

Chapter 3

BALANCE IS EVERYTHING

What is healthy eating?

It seems so complicated. Is there an easy way to make sure I get all the nutrients I need?

Okay. I understand the four food groups. But what's a serving?

Why are vegetables and fruit so important?

What about coffee, tea and alcohol?

What about salt?

Are organic foods better for my health?

Where does exercise fit?





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A **NUTRIENT** is a substance that provides nourishment essential for life and growth.

As your body ages, you may require fewer calories – mostly because you are not as active – but your need for essential nutrients stays the same and in some cases even goes up. For example, you need more calcium, folate, vitamin D and B6 as you get older.

As a result, healthy eating becomes even more important as a way to make sure you get all the nutrients you need, without any extra calories or extra weight gain. And if what you eat does not give you quite enough nutrition, you can take a multivitamin/mineral and/or other supplements to help (see Chapter 4).

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating is balanced eating, where you consume a variety of foods. It includes protein, carbohydrates (especially fibre), fats and fluids.

Protein

Protein helps repair your muscles, skin and nails. It can help you heal if you've been ill or have had surgery.

The best sources of protein are meat, fish, poultry, milk, eggs, cheese, yogurt, legumes (such as dried peas, beans and lentils), nuts, seeds and soy products (such as tofu or soy beverages). Whole grains, vegetables and fruit can also provide small amounts of protein.

Here's how you can easily get the protein your body needs in one day along with many other good nutrients, such as iron, calcium and vitamin B12:

- At breakfast, have one egg, one slice of whole wheat toast and a banana. Or try oatmeal made with an egg and milk or unsweetened, fortified soy beverage, or cold cereal made with low-fat buttermilk or lassi (a yogurt drink).
- At lunch, have a chunk of cheese and a bowl of lentil soup (see our recipe in Chapter 11). Or try steamed brown rice with cut-up chicken pieces and vegetables, such as green beans or bok choy, or a cup (250 mL) of dahl (lentils) with two whole wheat roti (flat bread).
- For an afternoon snack, have a handful of nuts with three-quarters of a cup (175 mL) of low-fat yogurt, or a small glass of milk or unsweetened, fortified soy beverage.
- For dinner, have fish (or tofu) with half a cup (125 mL) of brown or basmati rice, and half a cup (125 mL) of broccoli or other vegetable and one cup (250 mL) of mixed salad.

ADDING PROTEIN IS EASY

Try to have one good source of protein at each meal, such as lean meat, chicken, turkey, eggs, low-fat cheese, fish, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, nuts or peanut butter.

Try:

- adding a slice of cheese to your favourite sandwich
- cutting up a hard-boiled egg into your salad
- preparing a dahl (a South Asian lentil dish)
- drinking milk instead of water at one meal
- eating a handful of unsalted soy nuts
- sprinkling nuts and seeds on your cereal, salad or stirfry
- spreading peanut butter on a slice of whole wheat toast or a whole wheat tortilla, or
- adding chickpeas or beans to a stirfry or pasta sauce.

If you still just can't get enough protein through your diet, add skim milk powder to your cereal, milk or juice.



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Carbohydrates

Healthy carbohydrates – such as vegetables, fruit, whole grains and low-fat dairy products – provide your body with the fuel your heart, lungs and other organs need to function properly. They deliver essential vitamins and minerals and help give you the energy you need to walk another block or swim a few more laps. Many are also important sources of fibre (see below).

A few carbohydrates, however, are unhealthy – particularly the ones that are easily digested and that quickly raise your blood sugar. These include white bread, white rice, cookies and cakes.

Some weight loss programs say to cut down on or cut out all carbohydrates because they make you gain weight. But that severely limits what you can eat and you miss out on many important nutrients.

Permanent weight loss or weight management requires a permanent change in lifestyle and eating habits. (See Chapter 6 for tips on healthy ways to lose weight.)

Fibre

Most Canadians – especially seniors – only get about half the fibre they need each day.

