrylamide we are exposed to. The food industry is also studying ways to reduce the formation of acrylamide during food processing.

If you're worried about acrylamide, avoid or cut back on fried or deep-fried foods that have been shown to contain it, such as French fries and potato chips.

Artificial sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners are used in a wide variety of foods and drinks. Many studies tell us the same thing - that artificial sweeteners have not been linked to an increased risk of cancer in humans.

When making healthy eating choices, remember that diets high in sugar tend to be high in calories. Replacing the sugar in foods such as cake, candies and soft drinks with artificial sweeteners may reduce calories, but it does not make them healthy foods.

Water

Arsenic and drinking water

Arsenic is a naturally occurring substance found in rocks and soil. Canadians may consume very low levels of arsenic when they drink water. However, some areas of Canada have higher levels of arsenic in drinking water than others. Drinking water that is contaminated with a high level of arsenic over a long period of time is known to increase the risk of several types of cancer.

The Canadian Cancer Society encourages everyone to make sure their drinking water contains the lowest amount of arsenic possible. We also encourage municipalities to regularly publish the results of their water-testing. Private wells should be tested for arsenic levels. Start by contacting your provincial or territorial health and environment ministries to ask how to do this.

Chlorinated water

Research has shown that drinking water treated with chlorine over a long period of time slightly increases the risk of developing bladder cancer.

Adding chlorine to water makes it suitable for drinking. The amount of organic matter in the water and the amount of chlorine used to purify the water can create harmful by-products. The Canadian Cancer Society is concerned about a link to cancer in areas where chlorine by-product levels are high.

The Society recommends that the amount of chlorine used to purify water is as low as possible while still ensuring the water is safe to drink.

Food additives

Food additives are used in very small amounts to increase shelf life and enhance the quality of our foods. It's very unlikely they cause cancer. Additives are tested for safety even before they are submitted for approval by the Health Products and Food Branch of Health Canada. Once approved and in use, all food additives are monitored. If at any time the safety of a food additive is in question, it can be removed from the market.

Genetically modified foods (GMOs)

Foods can be modified genetically by altering or adding genes in plants to improve taste and nutrition or to make crops easier to grow and ship. Such plants are called *genetically modified organisms* (GMOs).

Before new genetically modified foods are released on the market, they are inspected by Health Canada and then monitored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for safety. A genetically modified product is only approved for consumption when all of Health Canada's strict safety standards are met.

Irradiation

Irradiation is a process to help prevent many foodborne diseases that are transmitted through meat, poultry, fresh produce and other packaged foods. It uses ionizing radiation to treat foods. At low doses, irradiation can be used to control insects, stop the growth of moulds, slow down sprouting of vegetables and prolong shelf life. At higher doses, irradiation can be used to control harmful bacteria in fresh meat and poultry. Similar technology is used to sterilize surgical equipment, medical implants and wine corks.

The decision to irradiate foods is regulated by the Food and Drugs Act. Health Canada reviews all requests for use of irradiation on food products to ensure its safety.

Milk, calcium and vitamin D

Milk and milk products such as yogurt and cheese are excellent sources of calcium. In Canada, milk is fortified with vitamin D. Calcium and vitamin D work together to keep bones healthy. It will be difficult for you to get enough calcium in your diet if you don't have milk or dairy products each day.

Choose a variety of milk products and try to make lower-fat choices such as skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt and lower-fat cheeses. Include non-dairy sources of calcium as well – fortified soy milk and orange juice, tofu (made with calcium sulfate), beans and green leafy vegetables. These non-dairy choices can work well for lactose-intolerant people.

Organic foods

Although people may choose organic foods because they believe that they are healthier and safer, there is not enough evidence that this is true. Organic foods differ from non-organic foods in the way in which they are grown and processed.

People often choose organic foods because they are concerned about the use of pesticides and the environment. But pollutants may be found on both organic and non-organic foods, so all vegetables and fruit should be washed thoroughly.

Soy

Soy foods such as tofu, soy milk, soybeans and soy nuts are an excellent source of protein. They are a lower-fat, healthy alternative to meat.

Researchers have been studying the role of soy in a number of health conditions. Soy contains estrogen-like phytochemicals, which may help reduce the risk of osteoporosis and heart disease. Studies of the effects of soy on the risk of cancer are not conclusive. If you're being treated for cancer, you may want to talk to your doctor before adding soy to your diet.

