

Chapter 1

SENIORS TODAY

The news is good. Canadian seniors age 65 and over are living longer than ever before. Well after they retire, they are continuing to participate in their communities and to enjoy satisfying, energetic, well-rounded lives with friends and family.

However, recent surveys investigating the eating and exercise habits of Canadians – age 65 to 84 – reveal that seniors could be doing even better.





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Here are some important facts to consider:

FACT: Seniors have higher rates of heart disease, cancer, high cholesterol and high blood pressure than the rest of the adult population.

FACT: These diseases can be prevented or controlled through healthy eating and regular physical activity.

FACT: The majority of seniors are overweight or obese.

FACT: It's also true that you are never too old to lose weight, and that losing just a little weight – even five pounds – can make a huge difference to your health.

FACT: Most seniors are not as physically active as they could be.

FACT: Seniors who are physically active for at least an hour each day have better heart health and are better able to control their weight than those who are not as active.

FACT: The majority of senior men and many senior women eat more than the recommended amount of sodium (salt).

FACT: Decreasing the amount of sodium you eat can substantially reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

FACT: Many seniors do not get enough calcium, folate, vitamin B6, vitamin B12 and vitamin C through the food they eat.

FACT: The right vitamins and minerals, in the right amounts, can help prevent anemia, depression and memory loss. They can also help you heal better after surgery or an injury, and help keep your bones and teeth healthy and strong.



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FACT: Most senior women do not eat enough vegetables and fruit, grains, milk and milk products, meat and meat alternatives. Most senior men do not eat enough vegetables and fruit or milk and milk products.

FACT: It is possible to change and improve the way you eat – and the way you feel – at any age.

This handbook

This handbook provides nutrition information tailored to seniors, to what you really need and want to know about healthy eating. It includes information on:

- how aging and eating go together (Chapter 2)
- what healthy eating means (Chapter 3)
- where vitamins and minerals fit in (Chapter 4)
- how to eat if you have a chronic illness, such as heart disease or high cholesterol (Chapter 5)
- how to lose weight, gain weight or deal with other problems (Chapter 6)
- how to cook when you don't like to cook anymore (Chapter 7)
- what to keep in your kitchen and how to modify your recipes to be healthier (Chapter 8)
- how to prepare your food safely (Chapter 9)
- how to find a dietitian and more information on nutrition and general health (Chapter 10)
- recipes for quick, easy and tasty dishes (Chapter 11).

The handbook also includes Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide (Appendix B), along with a week's worth of healthy

menus (Appendix A), two easy methods for determining if your weight is healthy (Appendix C), and a glossary of health and nutrition-related words and phrases (Appendix D).

A note about the content

There are many Canadian organizations currently providing clear, easy-to-read and up-to-date information and advice about nutrition for seniors. (We have listed the major ones, with contact phone numbers and Internet addresses, in Chapter 10 for readers looking for more information.)

To create this handbook, we depended heavily on print and online nutrition materials developed by:

Dietitians of Canada

Dial-A-Dietitian

Canadian Cancer Society

Canadian Diabetes Association

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

Canadian Health Network

Health Canada, and

British Columbia Ministry of Health.