

**Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Messages**  
**Food and Fitness in Focus**  
**National Institute of Nutrition- Diabetes Strategy Project**

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**Week 1**

**Your body is an engine! It needs the right fuel.**

Like a finely tuned engine, your body needs the right fuels to work well. The fuels come from the nutrients in the food you eat: carbohydrates, proteins, and fat that give you energy (in the form of calories); and vitamins and minerals to help you use that energy.

To make sure you're getting these nutrients in your food choices, just remember the three keys to healthy eating:

**Balance** — Include grain products (bread, pasta, or cereal), milk products, vegetables or fruit or both, and meat or meat alternatives (peanut butter, eggs or tofu) in each meal.

**Variety** — Choose different foods from all four food groups to make sure you're getting the different nutrients you need. A ham and cheese sandwich with an apple includes all four food groups; so does a bowl of cereal with milk and added fruit and nuts.

**Moderation** —we don't all need the same amount of food. Someone who works sitting at a desk most of the day won't need to eat as heartily as a worker doing hard physical labour at a construction site. Eat the amount that feels right for **you** and suits **your** daily activities: not too little, not too much.

**Physical activity fuels your engine too!**

Physical activity is vital to your well-being. Here's why:

- Regular physical activity is necessary for good health. It greatly reduces the risk of early death from a number of medical conditions including heart disease, adult-onset diabetes, colon cancer and joint pain. Almost two-thirds of Canadians are at unnecessary risk from these and other conditions because they're not active enough.
- Physical activity needn't be vigorous to gain some health benefits. Try walking, gardening, playing with children. . .
- If you want to be fit and healthy, it's as important to be physically active as it is not to smoke.
- Being physically active helps keep your mind sharp as you get older and helps you remain independent.
- Physical activity helps you get a good quality sleep and wake up rested and refreshed.
- Regular physical activity such as brisk walking, riding a bicycle or swimming helps you become fit and maintain a healthy weight.
- Physical activity that includes strength training such as lifting weights keeps bones strong and helps prevent and treat osteoporosis in women and men.
- Work towards a goal of 30 minutes of moderate-level activity such as brisk walking or swimming, 4 – 7 times per week.

As a precaution, if you haven't been recently physically active, it's a good idea to see your physician before taking up a physical activity.

**Remember to:**

**MAKE FOOD CHOICES THAT ARE BALANCED AND VARIED — AND FIT YOUR ENERGY NEEDS.**

**BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE OFTEN — EVEN A LITTLE ACTIVITY, REGULARLY, REAPS BENEFITS.**

## Week 2

### Healthy eating — the key to looking good and feeling great!

Healthy eating helps you get the most out of life and to be your best for your family, friends and co-workers.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating offers you a rainbow of healthy food choices based on sound nutrition principles that have stood the test of time.

Choose every day:

**Grain products:** 5-12 servings/day, opting for more wholegrain choices. Example of one serving = 1 slice of bread; or 1/2 cup of rice; or 1/2 c pasta or 1/2 a bagel.

**Vegetables and fruit:** 5-10 servings/day. One serving = 1/2 cup of broccoli; or 1 medium banana or apple; or 1 cup of salad.

**Milk products:** 2-4 servings/day. One serving = 1 cup of milk; 50 grams of cheese (2 ounces, or one 3 x 1 x 1 inch piece); or 3/4 c yogurt

**Meat or alternatives:** 2-3 servings/day. One serving = 50-100 grams of meat, fish or poultry (about 2-3 ounces); or 100 grams of Tofu (1/3 cup); or 2 tbsp peanut butter; or 1-2 eggs.

**Suggestion:** Today, make a note of what you eat and see how your choices fit into the Food Guide's rainbow of food groups. See the resource web page for Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and the Healthy Eating Scoreboard.

### **A is for Active...B is for Benefits**

Get active! You'll feel the benefits. And your family will benefit from having a healthier you in their lives.

Make activity a family affair. Encourage members of your family in being active with you. Recruit your friends.

Children love being active with their parents. Play ball or frisbee in the park together. Go family swimming or take a family hike. You encourage them and they encourage you. It's a great way to create momentum and maintain motivation — yours and theirs.

