

# Healthy Living Profile

A MARKETING FEATURE ON THE CANADIAN HEALTH NETWORK

## The Canadian Health Network

How a national Web site is changing the way Canadians access health information

Countless Canadians look to the Internet for guidance on making healthier choices in their lives. More than three million users each year go to the Canadian Health Network (CHN), which is one of the most trustworthy, reliable and timely sources of Canadian health information available online.

Created in 1999, the CHN is co-ordinated by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and offers one-stop access to more than 20,000 English and French expert-reviewed Web-based health resources that cover a broad range of subjects from healthy eating to mental health and sexuality. The CHN also provides information unique to specific groups, including children, youth, men, women, seniors and Aboriginal peoples.

As well as the general public, health professionals, academics and physicians also value the CHN because it provides the health and medical fields with timely and relevant health information and news. Doctors, nurses and health educators have also expressed confidence in the site because the content adheres to strict quality assurance guidelines.

The CHN relies on a unique collaboration with some of Canada's best health information providers, including the Canadian Cancer Society, The Lung Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association and The Dietitians of Canada. The CHN also benefits from the expertise of Health Canada and numerous other national and provincial or territorial non-profit organizations, universities, hospitals, libraries and community-based organizations.

There are more than 15 million Canadians online, and a staggering 80% report that they have used the Internet to look for health information. Often, Internet information-seekers are bombarded with search results that are out-of-date, inaccurate or misleading, so it's not surprising that so many Canadians trust the resources of the CHN.

## A safe journey from A to B

How to prevent seniors' most common injury – falling

The risk of falling and being injured becomes greater as we age. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, one in three seniors will experience a fall each year, and half of those will fall more than once. But with the right approach to personal safety, we can reduce the risks.

### KEEP YOUR HEALTH IN CHECK

Falls are rarely due to pure clumsiness. Eating well and staying active help to keep us healthy, which in turn helps to prevent injury, no matter how old we are. A healthy diet helps us maintain energy and alertness, while regular physical activity builds muscle and keeps the body limber. If you're on medication, you should be fully aware of the correct prescribed dosage, the side effects and any harmful interactions with other drugs. Medications can cause dizziness and nausea and can affect your sense of balance. Talk to your health care providers about the medications you take. At least once a year, give them a list of all of your medications, including prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs and any herbal remedies.

### PROOF UNDER YOUR ROOF

We can significantly reduce the risk of falling by properly safety-proofing our homes. Keep high-traffic areas free of clutter, make sure that kitchen and bathroom floors aren't slippery and equip bathtubs with well-anchored grab bars. Avoid using area rugs that may slide on the floor, wear sensible shoes and consider installing double handrails on the stairs. Be sure to promptly wipe up any spills on your floors and keep the main areas of the home well lit.

When you're outdoors, it's especially important to be aware of your surroundings. Check the weather for icy or windy conditions and get familiar with the bumps and cracks in your neighbourhood sidewalk. If you have poor eyesight, avoid walking at night or in poorly lit areas. A cane or walker can be very helpful for extra support and stability.

As the general population ages, the ability to live independently is more important than ever. In order to maintain their independence, today's seniors need to pay close attention to their surroundings and their health. Safe surroundings, an active lifestyle and healthy eating helps to prevent falls and makes for a much safer (and longer) life!



## Join in the fun to get your kids moving!

One of the best ways to encourage healthy habits for our kids is to set an example, such as incorporating physical activity into our daily routines. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada's *Family Guide for Physical Activity for Children*, "over half of the children in Canada are not active enough for healthy growth and development." We can start to change this if we change the way we approach physical activity.

Many people say they're just too busy to exercise or that life's demands get in the way. But when you consciously set aside blocks of time to exercise with your children, you're demonstrating a long-term commitment to your health. Here are a few of the ways to get your bodies moving as a parent-and-child team:

**Focus on the fun** Exercise has obvious benefits, such as keeping our bodies trim and our energy levels up, but it's also fun! Remind your kids that smiles and laughter are part of a healthy workout — especially when you're doing it together.

**Give them a choice** Forcing children to engage in sports or activities they dislike rarely produces positive results. Instead, offer them a choice. Let them decide which activities they're interested in joining or doing and have them commit to those choices. And always make sure you play an active role on the sidelines — whether you're cheering them on or helping them at practice, your presence and encouragement will help fuel their enthusiasm.

**Encourage informal exercise** Physical activity doesn't always have to be scheduled. Teach your kids to exercise 'on the go' by taking the stairs instead of the escalator, helping Mom rake the leaves or Dad carry the groceries. Informal activities help to keep our bodies in tune between the soccer games and gymnastics lessons.