Fibre is a nutrient found in plants. You need fibre to keep your bowels regular and healthy. Eating a lot of high-fibre foods can also help lower blood cholesterol levels, control blood sugar levels and help prevent high blood pressure. Because fibre makes you feel full for longer, it can also help with weight control.

Watch Out!

If you have an intestinal or bowel disease, you may not be able to eat large amounts of fibre. Check with your doctor or dietitian.

Grains and grain products are particularly high in fibre. In fact, a high-fibre cereal for breakfast (one with four grams or more of fibre) will help keep your hunger under control for the whole day. Follow up throughout the day with other high-fibre foods, such as whole wheat toast or pasta with vegetable sauce, a spicy bowl of chili, or low-fat yogurt with fruit and bran added on top.

Fruit and vegetables, beans, lentils and chickpeas are also great sources of fibre.

Fibre Tips

- Look for labels that say “high” or “very high source of fibre.” This means the foods have at least four to six grams of fibre per serving.
- Eat breads, rolls and roti (flat bread) made of whole wheat, wheat bran, mixed grains, dark rye or pumpernickel flours, as well as brown rice and whole wheat pasta. Look for “whole” grains to be the first ingredient on the ingredient label. (“Enriched wheat flour” and “unbleached flour” are both refined white flour and have less fibre, iron and vitamins than whole grain flour, while “multigrain” may just mean that a small amount of whole grain has been added to enriched flour.)
- Eat lots of vegetables and fruit.
- Drink plenty of fluids to help fibre work properly. For women, that’s at least nine 8-ounce glasses (2.2 litres). For men, it’s at least 12 8-ounce glasses (three litres).
- If you haven’t been eating much fibre, add fibre slowly to avoid any problems with gas or cramps, and make sure to drink lots of fluids.



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A return to basics



When 78-year-old Joan Reichardt of Nelson, B.C., first arrived in Canada as a war bride, she was given a copy of the Canadian Cookbook for British Brides.

“It had all sorts of good advice – especially for someone like me,” she says. “I could scarcely boil water. I’d done a bit of cooking in school, but food was too scarce during the war to allow anybody who didn’t know what

they were doing near the food!”

The war bride cookbook explained the differences between Canadian and British meal patterns, shopping habits, foods and food names. It also included some common Canadian recipes that were “very basic, very down to earth, like baked ham slice,” says Joan, “that we sort of abandoned for fancier food later.”

Today, as a widow, Joan finds herself returning to much the same kind of plain and simple cooking. “Interestingly enough,” she says, “I’ve reverted to the basics. Not that I was ever a really fancy cook – you can’t be with five children – but today I find I really enjoy simple and healthy food. Last night, for example, I had a small piece of salmon, new boiled potatoes and carrots. Delicious.”

Fats

Research now proves that it is not fat that is bad for you, but the type of fat you eat that counts most.

Everyone needs to eat some fat to stay healthy. Fat supplies your body with energy and helps build a protective coat around your cells – but it's got to be healthy fat and in the right amount.

Unhealthy fats are saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats are mostly found in food that comes from animals. They are also found in palm and coconut oils. Trans fats come mostly from vegetable oils that have been made solid through a process called hydrogenation.

Unhealthy fats are found in:

- whole or full-fat milk, including coconut milk and Hong Kong-style milk tea
- cream, sour cream and ice cream
- butter and clarified butter or ghee
- cheese (including paneer)
- fatty red meat (sausage, pork hock, bacon, Chinese preserved meats)

Some fat not a lot!

Everyone needs some fat, but all fat, even healthy fat, is very high in calories.

Too much fat can make you gain weight and increase your risk of diabetes and may also lead to clogged arteries and an increased risk of heart disease and cancer.

That means you must choose your fats wisely: don't waste your fat "quota" on cookies or cakes. Instead, choose foods that also provide lots of good nutrition, such as nuts and seeds, avocado, salmon and low-fat cheese.

Snacks that have almost no fat include fresh fruit and vegetables. Other low-fat choices include melba toast, fig cookies and gingersnaps. Or try low-fat yogurt or whole wheat crackers that have less than three grams of fat per serving (read the label!).



