

# wellness matters



Choices for healthy living • nutrition • fitness • well-being • health

## Under My Skin



**A**s the days heat up, Canadians get bombarded with information about preventing skin cancer: slip on a hat, slap on sunscreen, seek shade. Yet melanoma is still rapidly rising in Canada, with incidence rates increasing by about 2% per year for men and 1.5% per year for women. About 6,500 Canadians are diagnosed with melanoma annually, and more than 1,000 die from it.

“People accept that there is a relationship between excessive sun exposure and skin cancer. But acceptance doesn’t translate into changed behaviour,” says Dr. Harvey Lui, a dermatologist and cancer researcher with the B.C. Cancer Agency and the University of British Columbia. Lui says rates are rising faster among younger women and older men, in part due to resistance to quitting the tanning salon and to taking precautions in the sun.

“It’s good to be outdoors for exercise and recreation, and we feel good when it’s sunny and warm,” says Lui. “But we have to figure out how to get the benefit while minimizing the damage it causes to our skin while we’re out there.”

Lui recommends simple adjustments, like wearing light, long-sleeve clothing or scheduling outdoor activities like gardening or golfing in the

### MONITOR YOUR MOLES

While those at higher risk may benefit from seeing a dermatologist annually, Dr. Lui says the majority of skin cancers are first discovered by the individual or their spouse. “Everyone has eyes,” says Lui. “Get used to your skin. Be aware of any changing spots or moles, and report them to your doctor.”

morning or late afternoon, rather than in the middle of the day, when UV light is at its strongest. And for those who still skip the sunscreen, Lui points to compelling new research: “If skin cancer and sunburns don’t scare you and you need another incentive, sunscreens have also been shown to prevent you from looking older when used consistently on a long-term basis.”

## 10 FAST FACTS

- 1 Swishing coconut oil** in your mouth for up to 25 minutes every day can help whiten teeth.
- 2 Bathing in cold water** revives the immune system and boosts white blood cells.
- 3 Activated charcoal extract** is used to treat stomach complaints and acid indigestion.
- 4 Overhydration** can worsen athletic performance as it reduces the amount of sodium in the body.
- 5 One medium pear** provides six grams of fibre, about 24% of the daily requirement for a woman under 50.
- 6 Pulpy juice** is said to have substantially greater antioxidant effects than clear juice.
- 7 Raynaud’s phenomenon**, a disorder of blood circulation in the fingers and toes, affects four in 10,000 Canadians.
- 8 Studies show** that Raynaud’s phenomenon commonly occurs in workers in certain occupations that involve exposure to vibration, such as tree felling.
- 9 Red rooibos tea** contains quercetin, which is an anti-inflammatory and can help lower blood pressure.
- 10 Yellowing eyes** can indicate a dysfunction of the liver or an iron deficiency.

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summer  
recipe

## Mango Berry Rotini Salad

Mango, berries, spinach and feta cheese make for a colourful twist on pasta salad, with the perfect balance of sweet and tangy.

Servings: 4      430 Calories/serving

INGREDIENTS

**Vinaigrette**

- 3   tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2   tbsp raspberry vinegar
- 1   tsp sugar
- 1   tsp poppy seeds
- ¼   tsp salt

**Salad**

- 1   cup whole wheat rotini pasta, uncooked
- 1   ripe mango
- 1   cup raspberries
- 1   cup blueberries
- 2   cups fresh baby spinach
- 1   cup canned black beans, rinsed and drained
- ½   cup feta cheese, crumbled

INSTRUCTIONS

- In a small bowl, whisk vinaigrette ingredients and set aside.
- Boil water and cook rotini according to package instructions.
- Drain cooked rotini and rinse in cool water.
- While rotini is cooking, cut mango into chunks, removing peel and pit.
- Place salad ingredients in a large bowl. Drizzle with vinaigrette and toss gently.

# It's Never too Late

Canadians who have made a lifetime habit of drinking soda, eating fries and enjoying processed or red meat may feel that it's just too late to make a difference. But maybe it's not. Walter Willett, chair of the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says it's never too late to change.

At a January 2016 forum about the evolution of our understanding of the relationship between health and diet, Dr. Willett stated that it's always useful to make dietary changes, even if you've lived on a steady intake of unhealthy food for decades. Suggested dietary changes include increasing produce intake and cutting back

on unhealthy fats and red meat.