**Log off and tune in to healthier choices** Television and computer use are two of the main reasons why children and parents are getting less physical activity than they did 10 years ago. Limit your time in front of the screen and you'll make more time for something much more important — your health.

Last but not least,

**Praise their efforts** Children gain a sense of accomplishment from setting goals and being rewarded for their efforts. If you acknowledge their milestones on a regular basis, your kids are much more likely to make exercise a regular part of their routine.

## Healthy lunches to go...

Imagine packed lunches that are healthy and easy to make, that even your kids will eat. It may sound too good to be true, but it is not. Take the Canadian Health Network Healthy Lunches to Go Tour and find out how fast and easy it can be to pack healthy and delicious lunches for the whole family. This short tour offers nutrition information and tips. It also looks at some of the obstacles we all face in making healthy lunches part of our daily routine and suggests simple steps for dealing with them. The Healthy Lunches to Go Tour is brought to you by the Dietitians of Canada, an expert source of information on healthy eating.

Visit [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca) and click on Healthy Eating in the topic list (left margin) to take the Healthy Lunches to Go Tour.

### HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL FIND:

- ✓ Healthy Lunch Checklist – Start by using the checklist to rate the lunch you ate or packed for your child today, to see how it stacks up. Keep this checklist on your fridge so it is always handy.
- ✓ Creative ideas to prevent lunch bags from getting boring
- ✓ Timesaving tips to make packing lunch quick and easy
- ✓ How to read nutrition labels and what ingredients to watch out for
- ✓ A pledge form to help you set a Healthy Lunches goal



## There's something in the air

Controlling what you inhale indoors

Canadians spend about 90% of their time indoors, but the air we're breathing inside is often very poor. Poor indoor air quality can cause many health problems, from asthma and allergies to pneumonia or even lung cancer. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of poor indoor air quality.

Here are just a few of the harmful elements circulating in our homes and offices:

**Molds** are fungi that grow in damp environments and can cause respiratory infections and allergic reactions. Common sources of mold are basements, old carpets, air conditioners and refrigerator drip pans.

**Carbon monoxide** is a poisonous, colourless and odourless gas. Possible sources of carbon monoxide include poorly-maintained or improperly-vented gas and oil furnaces and car engines in attached garages.

**Household pet allergens** can irritate the eyes and nose and can exacerbate more serious respiratory conditions such as asthma. They are found in the skin, saliva, hair and urine of pets including cats and dogs.

**Mites** are extremely small insects found in warm, humid environments such as bedding and carpets. Mites can trigger allergic reactions such as asthma, chronic

colds and allergic inflammation of the skin (dermatitis).

Indoor air quality can also be affected by many other pollutants, including second-hand smoke and volatile organic compounds (petroleum products found in aerosols, paint, linoleum and detergents).

### WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT?

There are two main things you can do to improve your indoor air quality. You should keep your home dry and well-ventilated, and remove or reduce the presence of indoor pollutants.

To achieve healthy levels of humidity (35 – 40%) in your home, keep moist areas such as the bathroom and kitchen well-vented by installing fans or opening windows. A humidifier or a humidistat can also help you to regulate your home's humidity.

To reduce the presence of indoor air pollutants, keep your house clean and smoke-free. Reduce your use of toxic materials in the home. Clean your humidifier regularly, disinfect smooth surfaces such as windows and countertops where mold might grow, and consider investing in a high-efficiency particulate filter vacuum cleaner.

## Everybody's doing it

Yoga and walking: Easy and effective exercises!

Yoga and walking are both simple and popular forms of physical exercise. Both activities are good for the body, physically and mentally.

### PLENTY OF BENEFITS

There are many benefits to practising yoga regularly. Yoga can improve your flexibility and muscle strength, boost your energy levels, help lower your blood pressure and improve your cardiovascular health.

Walking is the most popular physical activity in Canada. Regular brisk walking for 30 minutes for four to seven days a week has been proven to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and even certain types of cancer. Regular walkers also benefit from

increased energy levels, more stamina, better sleep and lower stress levels.

### GET STARTED AND STAY MOTIVATED

Incorporating yoga or walking into your routine by planning when you will do them, think about alternate options or plans in case something comes up, map a safe walking route and consider any factors that will affect your participation such as costs, air quality and opportunities to be active at work or school.

If you'd like a little guidance or company, you can look for a yoga program or a walking group or clinic in your area. But if you prefer, you can enjoy either yoga or walking by yourself. Either way, both of these activities allow you to set and achieve your own personal goals.