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- chicken feet, chicken, duck and turkey skin or fat
- dim sum (including pork pastry, pot stickers and sticky rice wraps)
- palm and coconut oils
- hard margarines and vegetable shortening
- partially hydrogenated vegetable oil
- lard
- deep-fried foods (such as chips, pakoras and samosas)
- baked items (including cookies, cakes, pies and pastries, pineapple buns, cocktail buns and moon cakes), and
- South Asian sweets (such as jalebi, ladoo, barfi and gulab jatman).

Healthy fats are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. One type of polyunsaturated fat – omega 3 fatty acid – is particularly helpful in reducing the “stickiness” of your blood so you are less likely to develop clots. Omega 3 fatty acids also help lower triglycerides, reducing your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Healthy fats are found in:

- oily or fatty fish*, such as salmon, anchovies, rainbow trout, sardines, mackerel, eulachon, char and herring
- nuts and seeds, such as cashews, almonds, walnuts*, peanuts and ground flaxseeds*
- vegetable oils, including olive, peanut, canola*, soybean*, and sesame oil and soft-tub margarines made from these oils (provided they have “non-hydrogenated” on the label)
- flaxseed and walnut oils* (do not heat these oils; use them cold)
- wheatgerm
- avocados, and
- foods fortified with omega 3, including eggs, yogurt and soy beverages.*

* These items are all particularly high in omega 3 fatty acids.

Butter vs. Margarine

For years, researchers said that margarine is better for the heart than butter. But now they know that hard-stick margarine is actually worse for the heart because it contains large amounts of trans fats.



The best option is to use liquid vegetable oils, such as canola, olive or soybean oil, or soft-tub margarine that is labeled “non-hydrogenated.” Also make sure the margarine is low in saturated and trans fat, and look for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada’s Health Check™ logo.

To make sure you are eating the right amount of fat, start by choosing foods that are naturally low in fat, then add no more than two to three tablespoons (30 to 45 grams) of healthy, unsaturated fats to what you eat every day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.

Also try to substitute healthy fat for unhealthy fat where you can, and remember to read food labels carefully. “Low fat” means that the food has less than three grams of fat per serving. “Fat free” means that the food has less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.

In addition:

- Choose lean meats, then trim off any fat you can see.
- Remove the skin from chicken and turkey.
- Grill, broil or roast your meat, chicken or turkey to allow the fat to drain off.
- Eat fish at least twice a week.
- Choose legumes instead of meat at least once a week. Prepare a dish that uses baked beans, dahl (lentils) or chickpeas, or cook a batch of chili.
- Cook with low-fat dairy products made with skim or 1% milk or yogurt.



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- Use low-fat milk in your coffee and tea or to make chai.
- Use whole wheat flour to make roti (flat bread), and leave out the butter.
- Use small amounts of mustard, ketchup, relish, cranberry sauce, or peanut butter instead of butter or margarine.
- Choose a healthy, low-fat salad dressing or make your own (see our recipe in Chapter 11).
- Try steamed or boiled brown rice instead of pilau or biryani.
- Substitute small amounts of canola or olive oil for butter or margarine in your cooking, including when you make dahl (a lentil dish) or cook vegetables.
- Reduce the fat in your favourite recipes (see Chapter 8 for tips).

Fluids

Fluids are essential to life. They help you to think clearly and keep your body temperature where it is supposed to be. They also help your bowels stay regular, because even mild dehydration can cause constipation.

As you get older, your body's signals tend to become a bit weaker. You may not know when you're thirsty. And by the time you feel thirsty, you could already be dehydrated, which means you've lost too much water and may soon start feeling tired, confused, hot, flushed and even nauseous.

To your good health

Start your lunch or dinner with a low-salt vegetable soup – you'll eat your veggies and drink your fluids all in one!

Try our milkshake recipe (see Chapter 11) for an easy way to increase your fluids while adding calcium, protein and vitamin D to your diet.

Avoid drinking a lot of sugary drinks, such as pop, slushies, sweetened fruit drinks and iced tea.

Have sparkling water instead of wine.

Watch out!

Talk with your doctor if you have heart disease, kidney, liver, adrenal or thyroid disease. You may need to drink less.

