



HEALTHY AGING:

Food, diet, and nutrition

A practical guide to lifelong well-being for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults (18-49 years) and older adults (50+ years) in Canada

IN THIS ISSUE:

- » Practicing healthy eating habits
- » Limiting unhealthy foods
- » Consuming traditional foods
- » Staying hydrated



How this resource was developed



This resource is one of a series of six healthy aging booklets for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults (aged 18 to 49 years) and older adults (aged 50+ years) in Canada. It was developed in response to expressed interest from Indigenous families and community partners for useful, culturally appropriate information to improve and protect the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people throughout the aging process.

The healthy aging booklets in this resource series include:

- **Healthy aging: Physical activity and exercise**
- **Healthy aging: Food, diet and nutrition**
- **Healthy aging: Preventative health behaviours**
- **Healthy aging: Mental and emotional health**
- **Healthy aging: Life stages and wellness**
- **Healthy aging: Financial wellness**

The resources were developed using information from print and digital publications, webinars, conferences, and online forums. A number of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people from across Canada helped with the development of the healthy aging booklets by sharing their knowledge, insights, ideas, stories, health tips, and feedback to improve the quality and value of the resources.

We want to thank the following people for assisting with the editing of our healthy aging booklets:

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National Collaborating Centre
for Indigenous Health
Centre de collaboration nationale
de la santé autochtone

© 2026 National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH). This publication was funded by the NCCIH and made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of PHAC.

ISBN (print): 978-1-77368-766-7

ISBN (online): 978-1-77368-767-4





Introduction

About this booklet

Traditionally, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people lived active, healthy lifestyles with wholesome diets consisting of:

- high-quality, complete protein from wild game (e.g., moose, caribou, bison), fish, and marine mammals
- highly concentrated sources of marine omega-3 fatty acids — eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) for brain and heart health — from fish (e.g., salmon, sardines, mackerel) and sea mammals (e.g., whales, seals)
- a wide variety of locally harvested plant foods such as seasonal roots, greens, and nutrient-dense berries.



Eating habits today, however, look very different. Because of the processes of colonization — including land evictions and forced moves; disruption of traditional hunting, gathering, and land stewardship; and colonial policies like the ration system, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop — many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people are forced to rely on highly processed store-bought foods that are low in nutrients and high in calories, resulting in weakened immunity to fight off and recover from infections. The shift away from traditional land-based diets has also led to overly high rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer in Indigenous populations.

I had shingles, too, back in 2019. ... It still bothers me. ... It's nerve damage. I think once you get shingles, you'll have the after effects of that. ... It comes and goes it seems. It depends on where it is on your body.

— First Nations advisor

This booklet is intended to promote healthy lifestyle habits to improve and protect the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults (aged 18 to 49 years) and older adults (aged 50+ years) in Canada. Learning how to take care of your mind, body, and spirit through food, diet, and nutrition will boost your whole health and overall quality of life. This includes practicing healthy eating habits and limiting unhealthy foods when





and if possible. It also involves understanding the full benefits of consuming traditional foods and how staying hydrated is crucial for keeping your mind and body healthy and functioning properly. These topics are discussed in this booklet.

Throughout this booklet, you will find external links to additional knowledge resources that you can check out for more information. You can also refer to the list of national organizations at the end of this booklet for culturally appropriate services, links to local programs, and online knowledge resources to support your best health, well-being, and quality of life through healthy aging.





Acknowledging diversity

Indigenous people across Canada are not all the same. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people comprise three completely distinct cultural groups with their own unique histories, languages, cultural heritages, and spiritual beliefs. They have different worldviews, ambitions, and lived realities. There are also differences within each First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultural group, depending on regional geography, constitutional rights and entitlements, and whether residing in urban centres, rural or remote areas, on reserve, or in Inuit Nunangat.

Many factors shape the aging processes of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people and their ability to age well. Experiences of colonization and ongoing colonialism, political and economic structures, proximity to healthcare services and specialized care, connections to community and family, connections

to the lands and waters, and even sex and gender identities all play a role in the lived realities of healthy aging. For example, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis adults and older adults in rural communities face a very different reality than Indigenous people living in cities, especially if they are trying to manage chronic health conditions, struggle with physical disabilities or accessibility limitations, or have lost their ability to drive.

