

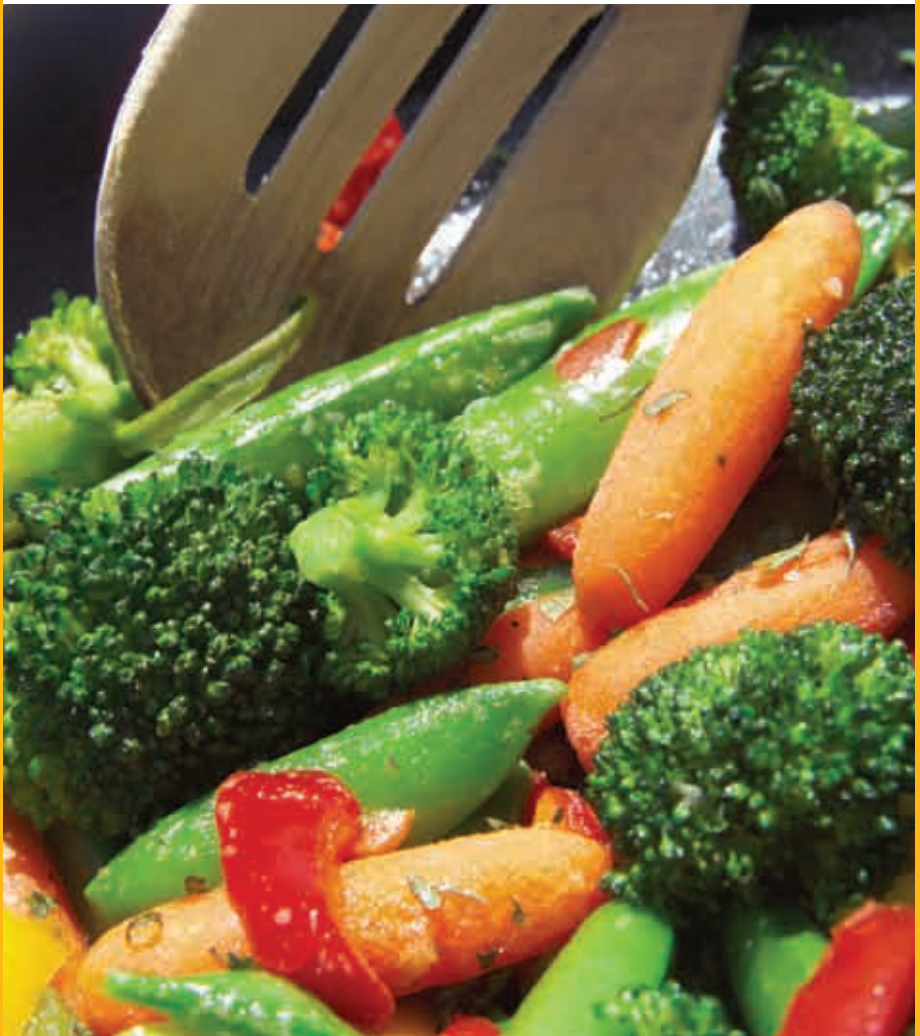
Chapter 10

INFORMATION YOU CAN TRUST

How do I know I'm getting reliable information?

Where can I find reliable information?

What's the difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist?





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You see them everywhere: ads for this miracle diet – “You can lose 10 pounds in 10 days!” – or that complete cure – “No more arthritis pain, ever!” But how do you know these products will really work? Whose advice should you take?

On questions of health or physical activity, always see your doctor first. On questions of nutrition and healthy eating, talk to a dietitian – see the back cover for contact information.

For tried, tested and true advice on healthy eating and creating a healthy lifestyle, you can also rely on Canada’s Food Guide (Appendix B) and the organizations listed in this chapter.

How do I know I am getting reliable information?

Unproven remedies give people false hope and may even be dangerous, either because they keep you from getting proper medical attention or because their ingredients are harmful. They can also cost a lot of money.