Vegetarian diet

A well-planned vegetarian diet tends to be healthy in that it is low in saturated fat and high in fibre, and includes a variety of vegetables and fruit. But diets that include lean white meats and fish, and red meats in small amounts, can also be healthy.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

The best way to get your full range of vitamins and minerals is through healthy food choices. The exception to this may be a need for Canadians to take a vitamin D supplement during the fall and winter months. There is growing evidence that vitamin D may reduce the risk of some types of cancer, particularly colorectal, breast and prostate cancers.

You can get vitamin D from exposure to sunlight, in your diet (especially if you eat foods fortified with vitamin D), or by taking vitamin supplements. Due to our northern latitude and because the sun's rays are weak, the Society recommends that Canadian adults consider taking a vitamin D supplement during fall and winter months. You may be at particular risk if you:

- are 50 or older
- have dark skin
- don't go outside very much
- wear clothing covering most of your body

Talk to your doctor about taking 1000 international units (IU) a day during fall and winter months.

Babies who are exclusively breast-fed might be at risk of vitamin D deficiency, which is why experts recommend they be given a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU a day.

Be Active

As a society, we're just not as active as we used to be. Previous generations were much more active in their daily life than most of us are. Many people walked or cycled to work. Jobs in factories or on farms required a lot of physical activity, as did housework. Household tasks like cutting the lawn (with a push lawn mower), doing laundry (by hand or with a wringer washer) or beating the dust out of carpets (rather than vacuuming) kept people more active on a daily basis.

Building activity into our busy lives takes some effort, but there are lots of good reasons to be active. Being active:

- keeps your heart healthy
- makes your bones and muscles stronger
- helps you feel better about yourself

Research shows that regular physical activity over your lifetime protects against colon cancer.

At least 30 minutes of moderate activity a day can make a difference. In addition to protecting against colon cancer, research so far tells us that women may be able to reduce their risk of breast cancer and uterine cancer by getting active.

Physical activity is also one of the best ways to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. People who are overweight or obese are at greater risk for cancer of the breast, colon and rectum, esophagus, kidney, pancreas and the uterus, and other health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

As you build towards your activity goals, these tips may help:

- Make it fun and easy. Exercise doesn't have to happen in a gym. Choose activities that you enjoy and that fit into your life. Enjoy the company of family and friends. Make them a part of your physical activity plans.
- Begin any new activity program slowly and build from there.
- Think of physical activity as an appointment that you can't miss.
- Keep a journal of your physical activity to track your progress.

Help others while helping yourself

While you're making changes to your own activity habits, you can also help make changes in your community that can help others. For example, you could work with local politicians to provide walking and cycling paths in your neighbourhood.

Goals to work towards

For general good health, the *Public Health Agency of Canada* suggests:

- Being active at least 2.5 hours a week.
- Focusing on moderate to vigorous aerobic activity during each week, in sessions of 10 minutes or more.
- Getting stronger by adding activities that target your muscles and bones at least 2 days a week.

Challenge yourself with moderate or vigorous activities as your activity level improves.



Examples of light, moderate and vigorous activities

INTENSITY LEVEL	ACTIVITIES
Light	Walking, playing ball with children, gardening, yoga, tai chi, softball
Moderate	Water aerobics, brisk walking or hiking, snowshoeing, tobogganing, cycling, swimming, ice skating
Vigorous	Cross country skiing, fast dancing, aerobic fitness class, jogging, hockey

Choose aerobic and strength activities

Aerobic activities help your heart, lungs and circulatory system stay healthy. They also give you more energy.

Moderate aerobic activity will make you breathe harder and your heart beat faster. Examples are walking quickly and skating.

Vigorous aerobic activity increases your heart beat a lot and you'll be breathing hard enough that you won't catch your breath after saying a few words. Running, playing soccer and cross-country skiing are good examples of vigorous activity.

Strength activities help your muscles and bones stay strong. To ensure good overall strength, try to do a combination of activities that work the muscles throughout your body. Lifting weights, doing sit-ups, push-ups or carrying heavy loads are all examples of strength activities.



Check with your doctor

Check with your doctor if you haven't been active for a long time or if you have a medical condition that might get in the way of being active.

Physical activity is almost always healthy. Your doctor may be able to suggest activities that suit your age, fitness level and general health - and if there are any activities you should avoid.