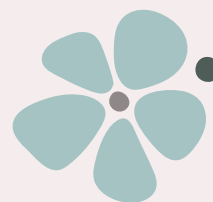
All First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people have different health realities and mental and physical capabilities. The information in this booklet provides a foundation for healthy aging and well-being in later life. You are encouraged to adapt these guidelines to fit your own needs, physical abilities, and personal circumstances.

What is healthy aging?

Aging is a natural part of our life cycle. It begins at conception and continues until death. Still, we usually do not start thinking about the health aspects of aging until we are in our 40s or 50s and changes in our bodies, health, and functional abilities become more apparent.

Today, I was making breakfast and I went to open a paprika tin and I tweaked my neck. So, I can't straighten it. ... I just tweaked my neck opening a small paprika tin. I'm like, what does that tell me?

— **First Nations advisor**





Healthy aging is about aging well, actively and successfully, by living well, staying positive and productive, and keeping good physical, mental, and social functioning. It focuses on what matters for your overall health and well-being in older age, like lowering your risk of chronic diseases and age-related disabilities and building a strong sense of life satisfaction and happiness. Healthy aging is about shifting the narrative, where growing older is not about decline, loss, and insignificance but rather, about dignity, connection,

and purpose. It is about gaining wisdom, strengthening your social connections, and finding new and meaningful ways to not only extend your lifespan (to live longer), but also enhance your healthspan (to live longer in good health).

Healthy aging is a lifelong process that can start at any age. You are never too old — or too young — to start taking care of your mind, body, and spirit. This booklet is the second in a six-part series of guides to healthy aging.

Food, diet, and nutrition

Practicing healthy eating habits

Eating healthy food is essential for healthy aging. Healthy eating is all about balance, moderation, and consistency. What you eat and how much you eat matters. Eating a variety of foods from all recommended food groups — vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy

— and having the right amount and proportion of food (within appropriate calorie limits) is important for staying strong, independent, energized, and healthy. Following is a list of health benefits, health tips, and examples of healthy food options for each recommended food group.

Healthy food options and related health benefits

Whole grains

HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in nutrients
- promotes heart health
- helps prevent diabetes
- aids digestion and weight management
- helps protect against cancer

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Choose 100% whole grain products to replace white bread, rice, and pasta.



Examples: Oats, brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, amaranth, barley, millet, rye, whole wheat bread and pasta, ancient grains

Vegetables and fruits

HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in nutrients and antioxidants
- high in fiber
- good for disease prevention
- helps with weight management, blood pressure control, and blood sugar control



HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ When fresh vegetables and fruits are not possible, choose frozen, canned, and dried varieties.
- ✓ Keep cut-up vegetables ready in the fridge for a quick, healthy snack.
- ✓ Use hummus (a high protein dip or spread made from chickpeas) as a highly nutritious, heart-healthy swap for mayonnaise and sour cream-based dips.

Examples: Bell peppers, cucumbers, carrots, celery, snap peas, radishes, tomatoes, zucchini, green leafy vegetables and wild plants (e.g., kale, spinach, fiddleheads, broccoli), hummus, berries, apples, pears, peaches, plums, grapes, apricots, oranges, grapefruit, bananas, melons, pineapple, dried fruit (e.g., raisins, cranberries, figs)



Lean proteins

HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in nutrients
 - helps maintain weight
 - promotes muscle growth and repair
 - good for heart health, blood sugar control, bone health, and overall body function
-

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Add beans and lentils to soups, stews, and sauces to boost fiber and protein content without adding excess fat or sodium.
-

Examples: Chicken breast, turkey, venison (e.g., deer, elk, moose, caribou), bison, pork tenderloin, rabbit, veal, lamb, duck, fish (e.g., cod, tuna, salmon, pickerel, Arctic char), eggs, Greek yogurt, plant-based proteins (e.g., beans, peas, legumes, lentils, tofu, nuts, seeds)

Dairy and plant-based alternatives

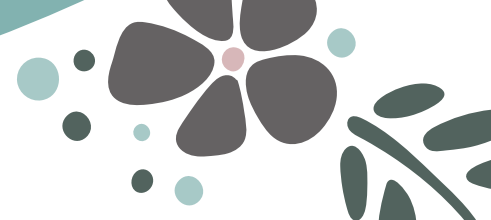
HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in nutrients
 - good for bone health, heart health, and gut health
 - helps manage weight, diabetes, and muscle and body composition
-