Establish physical activity as a regular part of your life. Take a walk in the neighbourhood each evening. Keep a weekly date to go swimming or skating. You can make an important difference to someone else's life as well as your own.

**Remember to:**

**EAT FROM ALL FOOD GROUPS EVERY DAY.**

**FIND WAYS TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE AS A FAMILY — IT'S GOOD FOR EVERYONE!**

### **Week 3**

**Healthy eating is about moderation — not deprivation!**

You don't have to give up the foods you enjoy for the sake of healthy eating. No one food can make or break a healthy diet. In fact, some research has suggested that eliminating favourite foods may make you crave them more — which leads to overeating them later on.

Moderation is the key!

If your favourite food is not a nutritional 'superstar', have a small amount — and enjoy it s-l-o-w-l-y. Savour the moment — focus on satisfying your taste buds. And you'll still have space in your daily meal plan for the foods that give you more nutrients.

Try cutting back instead of cutting out when it comes to making food choices. Choose a single cheeseburger, rather than a double. Opt for a salad instead of fries with a sandwich at lunch. Choose milk or juice instead of a cola.

Remember . . . it's how you eat most of the time that counts. Balance is everything.

**A is for Active...I is for Investing In Health**

Being physically active regularly is a proven long-term investment in your health and well-being.

You don't need to spend a lot on clothes, equipment, or memberships to get a great return on your investment of time.

There are many ways to be active that cost little or are free. Curl. Bowl. Dance. Take up yoga or tai chi. Ice-skate, in-line skate or rollerblade. Swim. Run. Skip rope. Play ball. Power walk. Hike. Take a walk in the park. Dig the garden, mow the lawn, shovel snow. And save on transportation costs by walking or cycling to the store or to work.

**Remember to:**

**CUT BACK RATHER THAN CUT OUT.**

**INVEST IN YOUR HEALTH! BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE REGULARLY!**

**Week 4**

**Watch out for hidden fat!**

Too much fat can add a lot of extra calories to your diet, and cause blood cholesterol levels to rise. This can increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Some higher fat foods are easier to recognize than others: a tub of margarine, a bottle of cooking oil. Other sources of fat are not as obvious — the fat inside the food may be 'hidden'.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends choosing lower fat foods more often. To help you do this and avoid hidden sources of fat in your diet:

- Cut back on the amount of fats and oils (gravies, cream sauces) you add to foods.
- Choose leaner meat, poultry and fish. Go for dried peas, beans and lentils more often. Try baked beans, lentil soup and tofu. Add chickpeas to salads or to chili and other casseroles.
- Choose lower-fat milk products more often: skim and 1% milk (white or chocolate), lower fat yogurt and fat-reduced cheeses.
- Baked goods such as cakes, cookies and muffins can be high in fat. Choose them in moderation.
- When choosing prepared foods such as canned soups, frozen dinners or ready-to-eat desserts, look for the lower-fat varieties.
- Prepare vegetables and fruits with little or no added fat. Steam, roast or microwave the vegetables you want to cook. Experiment with herbs and spices that add flavor.
- Choose the healthier fats such as canola, cold-pressed olive oils, non-hydrogenated margarines, oils in fish.

**A is for Active...G is for feeling Good**

Physical activity really makes you feel good!

Being active gives you a great sense of accomplishment. It can make you feel stronger, more in control, and more capable in other things you do.

You'll find that being active with your children, friends, or family is gratifying and fun. Because everyone benefits from the physical activity, this can strengthen relationships.

Did you know that one in two workers experiences moderate to high levels of stress because of trying to balance work and home-life? (Health Canada data) Did you know

that one of the best ways of shedding negative daily stress is to increase your physical activity? In fact, many people find that physical activity actually helps reduce mild anxiety and depression. A brisk walk. Jogging or running around the neighbourhood. Weight lifting. Strength training. A game of badminton or squash. Swimming laps. These can all be stress relievers.

Physical activity takes a load off. It helps relieve stress and sadness. It's a great way to burn off steam and improve your mood.

You'll find lots more facts and suggestions in Canada's Physical Activity Guide web site.