Talk to your doctor, too, if you suddenly feel very thirsty or have to urinate more often than usual.

As a senior, you need to drink fluids regularly, whether you feel thirsty or not.

If you are a woman, try to drink about nine 8-ounce glasses (2.2 litres) of fluids each day. If you are a man, try to drink about 12 8-ounce glasses (three litres) of fluids each day.

Drink more:

- when it is hot
- after you exercise
- if you have been vomiting or have diarrhea.

You can get your fluids by drinking plain water, but there are also many different and healthy sources of fluids, including:

- vegetable and fruit juices
- low-fat milk and buttermilk
- unsweetened soy beverages
- low-fat yogurt drinks
- soups
- decaffeinated coffee and tea (including black, green, herbal and chai), and
- Ovaltine™ or Horlicks™ mixed with low-fat milk or unsweetened soy beverage.

Remember: alcohol does not count as a source of fluid.

Your current total fluid intake is probably okay if you produce a colourless or slightly yellow urine and feel well.



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It seems so complicated. Is there an easy way to make sure I get all the nutrients I need?

The easiest way to make sure you are getting all the nutrients you need is to follow Canada's Food Guide (see Appendix B) – specifically the guide's recommended Food Guide Servings, to make sure you eat from all four food groups.

The guide recommends that senior women have:

- Seven servings of vegetables and fruit per day.
- Six servings of grain products, including bread, rice, pasta, cereals, per day.
- Three servings of milk and alternatives, such as cheese, yogurt, kefir and fortified soy beverages, per day.
- Two servings of meat (cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat) and meat alternatives, such as eggs, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, nuts and nut butters, per day.

It recommends that senior men have:

- Seven servings of vegetables and fruit per day.
- Seven servings of grain products, including bread, rice, pasta and cereals, per day.
- Three servings of milk and alternatives, such as cheese, yogurt, kefir and fortified soy beverages, per day.
- Three servings of meat (cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat) and meat alternatives, such as eggs, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, nuts and nut butters, per day.

Fresh vs. canned or frozen fruit and vegetables

You receive the same health benefits from canned, frozen or dried vegetables and fruit as you do from fresh – and they are often cheaper!

Canned and frozen vegetables and fruit are packed at the height of their nutritional value, when they are ripe. Just make sure that canned fruit is packed in water or juice, rather than syrup, and that canned vegetables are packed with little or no salt (sodium).

Some tips from Canada's Food Guide

- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Eat at least two servings of fish per week.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Make at least half your grain products whole grain each day, such as whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice and oatmeal.
- Drink skim, 1 percent or 2 percent milk each day. Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.

For more tips, see Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide (Appendix B).

Okay, I understand the four food groups.

But what's a serving?

- One serving of fruit could be one apple, orange or banana, or half a cup (125 mL) of 100 percent fruit juice.
- One serving of vegetables could be half a cup (125 mL) of fresh, frozen or canned vegetables, or one cup (250 mL) of raw leafy vegetables or salad.
- One serving of grains could be one slice (35 g) of whole wheat bread, half a bagel, pita or tortilla. Or it could be three-quarters of a cup (175 mL) of hot cereal or one ounce (30 g) of cold cereal. It could also be half a cup (125 mL) of cooked pasta, couscous, rice, bulgur or quinoa.
- One serving of milk or fortified soy beverage is one cup (250 mL); one serving of evaporated milk is half a cup (125 mL). One serving of cheese is one-and-a-half ounces (50 g), while one serving of yogurt or kefir is three-quarters of a cup (175 g).
- One serving of cooked fish, shellfish, poultry or lean meat is two-and-a-half ounces (75 g). For meat alternatives, one serving is three-quarters of a cup (175 mL) or 150g of tofu or legumes, two eggs, two tablespoons (30 mL) of peanut butter, or one-quarter cup (60 mL) of shelled nuts or seeds.



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Why are vegetables and fruit so important?

Researchers have known for a long time that vegetables and fruit are full of things that are vital to health, like fibre, vitamin C and E and other antioxidants (see Chapter 4 for more on these vitamins). Today, new research is revealing that there are even more good things hidden inside apples and green beans.