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Choose lower-fat and lower-sodium dairy (which is easier to digest) or plant-based alternatives fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
 - ✓ Use plain, low-fat Greek yogurt as a substitute for sour cream.
-

Examples: 2% milk, powdered skim milk, 2% cottage cheese, 5% sour cream, plain or unsweetened yogurt, mozzarella cheese, Swiss cheese, unsweetened almond or oat milk



Healthy fats and oils

HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in antioxidants and healthy fats
- promotes heart health, brain health, and gut health
- helps with nutrient absorption
- good for energy, cell function, inflammation, and blood sugar control

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Natural fats are good for your overall health, in moderation.
- ✓ Sprinkle nuts and seeds over yogurt, porridge, or salads; add them to smoothies or baked goods; and use them in stir-fry or soup for added crunch.

Examples: Oily fish (e.g., salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines), extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil, sesame or walnut-based dressings, nuts (e.g., walnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, hazelnuts, almonds), seeds (e.g., flax, chia, sunflower, pumpkin, hemp)

Herbs and spices

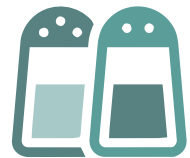
HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties
- promotes heart health
- helps with blood sugar control
- aids digestion
- boosts metabolism and immunity
- helps protect against cancer
- enhances flavours of foods

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Choose whole, fresh, or dried herbs and spices.

Examples: Turmeric (curcumin), cinnamon, ginger, garlic, chili pepper, lemon juice, flavoured vinegar



Unsweetened drinks

HEALTH BENEFITS

- rich in nutrients and antioxidants
- helps with weight management, blood sugar control, and insulin regulation
- promotes oral health and hydration
- good for heart and liver health

HEALTH TIPS

- ✓ Choose beverages that are naturally unsweetened and free from artificial additives.

Examples: Water, black coffee, unsweetened tea (e.g., black, green, herbal), traditional tea (e.g., cedar, Labrador, chaga)



Canada's food guide
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-foodguide



Eating well with Canada's food guide: First Nations, Inuit and Métis
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-eatwell



Handy guide to serving sizes
bit.ly/HA02-unlockfoods-servingsize



Healthy food guidelines for First Nations communities
bit.ly/HA02-fnha-healthyfood

“I was diagnosed with diabetes. Before that, I was so prone to having a lot of infection, every three months. It was bad. Once I was diagnosed properly, I became very healthy. I walked out of the health centre there and it was in April, wintertime. I pulled my coat down and I said, ‘Hmm, it’s something I can try and control. It’s something I can try and handle.’ Ever since then, I’ve been very healthy. ... I do a lot of physical activity where I like to walk.”