And the effects can be immediate. "[Dietary] changes even very late in life can, within a matter of a few months, greatly decrease the risk of a recurrent heart attack or death," Willett tells *Wellness Matters*.

The positive effects on health apply to individuals with diabetes as well, according to Willett, who says, "The risk of diabetes goes down almost immediately after switching to a healthier diet."

This doesn't mean you should wait until late in life to start eating healthy. "If you want the healthiest possible life, it's best to start a healthy lifestyle early. But if you've sort of ignored things, it's never too late to still get some benefit." Heartening news.

"Every man takes the limits of his own field of vision for the limits of the world."

Arthur Schopenhauer, philosopher

# Healthy Eating, No Prep

**Prepared meal services** are gaining popularity, especially for on-the-go professionals who value healthy eating but have limited time to prepare food. Meal delivery services provide convenience and consistency, but are they a healthy long-term solution?

“I recommend meal services to clients who work 40 to 60 hour weeks and train consistently, but don’t know where to start with nutrition,” says Jana Finkbiner, a registered holistic nutritionist in Vancouver. “Prepped meals take away the guesswork. They teach you what a balanced meal looks like — this amount of protein, fat and carbs,” Finkbiner explains. That information may ultimately help you to plan homemade options, which is always the best route to healthy eating.

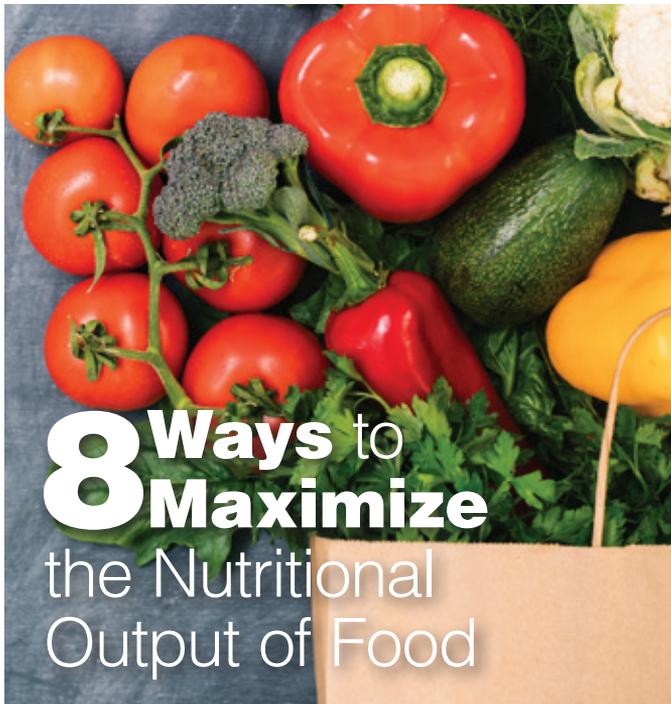
Meals are usually pre-portioned and include a nutritional breakdown, making planning your intake simple. However, meal services are more expensive than buying and preparing groceries. For the



unenthusiastic cook who frequently throws away ingredients that have gone bad, it’s a helpful option, adds Finkbiner.

“I recommend a 50/50 approach,” Finkbiner tells *Wellness Matters*. “If you’re comfortable preparing breakfast and snacks, ordering prepared lunch and dinner can help you stay on track.”

Ultimately, assess what you want to get out of your meals and plan accordingly. Check with a registered dietitian to ensure you’re selecting a credible prepared meal service and choose an option that satisfies your taste buds and wallet; otherwise, you’re better off investing in a cooking class or two.



## 8 Ways to Maximize the Nutritional Output of Food

**Imagine a world** in which we grow our own food, pick it when perfectly ripened and prepare it to ensure every morsel of goodness is optimally delivered to our cells in peak condition. The truth is, that’s not how most of us live, particularly with busy work lives.

But we can still boost the nutritional output of the food we eat.

### HERE’S HOW:

- 1** If you have access to an outdoor space, grow as much food as you can, even if it’s just a few fresh herbs on a windowsill.
- 2** Buy locally grown or locally made food. Generally, the shorter the distance food has traveled from its origin to your plate, the better.
- 3** Buy in-season vegetables and fruits. They were likely picked closer to their peak ripeness.
- 4** Cook at home to manage added salt, sugar or fat in your meals, but note that the nutritional quality of some foods is actually enhanced by cooking.
- 5** Food is best stored at 1.6 to 3.3 °C. Check the fridge temperature at home and the office to ensure it’s set for optimal fresh food storage.
- 6** Avoid storing food in the 4 to 60 °C danger zone. Keep cold foods below 4 °C and hot foods above 60 °C.
- 7** Slow roast, steam or bake vegetables instead of boiling to preserve nutrients.
- 8** Read food labels for storage instructions. Exposure to light and heat can reduce the nutritional quality of food.

