

How to Prevent Winter Injuries



Pedestrians taking a tumble on slippery surfaces may be popular on YouTube, but it's no laughing matter for hospital workers who handled an estimated 1,800 emergency department visits and 417 admissions every day last year, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information.

Canadian winters pose a double threat: as the temperature drops, injuries due to falls increase, as do accidents among the sporting populace who want to make the most of the sub-zero weather. Knee and upper body injuries are the most common injuries among those who ski, snowboard and sled, according to Sports-Health.

Fortunately, there's no end of good tips on how to avoid taking a spill when going to the mall or picking the kids up from school, and the most obvious is to invest in the proper winter footwear.

As for sport enthusiasts, Normand Richard, a Vancouver-based certified exercise physiologist,

says the best way to avoid injury in winter is to keep active throughout the year. "Too many people stay idle during the warm weather months and then think they can hit the slopes without incurring any mishaps," he says.

Getting the necessary equipment is also crucial. "Helmets can be expensive, but they protect your head," says Richard, adding that parents should avoid buying large helmets for kids on the basis they'll eventually grow into them. "All safety equipment must fit right," he says.

For those new to winter sports, learning proper techniques from a professional trainer will go a long way in preventing injury, and help awkward rookies quickly gain confidence.

Finally, Richard stresses that pushing oneself to the limits when already tired is how accidents happen. "Know your abilities and stick to them," he says. "You can always improve next winter – instead of paying a visit to the emergency ward."

10 FAST FACTS

1 A pound of muscle burns 3 times more calories than a pound of fat.

2 Exercising on a regular basis helps boost your immune system.

3 Sweat releases dirt through your pores which reduces acne and breakouts.

4 Studies suggest getting at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity a week.

5 Only 10% of people are successful at losing weight through diet alone.

6 Apples are made of 25% air, which is why they float.

7 Walking at a brisk pace can burn almost as many calories as jogging the same distance.

8 It takes the body six to eight weeks to adapt to an exercise program.

9 Muscle mass diminishes at the rate of 1% a year in middle age.

10 Oil of oregano is recognized as an active antimicrobial that can help prevent colds.

The Benefits of Kefir



Kefir has been receiving a lot of buzz lately, and for good reason it seems.

It is both high in nutrients and probiotics, and extremely beneficial for digestion and gut health; it is even believed to boost immunity.

But what is it? Kefir is a fermented drink that adds kefir grains to cow's, goat's, soy, rice or coconut milk. In fact, most milks will do, which makes it accessible to many.

Derived from the Turkish word keyif, or "feeling good," kefir comes from the Eastern European Caucasus Mountains. It is believed that sheep herders accidentally fermented milk in their leather flasks and its healing benefits were then discovered and used to help treat ailments like tuberculosis.

Kefir contains high levels of vitamin B12, calcium, magnesium, vitamin K2, biotin, folate, enzymes and probiotics. While the craze of late has been to make your own, you can also buy it off the shelf

from most grocery stores. However, like most things in life, when kefir is bottled it is believed to lose some of its benefits as yeast fermentation and culturing needs to be suppressed in order to prevent continued carbonation (and exploding bottles). It's a great option however, if you don't have time or space.

How to Grow your Own Kefir

You can either buy kefir grains online, in most health food stores, or get some grains from a friend who is already making it.

How to make milk kefir:

- Place the active kefir grains into a big jar with up to 4 cups of fresh milk (of your choice).
- Cover with a coffee filter or muslin and secure with a rubber band.
- Place in a warm spot, 68°-85°F, to culture.
- Culture for around 24 hours until milk is slightly thickened.
- Once the milk changes texture and culturing is complete, separate the kefir grains from the finished kefir.
- Place the kefir grains in a new batch of milk.
- Store the finished kefir in the refrigerator.



winter
recipe

Lemony Fingerling Potatoes

Servings: 8

Time: 45 mins

Ingredients

- 2 large sage leaves, chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped rosemary
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 4 pounds fingerling potatoes, halved lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- Freshly ground pepper

How to Make

Step 1

Preheat the oven to 425°C. In a food processor, pulse the sage, rosemary and thyme until finely chopped. Add the lemon zest and pulse to blend. Add the salt and pulse until finely ground. Transfer the herb salt to a small bowl.

Step 2

In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with the oil and butter and season with pepper. Spread the potatoes in a single layer on 2 large rimmed baking sheets and roast for 25 minutes. Season the potatoes generously with the herb salt, toss well and continue baking for five minutes, or until the potatoes are tender and golden. Transfer to a bowl and serve hot or warm.

"The road to success is always under construction."