Phytochemicals are chemicals produced by plants. These chemicals contain compounds that may protect against disease, especially cancer, and possibly osteoporosis and eye disease.

The brightest and most colourful vegetables and fruit – the dark green, orange, yellow and red ones – are packed with both essential vitamins and minerals and disease-fighting phytochemicals. Soy products, beans and lentils, too, are full of phytochemicals – so remember to include them. And don't be afraid of flavouring your foods with herbs, spices and citrus peels to get extra nutrients.

What about coffee, tea and alcohol?

Experts used to think that caffeinated coffee and tea caused the body to lose water. New research, however, shows that coffee and tea do provide necessary fluid, but you still have to be careful about how much caffeine you take in each day.

A moderate amount of caffeine appears to be fine – about 400 to 450 mgs a day. That's about three 8-ounce cups of coffee a day and a bit more if you drink black or green tea, which contain less caffeine. (Herbal teas contain no caffeine at all, but most

My Food Guide

If you have a computer, you can now customize Canada's Food Guide to include the kinds of food you like to eat and the physical activities you most like to do.

Go to www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide and click on My Food Guide.

Help is available

It's easy to drink more than you should, particularly if you've lost a spouse and are feeling lonely or depressed.

If you are drinking too much, or you think a friend is, call the Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Services at 604 660-9382 in the Lower Mainland. Elsewhere in B.C., call 1 800 663-1441.

flavoured teas contain some caffeine. Cola and soda pop also contain caffeine.)

Researchers have not changed their opinion on alcohol, especially for seniors.

Your body becomes more sensitive to alcohol as you age and your metabolism slows down. Now, the two drinks you used to have before dinner feel more like four or five. In addition, you may be taking more medications than you used to, which can magnify the effect of the alcohol you drink and be very dangerous. And if you also have a balance problem or a chronic illness, such as heart disease and diabetes, alcohol can make it worse.

Added to all that, research indicates that consuming alcohol over many years, even in moderate amounts, increases your risk of developing certain types of cancer as well as Type 2 diabetes.

If you are taking any medications or have a chronic illness – especially if you have diabetes or your triglyceride levels are high – ask your doctor or a dietitian (see back cover for contact information) whether it is safe for you to drink alcohol at all.

If you are not taking medications, or your doctor or pharmacist says it is okay, stick to the one-drink-a-day rule. That's one 12-ounce (354 mL) bottle of beer, one five-ounce (147 mL) glass of wine, or one-and-a-half ounces (44 mL) of hard liquor. And always eat before you drink. Food helps slow down how quickly your body absorbs alcohol and reduces its effects.

What about salt?

You probably know that eating too much sodium (salt) can raise blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease. But recent research reveals that the effects of high blood pressure are even more wide-ranging.



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Low-salt tips

- Do not add salt when you cook.
- When you are eating out, ask the cook to hold the salt.
- Take the saltshaker off the dining table.
- Substitute other seasonings for salt, such as herbs, dry mustard, spices, lemon juice, ginger or garlic – or see the recipe for Universal Seasoning in Chapter 11.
- Choose fresh food as often as possible.
- Avoid frozen dinners.
- Rinse canned foods, such as salmon, tuna fish and beans, under water to remove the salt.
- Avoid “instant” foods, including instant soups, oatmeal, pancakes and waffles.
- Avoid processed cheese.
- Avoid meats that have been processed, cured or smoked. These include sausages, hot dogs, ham, bacon, pepperoni or smoked fish.
- Limit snack foods, such as salted crackers, chips, popcorn and nuts.
- Limit pickles, pickled foods, relishes, salsa, dips, olives, barbecue sauce, soy sauce, hoisin sauce, oyster sauce and prepared salad dressings.

Researchers now know that high blood pressure can also speed up the body's loss of calcium, which could lead to osteoporosis (thinning of the bones that makes them more likely to break). High blood pressure is also considered a “risk factor” for diabetes and kidney disease, which means you are more likely to develop these diseases.