You know you are getting good information if it comes from a reliable source. Here are some basic truths that can help you judge whether or not information is reliable:

- Aging is a fact of life. There is no cure for it and no treatment will slow it down. Healthy eating, staying active and not smoking are the only things experts know for sure can help prevent the diseases that happen more often with age.
- There is no proven way to prevent all types of cancer. There are, however, treatments that can help once you get cancer, but you have to start them as soon as possible.



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- Drinking a particular type of juice, eating a low-protein diet or embarking on treatments that claim to “cure” cancer may be harmful, especially if you delay starting on treatments that are proven to work.
- There is no cure for most types of arthritis. However, arthritis symptoms can come and go, so it is easy to be tricked into thinking that a special diet, pill or oil has made it disappear. Talk to your doctor about what is proven to work.
- Losing weight takes work and it takes time. It is not safe to lose more than about half a pound a week, and it will be harder to keep the weight off if you lose it too quickly without also making changes in your lifestyle, such as adding regular physical activity. It’s also not safe to follow a low-carbohydrate or a liquid diet for any length of time.
- “Natural” does not automatically mean safer. Some plants can be harmful and even deadly, especially if you are already taking medication for a condition such as heart disease.

Always question what you see on TV, read in an ad or hear from a friend. Depend on the sources that you know are objective and have nothing to gain from whether you buy a product or not, including your doctor, a registered dietitian, Health Canada, or a non-profit foundation.

Watch out for personal testimonials, such as “this oil cured my husband’s Alzheimer’s disease” or “I was diabetic, but taking this pill cured me in five days.” They are usually not scientifically proven, and may be made up.

Remember, too, that just about anybody can set up a website. Look for websites from reputable sources.

Check it out

Before you try a health-related product, talk to your doctor, dietitian or pharmacist for a medical opinion or contact Health Canada’s Natural Health Products Directorate at 1 888 774-5555.

Where can I find reliable information?

All health issues

The BC Health Guide Program provides reliable health information and advice you can trust. The program includes:

- The BC HealthGuide handbook provides information on how to recognize and cope with common health concerns, including tips on home treatment, care options and when to see a health professional. You can find topics relevant to older adults throughout this book, including information on healthy aging and tips for caregivers. Sections of particular interest to seniors are marked with an icon. To get a free copy of the BC HealthGuide handbook, visit your local pharmacy or Government Agents Office or call BC NurseLine.
- BC HealthGuide OnLine links you to a world of medically approved, up-to-date health information as well as more information on the BC HealthGuide Program. Visit www.bchealthguide.org.
- BC HealthFiles are fact sheets with BC-specific information on a wide range of public and environmental health and safety issues. Copies are available at www.bchealthguide.org or at public health units. Some BC HealthFiles have been translated into other languages including Chinese, Punjabi and French.
- BC NurseLine provides confidential health information and advice. You can speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and a pharmacist from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m. every day. Translation services are available in 130 languages.

In Greater Vancouver, call 604 215-4700.

Elsewhere in B.C., call toll-free 1 866 215-4700.

Deaf and hearing-impaired, call toll-free 1 866 889-4700.



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- Dial-A-Dietitian specializes in easy-to-use nutrition information for self-care, based on current scientific sources. Registered dietitians can provide brief nutrition consultation by phone. If you need more in-depth counseling, they will guide you to hospital outpatient dietitians, community nutritionists or other nutrition services in your community. This service does not replace the medical counsel of your doctor. Translation services are available in 130 languages.

In Greater Vancouver, call 604 732-9191.

Elsewhere in B.C., call toll-free 1 800 667-3438.

Or visit www.dialadietitian.org.

For information about health and other government services for British Columbia seniors:

- The Health and Seniors' Information Line is available Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Agents can answer your questions about services for seniors, and help you access government programs.

In Greater Victoria, call 250 952-1742.

Elsewhere in B.C., call toll-free 1 800 465-4911.

In addition:

- The Alzheimer Society of B.C. can answer your questions about Alzheimer's disease. Call 1 800 667-3742 or visit www.alzheimerbc.org.
- For information about arthritis, call the Arthritis Society of Canada's Arthritis Answer Line at 1 800 321-1433 or visit www.arthritis.ca/bc.
- For information about preventing or living with cancer, call the Canadian Cancer Society at 1 888 939-3333 or visit www.cancer.ca.
- For help with alcohol or drug use, try 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.