- Lily Tomlin, actress

Gut-Friendly Potatoes



One humble, standby vegetable with high versatility in cooking is potatoes. They're widely available year-round and generally very economical. Unfortunately, they've taken an unfair bad rap in low carb diets, excessively large French fry portions are often associated with obesity, and rarely is any mention of potatoes and the gut positive.

Still, potatoes remain a staple for many. They're naturally gluten-free. One medium potato supplies about 80 to 100 calories, similar to an apple, along with 32% of the daily vitamin C requirement, 15% of vitamin B6 and 12% of potassium. One medium potato supplies 17 grams of carbohydrate, 2.2 grams of fibre and 2 grams of protein. Lesser known is potato's role as a pre-biotic gut-health promoter.

Potatoes contain a resistant starch that ferments in the large intestine where it provides short-chain fatty acids and good bacteria with similar positive effects to fibre. Along with potatoes, other pre-biotic foods that provide resistant starch include bananas, oats, peas, beans and lentils among others.

Like many foods, how a potato is prepared can make a big difference in calories, fat and overall quality in the diet. A baked potato is a great snack for active people. Potatoes can be sliced into slabs, drizzled with a little olive oil and grilled. Sliced sweet potatoes can be used in place of toast and topped with avocado. These are all better gut-health promoters than a jumbo portion of deep-fried potatoes topped in gravy and cheese.

Ditch the Vegetable Bag

Great news! Canadians are increasingly eating a more plant-based diet full of vegetables and fruit. It's a valuable health-promoting measure. The simple act of eating more vegetables is the most important first step regardless of whether they're organic or conventional, homegrown, prepared at home or eaten when out.

Once the habit of having vegetables cover at least half the plate in most meals is mastered, fine-tuning the quality of the vegetables is a logical next step. One area for quality adjustments is in the category of bagged salads and vegetables. They are convenient with the prep work of washing and chopping done. That does come with a price in typically being more costly than a head of lettuce or spinach that you would wash and chop yourself. Unfortunately, they

also come with an environmental cost. Most brands of bagged greens or pre-cut vegetables come in thick plastic bags or plastic cello boxes. Some also have add-ins of smaller packages of croutons, raisins, seeds or salad dressing.

If using bagged mixes, it is still considered good practice to give them a rinse at home before using and to always use them by the due date. There have been cases of salmonella food poisoning in leafy greens that have not been properly handled and stored.

With all vegetables, exposure to air, light, moisture and heat reduces the nutritional value. Washing and chopping a fresh head of lettuce and using the same day can help ensure maximum nutritional value and there is no plastic waste.



"Stones make no splash on a frozen lake."

- Steven Erikson, novelist



The Rise of the Ninja Gym

So you want to be a ninja warrior, but don't think you have what it takes? Think again. The ninja gym is all the rage and these gyms are popping up everywhere in Canada.

Whether you are six or 60, the obstacles have been designed to test endurance, speed, flexibility and strength, while ensuring you have a ton of fun.

"If you are a city hiker or an endurance athlete, there are obstacles for all levels," says Gary McFarlane, owner of The Ninja Gym in Squamish, B.C. "You don't even have to wait long to notice improvements. You can actually see the difference within days."

Much like yoga and CrossFit, ninja gyms help build full body strength. The courses, which consist of everything from rope swings to the warped wall, force you to utilize all the muscles in your body, without even realizing you're doing so. And with an inflatable mat under you to soften any fall, it also helps build courage.

But the benefits aren't just physical. "These gyms encourage team building, develop social skills, and help maintain motivation and attention," says McFarlane. It's like a massive playground for kids, big and small.

Above all, it's a lot of fun, and that's enough to keep you motivated.

Balancing Board Benefits

It can be extremely difficult to get motivated during those cold, dark winter days. After coming home from work, the last thing you want to do is get back in your car and go to the gym. But buying gym equipment for the home can be expensive.

Back in the 1970s a surfer and skateboarder called Hunter Joslin came up with the idea of putting a board on a roller as an aid for training surfers during the off season. He soon realised that it was far more than a surfing simulator. In fact, its users reported increased leg strength and core fitness, while experiencing a high degree of entertainment and fun.

Recently, the Indo board balance trainer has experienced a resurgence as its benefits have been more widely publicised. The idea is that the instability provided by the roller and the wobbliness of the disc challenge your core as you try to stay upright.

The best part is, there are a great deal of similar balancing boards to choose from, and prices vary from \$20 upwards. Just be careful if it's your first time on one, as you could be at risk of injury.



"Imaginary obstacles are insurmountable, real ones aren't."

- Barbara Sher, author and lifestyle coach

Snowshoeing is more than Just Fun



Winter is here, and if you're not into skiing or snowboarding, what else is there?