**Remember to:**

**LOOK FOR LOW FAT CHOICES.**

**MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY A DAILY ACTIVITY — IT'S GOOD FOR MIND AND BODY.**

## **Week 5**

**Think 'portion control'!**

What's a 'normal' serving size today? Regular. Large. Extra large. Super size. Giant size. Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. You CAN have too much of a good thing. Overeating often happens simply 'because it's there'.

- Check out the portion sizes outlined in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. How do they compare to your normal portion sizes?
- Measure your cereal bowl, your dinner plate, your favourite glass or mug. Does that bowl hold one cup? Or two? Is that glass an 8-ouncer? Or 12? Or maybe even 16? Are you getting much more — or much less — than you thought you were? An awareness of serving sizes at home will help with food selection when eating out.
- Listen to your appetite. Pay attention to the internal cues that tell you 'enough, you are satisfied'. Don't take more just 'because it's there'.

**A is for Active...Y is for Yourself**

Going it alone?

Now is the perfect time to focus on you — a rare opportunity in your busy life. Silence and solitude may be just what you need. You can set your own pace. Work out stress. Reconnect with yourself, and with nature.

This is a time to plan your day. Organize your thoughts. Reflect on family, friends, relationships. Work. Life.

Uncomfortable going it alone?

Search out a friend, family member. Take your dog — or borrow someone else's. Use well-traveled, well-lit, open sidewalks and paths. Or a path along a commuter road.

Find it hard to be enthusiastic about getting going on physical activity, especially if it's early in the morning, or in winter? Then think 'reward' — and do it anyway. Your reward? A refreshed spirit. An awakened mind.

**Remember to:**

**LISTEN FOR THOSE APPETITE CUES — THINK 'PORTION CONTROL'!**

**GET GOING ON THAT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY! RESTORE THE SPIRIT, AWAKEN THE MIND!**

## **Week 6**

### **Choose more fruits and vegetables for vitamins!**

Looking for a simple way to meet your vitamin needs? then it's time to veg out or fill up on fruit!

Vegetables are a great source of vitamins and a number of other essential nutrients. They're also rich in a number of key nutrients that Canadians may fall short of such as vitamin A (carrots, sweet potatoes), vitamin C (tomatoes, red peppers, potatoes) folate (dark green leafy vegetables) and more.

Choosing a salad of mixed vegetables or indulging in a plate of steamed vegetables can help to make meeting your nutrient needs a snap. The greater the variety of vegetables, the greater the number of nutrients.

Fruits in every form (fresh, dried, frozen, canned, juice) are a great nutrition boost too.

Try these suggestions to help you reap the health benefits that vegetables and fruit have to offer:

- Add one more vegetable or fruit to your lunch and dinner.
- Prepare some raw vegetables for easy-to-grab ready-to-eat snacks.
- Carry dried fruits (cranberries, raisins, apricots) in your purse or briefcase for a portable snack.
- Add frozen mixed vegetables to pasta sauce while it is warming to create your own version of pasta primavera.
- Replace some of the fat in muffin recipes with pureed sweet potatoes, carrots or applesauce.

**A is for Active...B is for Busy**

Your days are filled with the things you absolutely have to do. It's hard to find time for physical activity. And even when you set aside a time, other demands may cut into it. Get around the problem by fitting in a little activity wherever you can.

- Take advantage of the waiting game. Be active when you're forced to wait; for instance, walk around the terminal when your flight is delayed.
- Walk or ride your bike to work (if you're close enough, make it a habit), to the store, or to the mall.
- Walk in your lunch hour (it takes only 15 minutes to eat).
- Make taking the stairs your personal policy.
- Hang out with other active people — they'll reinforce your drive to be active when it's wearing thin.
- Go to a recreation centre or gym for a social outing, instead of to a movie or dinner.
- Invite your family and friends to walk or work out with you.
- Have a moving meeting: grab a colleague and discuss business while taking a walk

Your body doesn't know the difference between lifting weights in a gym, or carrying groceries home from the store. It's all physical activity. It all improves your health. Just 30 minutes, four to seven days a week, of activity at a brisk walking pace (or faster if you can) will help you stay healthy.