You should limit your intake of sodium to no more than 2300 mgs per day (that's about one teaspoon of salt) from all your foods. You should consume even less sodium if you have high blood pressure, osteoporosis, kidney disease or diabetes.

The best way to control your sodium intake is to eat fresh vegetables and fruit more often and prepare your own food. Try not to rely on frozen dinners or canned soup, meat or vegetables, because most contain a lot of extra salt. If you do buy these foods, look for labels that say “no salt added” or “low sodium.” But watch out for labels that say “reduced sodium” or “less salt,” because the food may still have a lot of salt. (See Chapter 7 for more on reading food labels.)

Common foods and their sodium content

Pancake, from mix – 10 cm (2.5 inch)	250 mgs
Donut – 1	250 mgs
Canned green beans – ½ cup	180 mgs
Frozen green beans – ½ cup	6 mgs
Canned mushrooms – ½ cup	350 mgs
Canned spaghetti sauce – ½ cup	650 mgs
Tomato juice – 1 cup	930 mgs
Canned salmon, salt added – 1 can	370 mgs
Canned salmon, no salt added – 1 can	50 mgs
Bacon – 1 slice	100 mgs
Luncheon meat – 1 slice	200 mgs
Pork sausage – 1 2-ounce	530 mgs
Canned baked beans – 1 cup	1065 mgs
Salted mixed nuts – ½ cup	450 mgs
Kraft™ dinner – ¾ cup	430 mgs
Chicken broth – 1 cup	820 mgs
Tomato soup, with milk – 1 cup	950 mgs
Mushroom soup, with milk – 1 cup	1140 mgs
Italian dressing – 1 tbsp	230 mgs
Salt – 1 tsp	2375 mgs
Soy sauce, regular – 1 tbsp	1040 mgs
Hoi sin sauce – 1 tsp	70 mgs
Oyster sauce – 1 tsp	250 mgs



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Are organic foods better for my health?

That question is hard to answer.

Organic food started as just vegetables and fruit. Today, however, organic food includes milk, cheese, meat, poultry and grains for bread and cereal and other products.

Organic farmers choose to produce their food without using chemical pesticides or fertilizers, hormones or antibiotics – which means organic foods may be more environmentally friendly than non-organic foods. However, scientists are just beginning to test whether organic foods are actually more nutritious than non-organic foods, and they have not come to any final conclusions yet.

So it's really up to you. The most important thing is that you eat vegetables and fruit more often – whether they are organic or not.

If you do decide to buy organic food, always check for a “certified organic” mark on food labels and try to buy locally grown produce whenever possible. And remember to wash all vegetables and fruit carefully.

Where does exercise fit?

It used to be that people with a chronic illness were told to either “take it easy” or just take a pill or two. That advice has changed.

Today, researchers know that just a moderate amount of physical activity (30 to

Exercise: The results are dramatic

Once you start, you won't want to stop, because you'll soon find that it's easier to:

- climb a flight of stairs
- carry a bag of groceries
- lift your grandchild
- cook a healthy meal
- stand up straight
- avoid or prevent a fall
- cope with stress, and
- fall asleep at bedtime.

In short, regular physical activity can mean greater freedom and independence.

60 minutes a day) – combined with healthy eating – helps maintain weight. It also helps prevent a number of life-threatening diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol and possibly even cancer. And it helps those who already have these conditions manage them better.

For example, if you have diabetes, you know that watching what you eat is essential. But so is physical activity. Recent studies have shown that if you combine healthy eating with regular activity, you will improve your condition by more than 45 percent over healthy eating alone, even if you do not lose weight.

For those with arthritis or osteoporosis, physical activity can help reduce joint pain and joint damage, prevent further bone loss and build stronger bones. It can also build the muscles you need for better balance.

Getting started

Talk to your doctor first to make sure you are ready to increase your physical activity. If your doctor says you are, we recommend you also consult with an exercise professional for advice about what physical activity – and how much – is best for you.