“In order to fly you have to let go of the world you are hanging onto.”

Kurek Ashley, author



# Stepping Up

Stepping on a single stair is a convenient workout done anywhere, even at the office. It can be the cardio part of your regular workout, for heart and lung benefits, or you can use shorter sessions during breaks at the office to strengthen leg muscles and burn calories. A 135-pound person can burn about 150 calories in 20 minutes of stair-stepping.

Kevin Reid, Certified Personal Trainer in Surrey, B.C., tells *Wellness Matters* that beginners should use a seven-inch height or less. (The standard height of a stair is about seven inches.) A higher platform quickly exhausts the unfit and may cause injury. Use a sturdy box, platform or the bottom step of a staircase. You can gradually increase the height as fitness improves, but never higher than a height that causes the knees to bend more than 90 degrees.

Use the proper technique to avoid injury. Place the entire foot

on the step to distribute body weight evenly over the whole foot. When stepping off the platform, step down, not back, and always land with toes close to the step's base. Reaching too far back with the leading leg when stepping down results in sore calves, "and it also makes the body lean forward, putting more stress on the lower back and the ball of the foot," says Reid.

Step up with your left foot, and then up with the right. Step down with the left and follow with the right (change the leading foot periodically). Repeat this stepping pattern at a steady, controlled pace.

For quick calorie-burn breaks at the office, step for several five-minute sessions throughout the day. But slip into supportive shoes first, Reid advises; cross-training or aerobic shoes offer shock absorbency and stability. And don't forget to do a few leg stretches afterward!

## Why Prolonged Sitting is Hurting Us

**Pulled muscles and sore joints** are common complaints after strenuous physical activity, but research suggests the pains we feel at the end of the day are the result of what we don't do.

The average person sits for up to 10 hours a day between his or her commute, work, and nightly screen time.

Researchers at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute say that prolonged sitting is a unique occupational health issue with adverse effects such as weight gain, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Sitting slows the metabolism, affecting the body's ability to regulate blood pressure and sugar, and break down fat.

Workspaces were often designed to increase productivity by keeping workers seated at desks. Today, with more emphasis on employee well-being, organizations are introducing standing desks, fitness-ball chairs and other ergonomic furnishings. While these changes can provide some benefits, they may not be enough.

"It's about breaking up prolonged sitting," suggests Dr. Maureen Ashe, Associate



Professor of Family Practice at the University of British Columbia.

Research with a focus on bone health and preventative measures, suggests Ashe, who studies bone health in the aging population, will help to better understand the contributing factors of sedentary activity in relation to hip fractures and prolonged recovery times later on in life.

### GET MOVING!

If your workspace doesn't allow much opportunity for movement, Ashe, who is also a physiotherapist and researcher at Vancouver's Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, gives these tips:

- Send fewer internal emails and instead go see your colleagues.
- Take your phone calls standing up.
- Send a print job to a printer further from your desk.
- Use a washroom on a different floor and take the stairs.
- Consider standing meetings: they get more people out of their chairs and lead to shorter meetings!
- Set reminders on your phone or computer to alert you to get up and stretch.
- Wear a step-counter or fitness tracker to keep track and maintain levels of activity.
- If taking transit, get off before your regular stop and walk.

**"The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for 30 years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."** – Calvin Trillin, journalist



# Make Family Fitness Fun

**Juggling work and family** while trying to stay active can be challenging. Studies have shown that active parents raise active children, but how can you inspire your family to become active together?

The biggest mistake parents make is setting unrealistic goals or offering encouragement that can be interpreted as criticism, Kathleen Trotter, a personal trainer in Toronto and author of *Finding Your Fit*, tells *Wellness Matters*.

The best way to motivate family members is through adjustment rather than change: “You need to find what will work for you and your family; your unique recipe for success.”

Trotter suggests the “piggyback strategy,” in which activities are tagged onto things you were already doing. “If Sundays are your family fun day, instead of going to the movies, bike to a few attractions and have an adventure,” she suggests. “Or speed walk to three different places, which can include a toy store!”