The total amount of physical activity is what matters. Do shorter bouts throughout the day when you don't have large blocks of time – you can accumulate your daily activity in three, 10 minute bouts over the course of a day . Take advantage of every opportunity to be active. You WILL feel better for it!

**Remember to:**

**GET MORE VITAMINS FROM VEGETABLES AND FRUIT!  
BE ACTIVE! MOVE! MOVE MORE! MOVE OFTEN!**

**Week 7**

**Variety...go for it!**

There's no such thing as nature's perfect food. No one food can give you all the nutrients you need for good health. Oatmeal is nutritious. So is an orange. They both provide important nutrients — but different ones. And neither provides all the nutrients you need for good health.

The only sure way to get all the nutrients you need is to mix and match as many different foods as possible. Go for variety and you'll go towards good health. If you usually eat about the same kind of food every day, try adding something different. Break free from repetitive eating. Here's how:

- Try one new food every day this week.
- Substitute 100% whole-wheat bread for white bread.

- Choose an exotic fruit like a kiwi or a pineapple instead of a banana or an apple.
- Bump up the taste of a tossed salad by adding spinach, thawed frozen peas, or even mandarin oranges.

### **A is for Active...W is for Weather**

Even when the weather is bad or the days are shorter, you can still be active. It's just wet or dark, not late! Do your running, jogging, walking along a well-lit route with a partner.

Or take up an indoor activity.

You can still be active even on the harshest Canadian day. When the weather has taken a turn for the worse consider:

- Walking in a mall.
- Using an exercise video at home. Or just dancing in your living room.
- Going to a fitness/recreation centre.
- Joining a community league class.

What you do may rub off on others. Friends, family and colleagues may be inspired to follow your example when they see what regular physical activity is doing for you.

### **Remember to:**

**TRY DIFFERENT FOODS — VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE!  
FIND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY DOING INDOORS.**

## **Week 8**

### **Make meals a pleasure!**

Enjoying good food is one of life's pleasures. Too often today we just eat and run. But healthy eating is more than simply getting the right nutrients. It's also a time for relishing the company of family and friends. Savouring tasty dishes...talk...laughter.

Rediscover the joys of mealtimes. It may be easier than you think.

- Start a new tradition or reintroduce an old favourite. Try an old family recipe or an exotic new dish.
- Try a new taste. Add mango to your stir fry. Peanut sauce to grilled chicken.
- Make mealtimes an event. Set the table attractively. Add a flower, a candle. Put on some favourite music.
- Plan ahead. Tell the family 'this is special' so everyone will want to be home. Invite friends over.

### **A is for Active...C is for taking Charge!**

It's as important to keep appointments with yourself as it is to keep a business appointment.

Schedule physical activity in your day-timer. It's an important appointment with yourself. Keep it!

Maximize your time by combining physical activity with other activities:

- Walk to the store and carry groceries home. That will give you several (active) trips a week, rather than one big shopping trip with the car.
- Walk while visiting with a friend.
- Whenever you have to wait, be active! Take a walk during your child's game practices.
- Wake up 30 minutes earlier or go to bed 30 minutes later and use the half-hour gained for physical activity.
- At work, walk at lunchtime or take the stairs. Be an innovator and start a physical activity group.
- Consider the benefits of taking an active vacation. A change is as good as a rest, and physical activity makes you feel better than a rest. Take a hike, go skiing, horseback ride with your family. There are lots of choices!
- Keep a progress log to remind yourself of how far you've come and all that you've accomplished.

Obstacles will get in the way of your being active. Be aware of them. Work out ways to get round them. Physical activity should be a stress reliever, not a hassle.

When you have to miss your planned activity for unexpected reasons, don't be discouraged. Don't give up. Get back on track as soon as possible. It's worth it.

**Remember to:**

**MAKE MEALTIMES A PLEASURE.**

**KEEP THAT ACTIVITY APPOINTMENT WITH YOURSELF!**

## **Week 9**

### **Fat free is not calorie free!**

There's no doubt that cutting back on fat can help improve your health and reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke. You might think that choosing foods labeled 'fat free' is the answer to reducing your fat intake. But 'fat free' doesn't mean 'calorie free'.