To find an exercise professional near you, try your local recreation centre or YM/YWCA. You can also call or visit:

Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology
at 1 877 651-3755 or www.csep.ca

B.C. Recreation and Parks Association
at 1 866 929-0965 or www.bcrpa.bc.ca, or

B.C. Association of Kinesiologists at
1 604 601-5100 or www.bcak.bc.ca.

Also read the Public Health Agency of Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults. It's free, and you can order copies by calling 1 888 334-9769 or online at www.paguide.com.



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Three types of physical activity

To keep your body moving well as you get older, try to incorporate three types of physical activity into your life:

1. Endurance or aerobic activities to increase your heart rate and body temperature and strengthen both heart and lungs.

FITT	Just Starting Out	Regular Routine
Frequency	Most days	Four to seven days per week
Intensity Breathing Talk Test	Light Slight increase Can talk easily	Moderate Deep and consistent Can talk in short bursts
Time	At least 10 minutes at a time, up to three times per day	30 to 60 minutes
Type	Light walking, gardening, golfing	Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, dancing, as well as household chores such as vacuuming or washing floors

2. Strength activities to keep bones and muscles strong.

FITT	Strength Activities	Daily Activities
Frequency	Two to four days per week	Daily
Intensity	Weight you can lift eight to 15 times	Move objects in your daily routine
Time	20 to 30 minutes, two to four sets of each exercise	Periodically throughout the day
Type	Using your body weight by doing push-ups or sit-ups, using hand weights or weight machines	Household chores, yard work, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying groceries or laundry

3. Flexibility activities to keep your muscles relaxed and your joints mobile.

FITT	Stretching Activities	Daily Activities
Frequency	Daily	Daily
Intensity	Take stretch to just before point of pain	Move joint to end point without discomfort
Time	15 to 30 minutes, hold each stretch 10 to 20 seconds, no bouncing	Complete given task
Type	Stretching routines before or after physical activity, also stretch classes, T'ai Chi, yoga and Pilates	Household chores, such as putting away groceries and dusting or sweeping, as well as raking or digging in the yard and other bending, stretching and reaching movements that take your joints through a full range of motion

Dividing it up

You should work towards 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity every day, but it does not have to be all at once.

For example, you could try walking for 10 minutes in the morning, and another 10 in the afternoon, with a short stretch before and after and a little gardening or vacuuming in between. You can also alternate walking days with days where you do some strength training – lifting light weights, such as soup cans, for example. And if you just can't do 30 minutes, even 10 minutes of light physical activity a day will help you feel more vibrant, energetic and alert.



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Making it easy

It's sometimes hard to get all the physical activity you know you should. Not every town has specialized programs for seniors; some neighbourhoods may be unsafe to walk, while arthritis, osteoporosis or other medical conditions may make any activity difficult.

There are ways around these and other barriers however.

For example:

Barrier	Strategies
Unsafe neighbourhood to walk	Walk with a friend, walk in a mall or the halls of your building or join a walking group.
Difficulty getting places	Take the bus, car pool with friends or have an exercise professional come to your home.
Unsuitable or uninteresting programs	Check program listings at seniors' centres, churches and private fitness clubs or use a book or video/DVD to start your own program.
Too busy caring for others	Be active while the person you are caring for is resting or occupied (even five or 10 minutes at a time will help). Or have a friend come over and take care of your partner while you go out for a walk or class.
Stiffness, arthritis or osteoporosis	Choose gentle activities, such as walking, or classes designed to accommodate seniors with physical challenges, such as aqua-fit.

Healthy Eating

QUIZ # 2

True or False?

1. I can drink as much alcohol as I did when I was 20 or 40.
False. As you grow older, your body becomes more sensitive to alcohol, which means it will have a greater effect than it used to.
2. All fats are bad.
False. You need some fat in your diet, but it should be the right fat, from sources such as nuts, seeds, avocado, salmon, tuna and low-fat cheese.
3. I don't feel thirsty, so I must be drinking enough.
False. As your body ages, it's harder for you to tell when you need fluids. You must drink regularly, whether you feel thirsty or not.
4. I'm too old to exercise.
False. You are never too old for physical activity. Even if you are in your 80s or 90s, staying active will help you feel better and do the things you want to do.