Helpful Hints

✓ At the grocery store

Add more vegetables and fruit

- Prepare a shopping list that includes a variety of fresh, frozen and canned vegetables and fruit.
- Buy packages of pre-cut carrots, peppers, leafy greens or mixed fruit to make life a little easier if you're rushing to make lunches each morning.
- Replace some of the snack foods in your grocery cart with vegetables and dip, snack size canned fruit and 100% fruit juices.

Include more fibre

- Read the nutrition labels. High-fibre foods have at least 4 grams of fibre per serving.
- Fill your grocery cart with high-fibre foods like vegetables and fruit, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, beans and lentils.
- Choose foods made with whole grains over foods made with refined white flour. Look at the ingredients list rather than the colour of the foods. Some brown bread is simply white bread coloured with molasses. The first ingredient should be a whole grain, such as whole-grain wheat, oats, whole-grain corn, barley or brown or wild rice.
- Try different breads with whole grain including, chapatis, whole-wheat pitas, bagels, roti and tortillas.

Choose less fat

- Buy lean cuts of meat and choose smaller portions. Include alternatives to meat such as fish and legumes.
- Compare the nutrition labels when choosing a ready-made meal or food product and pick those with less total fat and less saturated fat.
- Replace some of the high-fat snacks and baked goods in your grocery cart with lower-fat choices. Choose vegetables and fruit, low-fat yogurt, low-fat popcorn and low-fat crackers.
- Look for non-hydrogenated margarines. Choose brands that are low-fat or fat-free when you can.
- Choose lower-fat dairy products, such as skim or 1% milk, low-fat yogurt and lower-fat cheeses.
- Replace cream and sour cream with yogurt or cottage cheese.

Cut down on salt and sugar

- Choose foods that are labelled as sodium-free, low-sodium, reduced (or less) sodium or unsalted.
- Buy foods that have not been processed. Dinner helper mixes, rice mixes, processed meats and frozen meals are loaded with salt and often sugar. Choose vegetables and fruit, whole-grain foods and lean meats to prepare your own healthy, quick and easy meals.
- Choose whole-grain breakfast cereals that are low in salt and not coated with sugar or honey.
- Replace some of the snack foods like chips, crackers and cookies in your grocery cart with vegetables, fruit, pita bread or crackers with unsalted tops.

✓ At home

Add more vegetables and fruit

- Plan your menus to include a vegetable and fruit at every meal.
- Have a glass of unsweetened 100% fruit juice and a sliced banana with your cereal at breakfast.
- Liven up the food you eat with crunch and colour. Put tomatoes and cucumber in sandwiches, berries in yogurt and cereal, or extra vegetables in pasta, rice, stir-fries and soups.
- Add kale, spinach, cabbage or frozen vegetables to your homemade or canned soup during the last few minutes of cooking.
- Make a salad with cabbage, broccoli, bean sprouts or green beans for a change from lettuce.
- Boost the flavour of cooked vegetables by adding lemon juice, flavoured vinegars or your favourite herb.

Include more fibre

- Start your day with a high-fibre cereal. Or sprinkle your favourite cereal or yogurt with 15 to 30 mL (1 to 2 tablespoons) of bran.
- Try different grains such as whole-wheat couscous, bulgur and cornmeal.
- Swap whole-wheat pasta for regular pasta for a change.
- Substitute brown rice and wild rice for white rice in recipes.
- Bake with whole-wheat flour. You can substitute half of the white flour with whole-wheat flour in most recipes.
- Add beans or lentils to your soups, casseroles, stews and curries. Add peas, beans and lentils to your meals.
- Try chickpeas in salads, lentils in meat loaf, and kidney beans as a taco or burrito filling.
- Serve hummus as a high-fibre dip for vegetable sticks or whole-grain breads and crackers.

Choose less fat

- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim off visible fat. Remove skin from poultry. Keep meat portions to about the size of a deck of cards.
- Grill, bake, poach or steam food rather than fry it, which requires adding extra fat for cooking.
- Enjoy meatless meals more often. Choose fish, legumes, nuts and seeds as alternatives to meat.
- Add extra vegetables, beans or lentils and less meat to casseroles and stews.
- Measure oil for cooking with tablespoons rather than pouring it straight from the bottle.
- Spread less butter or margarine on bread, buns and bagels.

Limit alcohol

- Make a fruit spritzer by mixing your favourite fruit juice with soda water.
- Serve “virgin” cocktails. Caesars, daiquiris and smoothies are just as tasty without alcohol.