— Inuk advisor

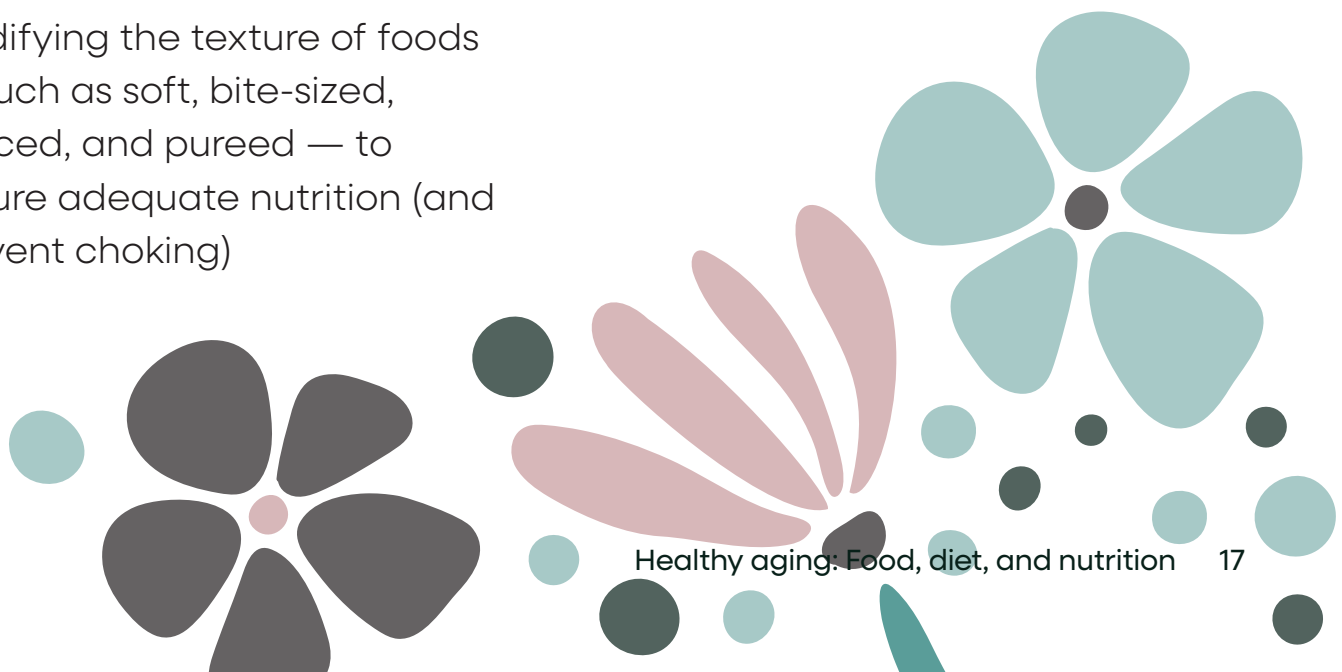
It is never too late to adopt good food habits. Eating a balance of different coloured vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats is the foundation of healthy eating. However, even healthy foods that are high in sugar and potassium must be carefully monitored, especially when balancing overlapping conditions like diabetes, chronic kidney diseases, and obesity. Below is a list of vegetables and fruits that require careful, interrelated monitoring of both sugar and potassium.

High-sugar and high-potassium fruits and vegetables

	FRUITS	VEGETABLES
HIGH IN SUGAR	Bananas, mango, pineapple, watermelon, dried fruit (e.g., raisins, dates, prunes, figs), grapes	White potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, peas, parsnips, butternut squash, canned vegetables
LOWER-SUGAR ALTERNATIVES	Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, avocados, apples, pears, kiwi	Kale, spinach, collard greens/ tree-cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, zucchini, green beans, tomatoes
HIGH IN POTASSIUM	Bananas, oranges, cantaloupe, honeydew, avocados, kiwi, dried fruit (e.g., raisins, dates, prunes, figs), apricots	Potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, spinach, beet greens, Swiss chard, avocados, carrots, artichoke, parsnips, pumpkin, liquid from canned vegetables
LOW-POTASSIUM ALTERNATIVES	Apples, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, pineapple, watermelon	Cauliflower, cabbage, green beans, cucumbers, lettuce, zucchini, kale

Focusing on foods that are as close as possible to their whole and natural state is an effective strategy for healthy eating. Other approaches to healthy eating include:

- prioritizing foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants
- eating small portions of nutrient-dense foods every two to three hours throughout the day
- using whole ingredients to make healthier versions of your favourite foods at home
- using healthy cooking methods such as slow cooking, steaming, boiling, and poaching to prepare meals
- drying or dehydrating whole foods at low temperatures to preserve the purity of food without the need for artificial preservatives, added sugars, or excess sodium
- modifying the texture of foods — such as soft, bite-sized, minced, and pureed — to ensure adequate nutrition (and prevent choking)
- using social media (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest) to find nutritious, budget-friendly, small-batch or single-serving recipes
- using local grocery delivery services to have groceries delivered directly to your home
- enrolling in a local meal delivery program — such as Meals on Wheels and Heart to Home Meals — to have nutritious, affordable, heat-and-eat meals delivered directly to your home
- growing your own vegetables, fruits, and herbs through planter box gardening, community gardening, or small-scale greenhouse gardening







Check out the following list of resources for helpful information, ideas, and guidance on growing your own vegetables, fruits, and herbs at home or in your community.



A community gardener's guidebook: A month to month guide covering the basics in gardening in Winnipeg
bit.ly/HA02-GovMB-gardening



Eco-Indigenous gardening guide
bit.ly/HA02-ecoindigenous



SLFNHA community garden implementation guide
bit.ly/HA02-slf nha-gardening



Get your garden growing
[bit.ly/HA02-AB metis-gardens](https://bit.ly/HA02-AB-metis-gardens)



Small-scale greenhouse training guide for Indigenous communities in British Columbia
bit.ly/HA02-GovBC-greenhouses



The following list of resources also provides helpful information, ideas, recipes, and tips to support effective approaches to healthy eating and chronic disease prevention and management.