Learning how to read labels is the key to shopping for foods that are affordable and nutrient rich. Knowing what the labels actually mean will give you the information you need to decide which foods best fit your budget and your nutrition needs.

Before you buy any food based on a nutrition claim ('fat free' or 'light') do some homework:

- Take a little time to learn more about what those claims really mean — you'll find the information on Health Canada's Food Guide web site (follow the links to nutrition labeling).
- Compare products before you buy. See if there are significant differences in the nutrient content between the regular product and those labeled 'fat free' or 'light'.
- Consider the cost. Fat-reduced products are sometimes more expensive than the regular product. Sometimes it may be more economical simply to use less of the regular version of the food.
- Remember that taste matters! A reduced-fat or low-sugar food is only a good buy if you enjoy the taste enough to eat it.
- You might enjoy taking a nutrition-oriented grocery store tour. Some stores offer tours led by registered dietitians, who can answer your questions about healthy eating and food labeling.

### **A is for Activity...I is for Interesting**

Variety is the spice of life — it's important to plan to keep activity interesting. Do what you can to make sure you don't get bored doing the same activity all the time.

Fend off boredom with these strategies:

Promise yourself you're going to try a new activity each season — and get the family involved, too. There are more activities to enjoy than you might think, and endless possibilities to explore . . .

Walk. Snowshoe. Curl. Hike. Bike. Dance. Bowl. Take up yoga or tai chi. Go camping. Ice-skate. Ski. Swim. In-line skate. Rollerblade. Run. Skip rope. Play ball. Power walk. Try strength training. Garden with gusto.

Seek out the activities that appeal to you. Consider what you've enjoyed in the past. Resist activities you haven't tried in a while.

Focus on fun. Make activity enjoyable. Then you'll want to stick with it.

Mix it up. Do different things. Do things differently. If you always walk the same route, go the opposite direction, or change your route.

Add a challenge. Time yourself. Next time try to beat yourself.

If an intense workout isn't fun any more, switch to something more moderate for a while. Just make sure you challenge yourself enough to stay stimulated and interested.

And expect to change your workout. From time to time you'll want to give it a minor tweak or a major overhaul. The key is to find combinations of activities that you feel good doing and can stick with.

Every workout isn't exciting. But keep going. You'll see and feel the benefits. And that will keep you going. Helping others with a gentle nudge to become more regularly active can help you too.

**Remember to:**

**FIND OUT WHAT 'FAT FREE' AND 'LIGHT' LABELS REALLY MEAN!**

**VARY YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES. KEEP THEM INTERESTING.  
ENJOYABLE.**

**Week 10**

**Making good food — fast!**

People often say they just don't have time to eat the healthy way. But there are ways to save time on food preparation and still eat well.

- Plan a week's meals ahead of time. Write a shopping list and buy accordingly, so everything will be on hand when you start to cook.
- Have a 'cooking night' to make some items in advance.
- Remember to take meat from the freezer to thaw in the fridge the day before you need it for a meal.
- Make double servings so you'll have a 'heat and serve' meal the next night.

The cost of food is often given as a reason for not eating the way we'd like to. But there are nutrition bargains — high-nutrient, low-cost foods — and there are ways to reduce food costs.

- Buy non-perishable foods in bulk (pastas, soups, beans, cereals).
- Buy produce in season.
- Use sale and special offers whenever you can.
- Plan ahead for meals and shopping — this may seem time-consuming, but it's actually a time and money saver (you've got the ingredients on hand when you need them; you've only bought what you needed)

**A is for Active...R is for Recharging your Batteries!**

Physical activity gives you more energy — not less.

Sitting at a desk all day can make you feel drained. Being mentally tired is sometimes mistaken for physical tiredness. But doing some kind of physical activity is actually the best way of recovering a feeling of well-being after a long day at home or at work. Being physically active lets your body deal with stresses and gives you a chance to reorganize your thoughts and improve your mood. The endorphins (natural mood-enhancing chemicals your body releases when you get going) make you feel even better.