Set an example by going for a jog at the kids’ soccer practice or encouraging family dog walks. Use other activities to encourage good behavior: “Promise your family they can watch TV after each member of the family has done 20 push ups,” says Trotter.

In the end, Trotter reminds us that if one strategy fails, try something new: “some motion is better than no motion.”

## Gym Etiquette

**Have you ever been at the gym** and the person next to you is on the phone? Or you go to use the weights and discover the last person left a heavy load for you to deal with? There may be some things you do that drive other people crazy, too! Most of the time we can sum up gym etiquette with four basic rules from Kindergarten:

- **Personal space:** people go to the gym for their own exercise, so focus on your workout, not someone else’s. Don’t give advice and don’t stare at others. Know where your classmates are in any group class to avoid collisions.

- **Clean up after yourself:** wipe down equipment after using it, clean up makeup from sink area and don’t leave your toiletries in the shower stall.
- **Share nicely:** don’t monopolize equipment for circuit training, observe gym time limits on cardio equipment and replace weights after lifting.
- **But don’t share everything:** keep noise to a minimum, including grunting when lifting weights. Leave your phone alone. Don’t leave your stuff all over the place – get a locker. And don’t wear perfume, as some people can be “scents-itive.”



“I was 32 when I started cooking; up until then, I just ate.”

Julia Child, chef and author



# Boost Your Happiness at Work

**U**nhappy at work? Before you do something drastic like quitting your job or starting a new career, consider these tips to help you enjoy your job more.

Each morning, get motivated for the day.

Remind yourself your job lets you enjoy life after work, like social time with friends or pursuing a sport or hobby. Having a positive attitude helps make your workday bearable.

Avoid defining who you are by the work you do. You have a life other than your job. Be proud of your fitness efforts, your hobbies or your volunteer work – and if you aren't active, creative or sociable, there's no time like the present to start!

Overwhelmed with projects and tasks?

Concentrate on the task at hand. Avoid becoming distracted by worrying about other things that need doing. Stay in the moment.

**Delegate when it's appropriate.** Use the "3D" rule: do it, dump it or delegate it. Some tasks may more fairly belong to someone else's workload or job detail.

**Take regular breaks.** Get away from the workplace, even for just five minutes. Avoid skipping lunch. Your brain needs the nourishment, fresh air and mental break.

Eat healthy lunches and snacks – like an apple instead of potato chips. Look for ways to energize yourself, other than adrenaline or caffeine.

**Contribute to a pleasant work environment.** Avoid negative gossiping and listening to negative gossip. Spend less time with co-workers you don't admire, and more time with those you like.

**Learn to have more fun at work.** See work

## TIP

There may be valid reasons why you no longer enjoy your job, but perhaps they are only the surface cause of your misery.

For instance, if your job seems boring, it may be your efforts aren't being recognized. Silently going about your tasks tells others you are content. Let your boss know you want more opportunities and challenges. Ask for feedback frequently from the boss, your co-workers and even your customers. Feedback is helpful and affirming!

If you are overloaded and can't say, "No, I can't take on more," perhaps you need to ask for guidance on prioritizing and spacing out your deadlines. You'll lower your stress and at the same time earn recognition from a supervisor who probably didn't realize how much you've been doing.

time as a game. Life should be fun and since you spend much of your time at work, you may as well enjoy the game.

**Switch off when you leave the office.** Work is a major part of your life and respecting your free time will help you survive the work time. Don't think about work while at home relaxing.

**Focus on what's good about your job.** You can choose to be happy at work. Dwell on what you like about your job: the big windows in your office, the short drive to work, co-workers you enjoy or the regular bonuses. Face it, no job is perfect, and even if you take the drastic step of switching jobs, it will still have unpleasant aspects. So learn to be happy now!

# Take a Break

**Over one in four Canadian** workers report their day-to-day lives to be highly stressful. With overwork cited as a major contributor, are Canadians bad at taking a break?

## What is a "real" break?

"What rest means to one person is not the same for another," says Constance Lynn Hummel, a Vancouver-based registered clinical counsellor, and founder of The Business of Helping.

One commonality for rest, however, is being present in a moment. We can only truly do one thing at a time," explains Hummel. "So if we actually intentionally do one thing at a time, we're not going to feel pulled in so many different directions."

## Add rest to your routine

"If we don't carve out the time for breaks, we generally don't get them," says Hummel, who tells her clients to schedule time not only for rest, but also time to think about the things they can't address in the present moment.