- If you're ready to quit smoking, call QuitNow at 1 877 455-2233 or visit www.quitnow.ca.
- Living a Healthy Life With Chronic Conditions is a free six-week course offered in a variety of locations throughout British Columbia. Call 1 866 902-3767 or visit www.coag.uvic.ca/cdsmp and click on your area of the province for the course nearest you.

Healthy eating

Canada's Food Guide is a great source of information on healthy eating (see Appendix B). You might also want to try Dial-A-Dietitian (see previous page). In addition:

- Dietitians of Canada offers reliable advice and terrific recipes. Visit www.dietitians.ca.
- The Canadian Cancer Society publishes an easy-to-read booklet called Good Nutrition: A guide for people with cancer. They also publish Eat Well, Be Active, a guide to preventing cancer through healthy eating and exercise, along with a variety of other publications. Call 1 888 939-3333 or visit www.cancer.ca.
- The Canadian Diabetes Association has lots of good information on nutrition and diabetes. Call 1 800 226-8464 or visit www.diabetes.ca. Many communities also have excellent local diabetes education programs. Ask your doctor for a referral.
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada can help with any questions about nutrition and its connection to heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. They also have some great recipes for easy, tasty and nutritious dishes. Call 1 888 473-4636 or visit www.heartandstroke.ca.
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada also operates Health Check™, the national not-for-profit food information program. Health Check provides consumers with a quick visual reference (a logo) on restaurant menus and food packaging. The logo guarantees the food has met specific nutrition criteria based on Canada's Food Guide. Visit www.healthcheck.org.



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- The Osteoporosis Society of Canada has a number of easy-to-use resources that will help you figure out how much calcium you are receiving from your current diet. Call 1 800 363-1933 or go to www.osteoporosis.ca.
- The B.C. Aboriginal Network on Disability Society publishes guides to healthy eating with traditional Aboriginal foods. To order, call 1 888 815-5511 or visit www.bcands.bc.ca.
- Health Canada's website (click on Food & Nutrition in the left-hand navigation bar) offers information on such topics as food safety, food labeling and genetically modified foods. Visit www.hc-sc.gc.ca.
- The Food Safety Information Society provides information about storing food safely, including the shelf-life of virtually any food.

Exercise

Before starting any physical activity program, consult your doctor. If your doctor says you are ready, contact an exercise professional/registered kinesiologist for advice about what physical activity, and how much physical activity, is best for you.

To find an exercise professional near you, contact:

- the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology at 1 877 651-3755 or visit www.csep.ca
- B.C. Recreation and Parks Association at 1 866 929-0965 or visit www.bcrpa.bc.ca, or
- B.C. Association of Kinesiologists at 1 604 601-5100 or visit www.bcak.bc.ca.

Also read the Public Health Agency of Canada's free guide, *Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults*. To order your copy, call 1 888 334-9769 or visit www.paguide.com.

What's the difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist?

The titles “registered dietitian,” “professional dietitian” and “dietitian” are protected by law in all Canadian provinces. Only people who have met national standards for education and training can use these titles. A dietitian will have at least a bachelor’s degree (and many will have a master’s or a doctorate) with a specialty in foods and nutrition. All dietitians in British Columbia are registered with the College of Dietitians of BC and listed in the college’s public registry at www.collegeofdietitiansbc.org.

The title “nutritionist” is not protected by law in all provinces, which means anybody could use the title even if they are not formally trained in foods and nutrition. However, many dietitians also call themselves nutritionists. Ask if your nutritionist is a registered dietitian.

A dietitian can:

- give you advice about what foods to eat to lower your risk of certain diseases or how to lose weight and keep it off
- help you plan meals for specific health problems, such as diabetes or high cholesterol, and
- assess whether you are eating correctly and whether you need to change the way you eat.

To find a dietitian:

- try Dial-A-Dietitian (see back cover)
- visit the Dietitians of Canada website at www.dietitians.ca
- ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian
- call your local public health department, or
- look in the Yellow Pages under dietitians.