Being active doesn't take away energy — it creates more! A walk at lunchtime can re-energize you, give you a fresh start, and help you stay productive throughout the afternoon.

**Remember to:**

**PLAN AHEAD — TO PREPARE GOOD MEALS, FAST!**

## **RECHARGE YOUR BATTERY — DO SOMETHING ACTIVE!**

### **Week 11**

#### **Make your First Bite a fruit or vegetable!**

Are you really getting the recommended minimum number of fruits and vegetables (five servings daily)? Many people aren't. Fruits and vegetables provide us with fiber, vitamins and minerals.

A simple reminder: Every time you're going to have something to eat, make the First Bite a fruit or vegetable. As well as taking the edge off your hunger, this will help meet the minimum daily requirements.

- At breakfast, make the First Bite an orange, a kiwi, a banana, a mango.
- At snack time, make the First Bite an apple or some carrot sticks.
- At lunch or dinner, make the First Bite a salad or some grapes.

#### **A is for Active...R is for Reward Yourself**

Being physically active regularly is a real achievement and one that you'll want to recognize. Reward yourself for sticking with your physical activity program. Give yourself an evening out or get yourself something nice. Treat yourself for all your hard work. You deserve it!

You can make physical activity a reward when you've accomplished something important in another area of your life. Finished that nagging job? Then put on your shoes and hit the trails for an extra feeling of well-being.

Recognize other people's efforts to stay healthy and keep fit. Give them positive feedback and little rewards. And accept positive feedback and rewards yourself.

#### **Remember to:**

**THINK FIRST BITE FRUIT OR VEGETABLE!  
STICK TO IT! BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE REGULARLY. AND REWARD  
YOURSELF FOR IT!**

### **Week 12**

#### **It's a balancing act — food and activity!**

Healthy eating and active living are key components of a healthy lifestyle. Each of them positively influences how we feel physically and psychologically. Put together they work wonders.

Balancing food intake and activity helps you feel and perform at your best.

On low activity days, cut back a little on food intake. On high activity days you need that extra fuel to perform well. As healthy lifestyle habits develop, this balancing act becomes automatic. If weight loss or weight gain is your goal, start slowly with slight changes. Healthy weight is a direct result of healthy eating and active living.

Be good to yourself.

Making healthy food choices is all about taking care of you. Eat well. Live well. Healthy eating is social and rewarding and part of everyday life.

When you eat well you will have:

- Energy
- Healthy tissues, organs and skin
- A strong immune system
- Reduced risk of some chronic diseases

It's true. You are what you eat. Eat a balanced diet — something from every food group, every day — to be your best!

### **A is for Active...L is for Living Actively**

Stay on track! Live actively!

Avoid situations where people are sitting and talking for long periods. Choose a more active option if you can. Instead of meeting friends or colleagues for coffee or lunch, go walking, swimming, golfing, or play squash with them. Try to include an activity in inactive situations — take the stairs to that meeting; walk the hallway at break time.

It's probably unrealistic to think you'll never miss a day of your physical activity program. Don't worry if you miss an opportunity. Just get back to your routine as soon as possible. An occasional week with no activity is trivial in terms of the rest of your life.

If you feel like quitting, talk yourself into carrying on with some positive feedback. 'I'm good at getting things done. I'm not a quitter. I can find ways to keep going!' Don't say 'I should (do this or that)'. Say, 'It would be good for me to get out today – I will do it.' Or picture yourself succeeding or overcoming a major challenge. Mental images are powerful!

On days when your energy runs low, friends can provide that extra boost. We all need a hand sometimes! Friends can also offer encouragement and practical support (baby sitting, a ride) to help you keep going.

You may be surprised to find that other people are happy to be active with you. All you need to do is ask. Invite someone else — your spouse, partner, a friend, children, parent, a relative, a colleague — to join your activity. This can strengthen social bonds and improve well-being for all of you.

**For a life of HEALTHY EATING / ACTIVE LIVING,**

**Remember to:**

**EAT WISELY — WITH BALANCE, VARIETY, MODERATION!**

**BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE — REGULARLY!**

**AND ENJOY LIVING!**