Cut down on salt and sugar

- Check nutrition labels to help you choose foods with less added salt and sugar.
- Take your salt shaker off the table. Add extra flavour to your food with pepper, herb blends or hot pepper sauce.
- Remove or reduce salt in recipes whenever possible.
- Try halving the sugar you use in recipes. It works for most things except jam, meringues and ice cream.
- Slowly reduce the amount of sugar you take in coffee or tea.
- Choose canned fruit in juice rather than in syrup.

Increase your activity level

- Be active (like stretching, stationary biking) when watching TV. Use light weights to do arm and shoulder exercises while sitting on the couch.
- Watch less TV and spend less time on the computer. Instead, play with the children or go for a walk.
- Make play-time with your kids physical for everyone. Don't watch them play – play tag, soccer or ball hockey *with* them.
- Meet up with a friend for an early morning or after dinner walk.
- Dance to your favourite music every day.

✓ At work or school

Add more vegetables and fruit

- Pack a lunch and include raw vegetables or a salad. Add tomatoes, lettuce, sprouts and other vegetables to your sandwiches.
- Avoid temptation by packing fruit to snack on during the day.
- Eat a pear or a handful of dried fruit, like apricots or raisins, for an afternoon snack.

Include more fibre

- Try barley, lentil or pea soup. Chili also makes a tasty, high-fibre lunch.
- Bring fruit, dried fruit, nuts and seeds to snack on during the day.

Choose less fat

- Low-fat lunch ideas include sandwiches with lean meats and vegetables, salads with low-fat dressing, and bean and vegetable soups.
- Balance out your lunch with vegetables, fruit, low-fat yogurt or milk.
- Pack a lunch rather than eating fast food at the cafeteria or restaurant.
- Have a handful of walnuts for a snack instead of cookies.

Cut down on salt and sugar

- Cut down on sauces such as soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce and ketchup because these are usually very high in salt.
- Gradually reduce the amount of sugar you take in your coffee or tea.
- Try having a slice of melon or fresh berries with a low-fat yogurt instead of cookies for a mid-afternoon snack.

Increase your activity level

- Walk to work or school if you can. If it's too far to walk all the way, get off the bus early or park the car further away.
- Start up a lunchtime activity club at work or school. You may be surprised at the response. Sometimes people are just waiting for someone else to organize something.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Get up from your chair to stretch and bend for a few minutes every hour. This can also relieve tension when you have to sit for long periods of time.
- Walk to a co-workers' office to discuss an issue instead of phoning or sending an e-mail.

✓ When you're going out

Add more vegetables and fruit

- Order at least one vegetable side dish, salad, juice or fruit.
- Choose meals that are planned around vegetables and fruit instead of meat. Try vegetable soups, pizza, stir-fries, curries or pasta dishes.
- Try veggie-based tapas for little bites that add up.

Include more fibre

- Choose salad or a baked potato rather than fries.
- Order a side of vegetables with your meal.
- Choose sandwiches made with whole-grain breads.
- Try chili or bean burritos rather than burgers in a fast-food restaurant.

Choose less fat

- Ask for higher-fat foods like salad dressings and sour cream on the side.
- Try healthier choices like submarine sandwiches with lean meats and vegetables, chicken wraps or soft tacos, veggie burgers or garden salads.
- Eat less deep-fried food such as French fries, fish fillet and fried chicken.
- Don't feel that you have to clean your plate. Restaurant portions are usually large. Ask to take leftovers home.
- Balance a high-fat choice with something low-fat to make the overall meal lower in fat. (For example, if you want to have a high-fat dessert as a treat, choose fish with veggies and rice as your main course, and have skim milk rather than cream in your coffee.)

Limit alcohol

- Always have a glass or bottle of water with you as well as your alcoholic drink.
- Try not to start drinking alcohol if you are thirsty – quench your thirst with water or another non-alcoholic drink first.
- Avoid salty snacks such as potato chips and nuts while drinking alcohol because these make you thirstier.
- Have some non-alcoholic or low-alcoholic drinks during the evening.

Cut down on salt and sugar

- Cut down on sauces such as soy sauce and ketchup because these are usually very high in salt.
- Go for water or unsweetened fruit juice instead of soft drinks. If you find it hard to give up soft drinks, try diluting fruit juice with sparkling water.