It's time to wrap up warm, strap on your snowshoes and get outside! Snowshoeing has multiple health and fitness benefits, it provides a great cardio workout, helps build strength, agility, balance and endurance.

According to studies by Ball State University and the University of Vermont, snowshoers can burn between 420-1,000 calories per hour. It's also an activity that is accessible to many, as it is low impact.

For the more athletic, snowshoeing helps keep marathon runners, endurance racers, hikers, and cyclists fit during the winter months.

The muscles you use are similar to those used when walking and hiking hilly terrain. Hip flexors may receive more of a workout and quads may get more exercise than usual due to the lifting motion of each step.

"Snowshoeing is easy to learn and provides excellent low impact cardio exercise. The equipment is affordable, ultramodern, lightweight and easy to use," says David Robinson, president at Snowshoe Canada.

Say Goodbye to Love Handles

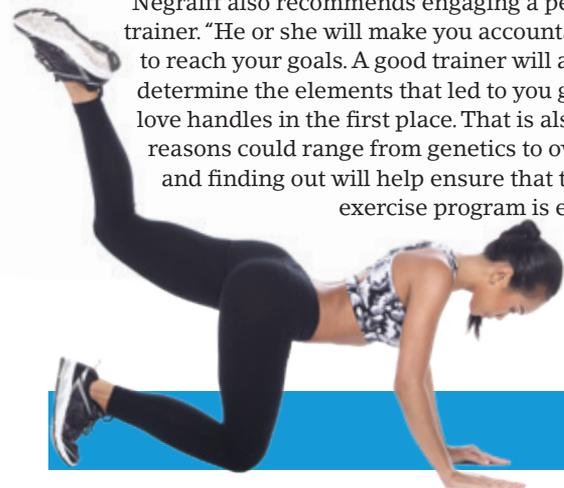
Since love handles sit on the side of the abdominal area, lots of people think a typical ab workout will melt them away – and become frustrated when the fat remains stubbornly in place.

Kari Negraiff, fitness professional in Pitt Meadows, B.C., says, "Unfortunately we're immersed in a culture of instant gratification; the fact is that changing one's biology through exercise and diet in order to get rid of fat takes time."

Rather than Negraiff suggesting specific exercises, she says it's more important to determine the type of exercise that suits you the best. "Then, performance goals should be set in very small increments. That way, the more goals you reach, the more motivated you will be to keep working out, and eventually the love handles will be gone, or at least noticeably reduced."

Negraiff also recommends engaging a personal trainer. "He or she will make you accountable to reach your goals. A good trainer will also determine the elements that led to you getting love handles in the first place. That is also key: the reasons could range from genetics to overeating, and finding out will help ensure that the exercise program is effective

and the goals are realistic."



Fitness Helps you Focus

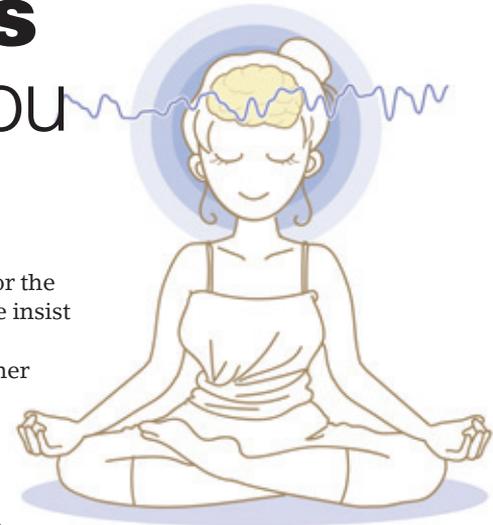
Exercise is not only good for the body, many business people insist it's great for focus.

Steve Di Tomaso, co-owner of Envision Fitness in Pitt Meadows, B.C., explains that during a workout, "neurotransmitters such as endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin are stimulated in the brain, making

exercise an effective natural anti-depressant; and regular exercise positively affects brain chemistry over the long term."

Research shows that an exercise session raises your focus for two to three hours afterwards, meaning if you have a business presentation, working out beforehand will ensure you perform at your peak.

In the long term, exercise can even help stave off brain aging



and Alzheimer's, thanks to the brain's ability to improve itself with blood flow and brain-derived protein.