10 tips for planning meals on a budget
bit.ly/HA02-dietitians-mealplanning



Quick and healthy snack ideas
bit.ly/HA02-dietitians-snacks



Indigenous recipe collection
bit.ly/HA02-dietitians-recipes



The nuu-chah-nulth food for wellness cookbook
bit.ly/HA02-nada-cookbook



Nunavimmiut cookbook
bit.ly/HA02-nrbhss-cookbook



What you need to know to prevent type 2 diabetes
bit.ly/HA02-dietitians-diabetes





Considering nutritional supplements

Eating food is the most effective way of supplying your body with nutrients. Sometimes, however, people will use meal replacements — such as packaged drinks, powders, bars, or soups — to ensure they get a balanced mix of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, especially if they have to skip meals or eat on the go. Nutrition shakes — such as Boost

and Ensure — are also used to help people meet their nutritional needs when solid food intake is challenging. These high-calorie, nutrient-dense beverages provide extra calories, protein, and essential vitamins and minerals that help fill nutritional gaps. They also provide carbohydrate-conscious nutrition for people managing diabetes or other chronic conditions.

Other nutritional supplements include:

- vitamins (e.g., vitamin C, vitamin D, and multivitamins)
- minerals (e.g., calcium, iron, and magnesium)
- sports and protein supplements (e.g., whey protein powder, creatine, and amino acids)
- herbal supplements and botanicals (e.g., echinacea, garlic, and ginseng)
- fatty acids and others (e.g., omega-3 fish oils and probiotics)

Meal replacements, nutrition shakes, and nutritional supplements vary widely and are used for different purposes. They are highly beneficial for filling nutritional gaps, but they are not meant to replace solid foods entirely. Talk with your doctor or local healthcare provider to see if you are getting adequate nutrition for your overall health or whether nutritional supplements are recommended, based on your medical profile and lifestyle. You can also talk with a registered dietitian for personalized nutrition and weight management advice.



Dietary supplements:
What you need to know
bit.ly/HA02-dietitians-supplements



Find a dietitian
<https://bit.ly/HA02-findadietitian>





Limiting unhealthy foods

Many foods that taste good are high in sodium, sugar, and unhealthy fats. This is because food companies use oil, sugar, and salt to boost the flavour, texture, and aroma of food, making it more enticing to eat. Any food that is altered from its whole or natural state is referred to as processed food. Simple food processing like drying and preserving meats

and vegetables has existed since the dawn of time. Over the past century, however, the level of food processing has greatly increased because of technology — like freeze-drying and chemical preservatives — and demands for more convenient and transportable foods. The next page describes four categories of food processing.



Categories of food processing



MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOODS

Foods that are slightly changed from whole (e.g., washed, chopped, frozen, dried, or pasteurized) but are still recognizable

Examples: Frozen vegetables and fruits, nuts, eggs, milk, canned beans and legumes, brown and wild rice, oats, whole-grain pasta, pre-cut meats and fish



PROCESSED FOODS

Foods that are made by mixing minimally processed foods with processed culinary ingredients

Examples: Canned vegetables and fruits, cheese, yogurt, bread, canned fish, cured meats



PROCESSED CULINARY INGREDIENTS

Substances taken directly from nature or from minimally processed foods

Examples: Oils, lard, butter, sugar, salt, honey, flour, herbs and spices



ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS

Foods that are made with large amounts of sugar, salt, fat, chemicals, artificial flavours and colours, preservatives, emulsifiers, and thickeners

Examples: Sugary drinks, packaged snacks, chicken nuggets, frozen pizzas, instant soups, frozen meals



The more food is processed, the greater its loss of vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients. Highly processed foods can be harmful to your health because of their low nutritional value and high amounts of sugar, salt, unhealthy fats, and chemical additives. When eaten in excess, they greatly increase your risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia. Other health problems linked to ultra-processed foods include:

- cancer
- mental health disorders
- hypoglycemia (sugar crashes)
- high cholesterol
- high blood pressure



Some people think they can continue to eat a bad diet because they can just take medication to counter the effects of their bad diet. It is better to eat healthier than rely on different medications to address your health problems.

