



Small steps for lifelong wellbeing

This month, we recognize Cancer Awareness Month and Canadian Fertility Awareness Week (April 20-26). These observances highlight the role of awareness, early detection, and support—all of which are also key to longevity and lifelong wellbeing.

Healthy habits—such as regular movement, a balanced diet, stress management, and quality sleep—can contribute to better health outcomes in both areas. Mental wellbeing also plays a key role, as managing stress and fostering resilience can have a positive impact on overall health. This month's care kits provide simple, practical ways to support longevity, mental wellness, and the benefits of staying active. Read below to take learn meaningful steps to take toward your long-term health!



1,425
people turn 65
every day in Canada.¹



By **2040**
the senior citizen
population will increase
by about 4.3 million.²

1. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/subjects-start/older_adults_and_population_aging

2. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/aging-chronic-diseases-profile-canadian-seniors-report.html>



Longevity is a hot topic, and living better and longer is the goal. However, physical ailments, especially chronic conditions, often catch up with many people in their elder years. With more Canadians reaching retirement age than ever before, the focus is shifting toward promoting healthy aging. Research highlights the importance of lifestyle habits that not only extend lifespan but also improve overall health and wellbeing in later years.

Studying those who are living longer, more active lives has uncovered five factors for a longer health span. They include:

Healthy eating

Follow meal plans that can lower the risk of hypertension, memory loss and other chronic conditions. The Mediterranean, DASH and MIND diets include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and healthier fats from nuts, olive oil and fish.³

Following a nutrient-rich diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and healthy fats can also contribute to hormone balance and fertility health while reducing the risk of certain cancers.

Regular exercise

Increased activity benefits your whole body and mind.

Limiting alcohol

People who drink moderately can have a lower risk of early death from cardiovascular disease.

Maintaining healthy weight

Speak with your doctor to understand what a healthy weight is for you considering health conditions, body type and family history.

Not smoking

Smoking harms nearly every organ in your body. Smoking is also linked to reduced fertility in both men and women and increases the risk of various cancers. Quitting smoking can be one of the best things you do for your long-term health.

“SuperAgers” are people 80 or older who have the cognitive function of people half their age. While these people could be naturally long-living, they follow the habits mentioned, plus:



Challenging themselves mentally

Exercising your mind is just as important. Read, take classes or learn a new game to stimulate your brain.

Being social

Social relationships help keep your brain active. Creating new memories can improve cognitive function. Social interaction requires a heightened level of attention. Social connections also help prevent loneliness and isolation, which can lead to physical and mental decline.

Choosing to live a healthy lifestyle at any age can impact your health span. In 2021, almost half (45.1%) of Canadians aged 12 and older had at least one major long-term illness, and the chances of getting one increased with age.⁴ Living a healthy lifestyle—like not smoking, keeping a healthy weight, staying active, and eating nutritious foods—can lower the risk of diseases like diabetes, heart problems, and cancer. While the exact numbers may change, these healthy habits help people stay well for longer and live a longer life.

3. <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/eat-to-protect-your-brain>

4. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-570-x/2023001/section1-eng.htm>



Start anytime!

Try these simple actions towards mental wellbeing.

Check in with yourself

Step away from distractions and just be still. Pay attention to your inner voice. If you're hearing negative self-talk, or if something is worrying you, change the conversation.

Try to clear this mental clutter.

Get some sleep

Quality sleep is essential for hormone regulation, which affects both fertility and overall health. Aiming for 7-9 hours of rest each night can support physical and reproductive wellbeing. Rest and mental health are intertwined. If you're not getting seven to nine hours of sleep nightly, try:¹

- Limiting screen time
- Relaxing before bedtime
- Going to bed a little earlier

Reach out

Seeing family and friends on social media may feel like a catch-up, but it's no substitute for the real thing. Pick up the phone and chat for a few minutes. Getting support and making connections are healthy steps to take.²

Breathe

Rather than screaming at the top of your lungs or bottling up your feelings, take some deep breaths.

Try these breathing tips:

- Gently close one nostril with a finger while you breathe, forcing yourself to inhale and exhale more slowly.
- Lie flat on your back. Since this is a position we normally reserve for sleep, it can naturally signal your brain to slow down your breathing.
- Breathe deep into your belly. This turns off your stress response, telling your body that everything is going to be OK.

Improving your mental health and feeling better about yourself isn't out of reach when you break it down into simple steps.

*If you feel you could use more help with your mental health, reach out to a licensed mental health professional for support.





Walking brings benefits to your mind and body

“Let’s go for a walk.”

It’s a phrase we hear hundreds of times over the course of our lives. It can evoke memories of time spent with babies in strollers, walking the family pet, stretching our legs after a big meal and jaunts through local parks and green areas.

However, walking lowers our risk of depression and heart disease, improves our overall health, and stimulates our brains. Simply taking a 20-minute walk every day—adding up to 2.5 hours a week—will bring those benefits and more.

Regular movement like walking has also been shown to lower the risk of some cancers and improve circulation. For those thinking about fertility, walking is a great low-impact way to support cardiovascular health and reduce stress, which can be beneficial for reproductive health.

Take your first step

Walking is something almost everyone can do. It doesn’t require special clothes or gear other than comfortable, sturdy shoes. The investment is simply your time and your effort. But the physical return on investment is off the charts. Walking outdoors can also provide added benefits, like vitamin D exposure, which plays a role in immune function, bone health, and even fertility support:

- Prevent or help manage various conditions, including heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer and type 2 diabetes.
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Increase energy levels
- Improve your mood, cognition, memory and sleep
- Improve your balance and coordination
- Strengthen your immune system
- Reduce stress and tension

who walk
2.5 hours weekly



reduce their
risk of mortality by
31%¹

Mental rewards

Generally, what's good for the body is good for the brain.

What's more, walking in green spaces—parks, nature trails, forests or even suburban wooded areas—bumps up the benefits. Time spent walking in nature can reduce stress and negative thoughts and may help prevent burnout.

Another surprising benefit is a boost to your creativity and focus. It's been shown that creative thinking and concentration improve while you are walking outdoors and continue thereafter. There really is truth to the idea of taking a walk to clear your mind and find inspiration. It's no wonder that walking meetings are on the rise.

**Now grab a friend, colleague, or your pet,
and get walking!**

*It's always a good idea to talk with your healthcare provider before you start any new physical activity.

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