"If we don't create a space in which we can actually focus on solving whatever

the problem is, it becomes the thing that buzzes around with us forever," she tells *Wellness Matters*.

"There are always going to be a hundred things taking up your space in your life," says Hummel. The goal is to make taking a break a routine part of life, rather than waiting until illness or burnout force you to rest.

"Today I will do what others won't, so tomorrow I can accomplish what others can't."

Jerry Rice, football wide receiver

# Express Yourself

**Do you have a hard time expressing your emotions?** If so, you're not alone.

According to registered clinical counsellor Johanna Wickie from Jericho Counselling Clinic in B.C., North Americans pride themselves on living in their cerebral cortex and of being rational, non-impulsive "masters of their domains."

"It's often a learned behaviour," explains Wickie. "As children, we express how we feel, but as we age, society tells us some of those emotions are acceptable in society and some are not. We feel we will be perceived negatively, and so rather than being honest with people and ourselves, we often push those so-called negative emotions away. Women are often as likely to do this as men."

So why should you learn to let loose? Well, some studies have linked the repression of negative emotions to increased stress and ill health.

However, developing this

emotional intelligence is a skill, but one that can be strengthened through practise.

**Wickie recommends starting with baby steps:**

- **Create opportunities for recognition:** Slow down, hit the pause button and take stock about how you feel in the moment. Check your breathing, do your muscles feel tight, are you feeling flushed?
- **Put words to what you know or suspect is going on:** If you are feeling tired say to yourself, "I'm tired." Don't be afraid to open up and tell other people.
- **When someone asks you how you are doing, don't use masking words.** If you respond with "fine," "great," or "OK," you are shutting people down. Instead, think of this as wonderful opportunity to provide a more open response. If you say, "today is a crazy day," it's a great way to build a connection with someone.



# Coping in uncertain times

**Aerial images of mass carnage** and shaky video footage of panicked crowds flood our homes daily, as do the atrocities in places such as Syria and other far-off locations.

It's enough to trigger a sense of despair—and unfortunately many people can succumb to this, which causes sleepless nights and mounting emotional stress.

Arlene Tully, a B.C. registered clinical counsellor, says this media onslaught "contributes to existential angst, the perception that everything is terrible and we're doomed. It also weighs heavily on those who are already dealing with personal problems."

She adds that the situation has become acute. "News is no longer just at six o'clock or even hourly: it's broadcast relentlessly, 24/7 to our televisions and mobile devices."

Fortunately, it is well within one's capabilities to take control. "The old



comeback that you should switch off your television may be overly simplistic, but it does address the root of this problem," says Tully. "It may not be feasible—or beneficial—to disconnect entirely from our wired world, but you can take baby steps. Maybe stop receiving news on your smartphone, or establish a certain length of time when you don't get the news at all."

Another familiar remedy is to get outside. "Being exposed to one's natural surroundings can be extremely healing, psychologically speaking," says Tully.

Yet another familiar but effective strategy is talking with friends. "Expressing your feelings and having them validated can be enormously soothing," says Tully.

If none of the above is possible, Tully recommends seeking a counsellor. "Identifying and talking through your worries can go a long way in dealing with the constant onslaught of bad news," she says. "Remember that you are in good company—and that we're here to help."

**"Fitness is not about being better than someone else. It's about being better than you used to be."**

Brett Hoebel, fitness trainer

# 5 Tips for a Healthy Vacation

**A** vacation doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your health and fitness goals. Here are five ways to get active on your next trip:

- 1 Plan ahead.** Find out if your hotel has a gym or pool. If not, research the area around your hotel and search for fitness centres nearby.
- 2 In-room exercise.** There are plenty of exercises you can do in your hotel room with no equipment. Brandon Santo, a certified personal trainer and strength and conditioning specialist from Vancouver recommends squats, split-squats, lunges, vertical jumps, hip bridges, planks, dead-bugs and push-ups.
- 3 Pack smart.** Bring your running shoes and gym gear. At your destination, stock up on water and healthy snacks like nuts and seeds, raw vegetables and fruit.
- 4 Explore.** One of the best ways to get to know a new city is on foot or bicycle. Visit nearby parks and trails, or rent a bicycle and tour the city. Opt for a guided tour if you don't want to explore alone.
- 5 Relax, but keep moving.** Balance time in the spa or by the pool with activities that spike your heart rate. "You wouldn't want the number of hours sitting on your vacation to be equivalent to the number of hours sitting at your desk job," says Santo.



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