— **First Nations advisor**

By choosing foods in their natural, less processed state, you automatically consume fewer ingredients that lead to poor health. Still, prioritizing whole foods is not always practical. Busy lifestyle, precarious living, restricted kitchen access, high food costs, and limited supply of fresh foods can make it hard to avoid unhealthy foods. Knowing which foods to eat less often and in small amounts can help reduce your intake of potentially harmful ingredients. A list of highly processed foods to limit or avoid is on the next two pages.



Ultra-processed foods to limit or avoid



PROCESSED AND FATTY MEATS

Examples: Bacon, bologna, spam, wieners, sausages, deli or luncheon meats, chicken nuggets, canned ham, canned corned beef

.....



HIGHLY PROCESSED CHEESE PRODUCTS

Examples: Velveeta, Cheese Whiz, Kraft Singles, cheese dips

.....



FROZEN, PRE-MADE, AND FAST-FOOD MEALS

Examples: Frozen pizza, frozen pot pies, frozen lasagna, frozen Shepard's pie, pizza pops, french fries, fast-food burgers and chicken, frozen burritos, fast-food tacos, hot dogs, chicken strips, fish sticks, battered mushrooms, cheese sticks, egg rolls, TV dinners, macaroni and cheese, canned pasta in sauce, canned soup, instant noodles

.....



HIGH-SUGAR AND HIGH-FAT BREAKFAST FOODS AND BAKED GOODS

Examples: Sugary cereals and granola, instant oatmeal, frozen waffles and pancakes, pop tarts and toaster strudel, fast-food breakfast sandwiches, packaged cakes, pastries, muffins, donuts, croissants, cinnamon rolls, white bread



SWEET TREATS AND PACKAGED SNACKS

Examples: Candy, chocolate bars, licorice, ice cream, potato chips, pretzels, crackers, cookies, microwaveable and theatre-style popcorn, beef jerky

.....



HIGH-SUGAR AND HIGH-SODIUM SAUCES, DRESSINGS, AND CONDIMENTS

Examples: Ketchup, barbeque sauce, teriyaki sauce, sweet chili sauce, honey mustard, sweet pickle relish, jellies and jams, light and fat-free salad dressings, creamy dressings (e.g., French, Thousand Island, ranch, Caesar), soya sauce, packaged gravy mixes, bouillon cubes

.....



SUGARY DRINKS AND SMOOTHIES

Examples: Soda pop, Sunny D, frozen and powdered drink mixes, commercial fruit punches and cocktails, sports and energy drinks, sugary coffee drinks, pre-made smoothies

.....

Not all processed foods are bad for you. Many minimally processed foods can be used to make healthy, nutritious meals. For example, traditional cheeses, canned fish, and canned beans can be part of a healthy diet because they offer essential nutrients like protein,

omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, and calcium. Milk, whole grain cereals, and whole wheat pasta are also healthy options because they have added vitamins, minerals, and other supplements to increase their nutritional value.



One of the best ways to determine the nutritional value of processed foods and monitor your intake of sugar, salt, refined grains, and unhealthy fats is by checking the Nutrition Facts, suggested serving size, and ingredients listed on the packaging of pre-packaged foods. You can also refer to the black-and-white warning labels on the front of packaged foods to see which foods are high in unhealthy fats, sugar, and salt.

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive

Per 1 cup (250 mL)
pour 1 tasse (250 mL)

Calories 110	% Daily Value*
	% valeur quotidienne*
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g	0 %
+ Trans / trans 0 g	
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22 %
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Potassium 450 mg	13 %
Calcium 30 mg	2 %
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0 %

*5% or less is a **little**, 15% or more is a **lot**

*5 % ou moins c'est **peu**, 15 % ou plus c'est **beaucoup**

Source: Government of Canada



**High in / Élevé en
Sat fat / Gras sat.**



Sodium

Health Canada / Santé Canada

Source: Government of Canada

The resources listed on page 29 can help with understanding and reading food labels. Your local healthcare provider or a registered dietitian can also help with limiting unhealthy foods from your diet, based on your health profile, current conditions, and lifestyle.