Increase your activity level

- Arrange to meet a couple of friends for a walk at the same time every day. Explore nearby walking paths or trails.
- Join a friend who is already active at the gym, on the tennis court or in the pool.
- Make physical activity a social event. Go to the park with a group of friends and a Frisbee. Invite the neighbours and their kids over to play ball hockey or basketball.
- Make a personal or family commitment to try a new activity each season: snowshoe, hike, curl, bike, bowl, camp, skate, ski, swim, in-line skate.

How to read the labels

The nutrition information on food labels can help you to:

- compare products more easily
- determine the nutritional value of foods
- better manage special diets
- increase or decrease your intake of a particular nutrient

The *Nutrition Facts* table is easy to find and easy to read.

Information in the Nutrition Facts table is based on a specific amount of food. Compare this to the amount you eat. Use % Daily Value to see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 125 mL (87 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 18 g	6 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 2 %	Vitamin C 10 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 2 %

Ingredient list

Ingredients in the food are listed by weight from most to least. The ingredient list is especially useful for people with allergies or for people who need to avoid certain ingredients.

Nutrition claims

Health Canada sets requirements that must be met before a nutrition claim can be made on a label or advertisement. A claim highlights a nutrition feature of a food.

Health claims

A health claim is a representation in the form of words or symbols which states or implies that a relationship exists between a food and health. All health claims must be truthful and not misleading, and some types are subject to specific requirements set by Health Canada.

Source: *Health Canada Online*: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php> and <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/claims-reclam/index-eng.php>. Health Canada, 2003 ©. Adapted and reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2008.

Resources

Canadian Cancer Society

With research, we are always learning more about how diet, physical activity and body weight affect cancer risk. We can also provide information on other risk factors for specific types of cancer. Contact us for the most up-to-date information about reducing your risk of cancer:

- Call an information specialist toll-free at **1 888 939-3333** (TTY: 1 866 786-3934) Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- E-mail us at info@cis.cancer.ca.
- Visit our website at cancer.ca.



Our services are free and confidential.

Suggested websites

Health Canada

www.hc-sc.gc.ca

search for > Canada's Food Guide

- > Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- > Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion – Healthy Weights
- > Fight Bac!

Public Health Agency of Canada

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

search for > Physical Activity

Dietitians of Canada

www.dietitians.ca

5 to 10 a Day for Better Health

www.5to10aday.com

Nutrition Resource Centre

www.nutritionrc.ca

Canadian Cancer Society Division Offices

British Columbia and Yukon

565 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4J4
604 872-4400
1 800 663-2524
inquiries@bc.cancer.ca

Alberta/N.W.T.

325 Manning Road NE, Suite 200
Calgary, AB T2E 2P5
403 205-3966
info@cancer.ab.ca

Saskatchewan

1910 McIntyre Street
Regina, SK S4P 2R3
306 790-5822
ccssk@sk.cancer.ca

Manitoba

193 Sherbrook Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 2B7
204 774-7483
info@mb.cancer.ca

Ontario

55 St Clair Avenue W, Suite 500
Toronto, ON M4V 2Y7
416 488-5400

Quebec

5151 de l'Assomption Blvd.
Montreal, QC H1T 4A9
514 255-5151
info@sic.cancer.ca

New Brunswick

PO Box 2089
133 Prince William Street
Saint John, NB E2L 3T5
506 634-6272
ccsnb@nb.cancer.ca

Nova Scotia

5826 South Street, Suite 1
Halifax, NS B3H 1S6
902 423-6183
ccs.ns@ns.cancer.ca

Prince Edward Island

1 Rochford Street, Suite 1
Charlottetown, PE C1A 9L2
902 566-4007
info@pei.cancer.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador

PO Box 8921
Daffodil Place, 70 Ropewalk Lane
St John's, NL A1B 3R9
709 753-6520
ccs@nl.cancer.ca

What we do

The Canadian Cancer Society fights cancer by:

- doing everything we can to prevent cancer
- funding research to outsmart cancer
- empowering, informing and supporting Canadians living with cancer
- advocating for public policies to improve the health of Canadians
- rallying Canadians to get involved in the fight against cancer

Contact us for up-to-date information about cancer, our services or to make a donation.



Canadian Cancer Society
Société canadienne du cancer

Let's Make Cancer History

1 888 939-3333 | cancer.ca

TTY 1 866 786-3934

This is general information developed by the Canadian Cancer Society.
It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider.

The material in this publication may be copied or reproduced without permission; however, the following citation must be used: *Eat Well, Be Active: What you can do*. Canadian Cancer Society 2004.