Label reading the healthy way
bit.ly/HA02-ABhealth-labels



Nutrition labelling: Nutrition facts table
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-nutritionfacts



Limit highly processed foods
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-processedfood



Nutrition labelling: List of ingredients
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-ingredientlist



Nutrition labelling: Front-of-package nutrition label
bit.ly/HA02-GovCan-frontlabelling



Consuming traditional foods

The traditional diets of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people consist of foods that are harvested from their local natural environment through hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. Examples of traditional foods include:

- venison (e.g., deer, elk, moose, caribou) and other wild game (e.g., seal, beaver, bison, wild boar, quail, pheasant, grouse, waterfowl, rabbit, muskrat)
- fish and seafood (e.g., Arctic char, salmon, Atlantic cod, whitefish, lake trout, pickerel, bass, smelt)
- berries (e.g., Saskatoon berries, blueberries, chokecherries, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, currants)
- root vegetables (e.g., squash, potatoes, clover roots, fern roots, wild bean plants)
- grains (e.g., barley, oats, wild rice, corn)
- edible wild plants (e.g., dandelion, chickweed, wild onions, herbs)

About six years ago, a researcher come up to the north from the States to do a study about Inuit. ... It showed that the poor people were healthier than wealthy people. It told us that they were eating good from the land as opposed to from the store bought. ... It showed that the fish from the lakes or the ocean or the animals from the land and the geese and the eggs and all that is healthy for us. That's how we always live, from the land.

— Inuk advisor

Besides reinforcing Indigenous Peoples' connections to their lands, waters, territories, and cultural identities, traditional foods offer major nutritional benefits that are important for healthy aging. Adding traditional foods to the store-bought foods you eat can greatly



improve your nutrition, health, and long-term wellness. For example, eating traditional foods gives you:

- less calories for better weight control
- less sodium and saturated fats for better heart health
- more omega-3 fatty acids for healthy brain function
- more fibre for improved digestion, blood sugar control, and reduced inflammation

- more high-quality protein to fight age-related muscle loss
 - more calcium for strong bones and teeth
 - more iron for healthy muscles and blood
 - more zinc for wound healing and fighting infection
 - more vitamin A for vision and fighting disease
- 

Inuit, the Elders, believe it's to prevent infection and illness in your bodies. ... It's been a traditional preparation since the dawn of time. ... It's a fermented meat, like walrus with the fat, and beluga whale with the fat, and other things. ... It has to be prepared very properly under the directions of someone who knows how and you learn it. It has to be done outside at a certain temperature where there's air flowing. They cover it up with rocks so the foxes and little animals don't get into it but those wolverines, they can dig in with their long nails. The Elders do it so those wolverines won't get into it. ... There are things that other cultures eat that's not acceptable to others, maybe because of the smell and because of the look. They might think it's rotten but, in our culture, it's prepared well. ... There are things that I prepare in a certain way that is safe. ... We do eat a lot of raw stuff. That's our diet.

— Inuk advisor



Staying hydrated

Staying hydrated is essential for keeping your body healthy and functioning properly. Water is present in every cell and all parts of your body, making up about 60% of your body weight. Drinking enough fluids to keep a good balance of water in your body is crucial for moving nutrients and waste through your body, regulating your blood pressure and body temperature, and cushioning and protecting your joints and organs. It is also important for preventing dehydration, which is a huge risk factor for falls and fall-related fractures.

The amount of fluid you need to drink varies, depending on your age, sex, weight, health, physical activity, and environment. Feeling thirsty is an early sign that you are starting to get dehydrated. Other symptoms of dehydration include:

- dry lips and mouth
- dry eyes and nose
- flushed skin
- headache
- muscle cramps



First Nations traditional foods fact sheets
bit.ly/HA02-fnha-traditionalfoods



Gifts from our relations: Indigenous original foods guide
bit.ly/HA02-nada-foodguide



Indigenous cuisinology (Native cooking) podcast
bit.ly/HA02-alieaward-cuisinology



Tea recipes – Oti Aniibiish: Harvesting our strengths, sowing our successes
bit.ly/HA02-gullbayfn-tearecipes



- dizziness or fainting
- dark yellow, strong-smelling urine
- low blood pressure and increased heart rate

As you age, your sense of thirst starts to decline. Drinking small amounts of fluids consistently throughout the day is one way to make sure you stay hydrated. Other ways of staying hydrated include:

- drinking a cup of water as soon as you wake up, even before your morning tea or coffee
- drinking a cup of water before each meal
- drinking water before, during, and after physical activity and exercise
- carrying a bottle of water with you wherever you go
- choosing water instead of sweetened beverages when eating out
- adding berries, mint leaves, cucumber slices, or a wedge of lemon or lime to your water for flavour

Water is your healthiest option for daily hydration. There may be times, however, when you do not have clean water that is safe to drink. Other healthy options for staying hydrated include:

- milk or plant-based alternatives
- low-sodium vegetable juices that are “100% juice” and “naturally unsweetened”
- plain (unflavoured) 100% coconut water
- water-rich vegetables (e.g., cucumber, lettuce, celery, zucchini, tomatoes, radishes, spinach, bell peppers)
- water-rich fruits (e.g., watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, peaches, grapefruit, oranges, blueberries, pineapple, pears, apples)

Talk with your doctor or local healthcare provider to find out if you are getting enough water for your body’s needs and to learn more about how you can stay hydrated, based on your health profile, current conditions, and lifestyle.



How you can learn more

Several national organizations in Canada offer culturally appropriate services, links to local programs, and online knowledge resources to help you maintain your best health, well-being, and quality of life. Some of these organizations are listed below.



211 at United Way Centraide Canada is a primary source for provincial/territorial government and community-based health and social services. Resources for older adults include programs and services related to housing, food, housekeeping, mental health supports, and much more.

Phone: 211

211.ca/#find



Alzheimer Society of Canada provides links to local Alzheimer Society programs, knowledge resources, and referral services to support people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia, their families, caregivers, and healthcare providers.

Phone: 416-488-8772

admin.alzheimer.ca/en



Diabetes Canada offers a collection of tools and resources, as well as virtual learning opportunities, to help people with diabetes live healthy lives.

Toll free: 1-800-226-8464

diabetes.ca



First Nations Health Authority offers a variety of tips, guides, and knowledge resources to support healthy aging, quality of life, Elder wellness, and end-of-life care for First Nations people.

Phone: 604-693-6500

Toll free: 866-913-0033

fnha.ca



Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada offers a wide collection of heart-healthy recipes and the latest articles, health tips, podcasts, and digital stories to inform, educate, and raise awareness about heart disease and stroke prevention. Online resources include healthy recipes, lifestyle tips, and whole approaches to Indigenous health.

Toll free: 888-473-4636

heartandstroke.ca



Indigenous Services Canada offers information about many health and socio-economic programs and services to support Indigenous people and communities.

Toll free: 800-567-9604

canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada.html



National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health is a

source for many reliable, current, and culturally appropriate health-related knowledge resources to support the best health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

Phone: 250-960-5250

nccih.ca



National Indigenous Diabetes Association provides programs,

projects, regional services, and a wide range of online resources aimed at addressing the diabetes epidemic in Indigenous communities.

Phone: 204-927-1221

nada.ca



Public Health Agency of Canada offers a range of

programs, services, and knowledge resources to promote and support the health and socio-economic well-being of Indigenous Peoples and communities.

Toll free: 844-280-5020

canada.ca/en/services/indigenous-peoples.html



UnlockFood.ca by Dietitians of

Canada delivers reliable articles, videos, recipes, menu planners, and other life changing resource materials to enhance lives and improve health, including information about dietitians and finding a local dietitian, food safety, heart health, and healthy eating as you get older.

Toll free: 877-721-0876

unlockfood.ca/en/Seniors

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The booklets in this series include:



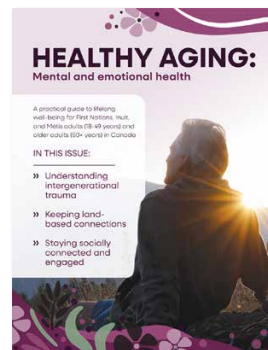
Healthy aging: Physical activity and exercise



Healthy aging: Food, diet and nutrition



Healthy aging: Preventative health behaviours



Healthy aging: Mental and emotional health



Healthy aging: Life stages and wellness



Healthy aging: Financial wellness

You can view all of the English booklets online at nccih.ca.
Aussi disponibles en français: ccnsa.ca.

For more information:



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