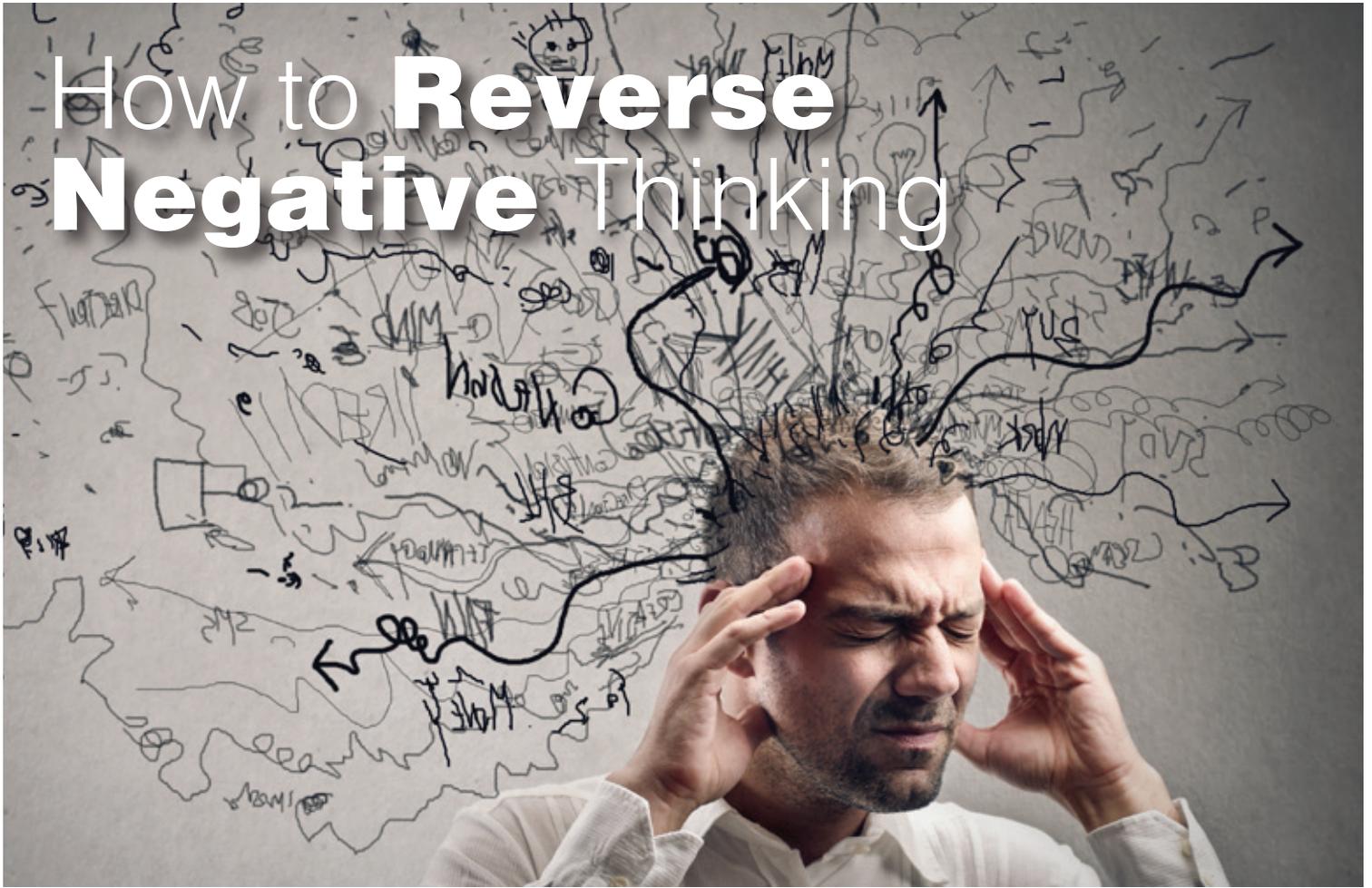
Di Tomaso says many clients come to his facility not to get buff per se, "But because their doctor has recommended exercise to improve their mental state."

So if you want to improve your memory skills or be at your best on the job, simply hit the gym daily. Your brain will thank you.

"Don't workout because you hate your body, workout because you love it."

- Unknown

How to Reverse Negative Thinking



Experts say the brain produces about 70,000 thoughts per day, but as many people are intimately aware, a lot these thoughts are negative, which in turn can lead to poor decision making or even mental health problems.

The good news is that the collection of neurons on each side lobe of the brain called the amygdala, which are important for registering emotional information, can be retrained. Harvard University studies have proven that daily meditation actually shrinks the amygdala, allowing rational thinking to take over.

Edmonton-based Paul Robinson and his partner Monica Kneifel combine their physiology and psychological skills to benefit their

clients at Kneifel Robinson Personal Training, and Robinson points out that while a variety of methods can coax the brain into a habit of thinking more positively, they all derive from the common first step of becoming aware of one's thoughts in the first place.

"From there, mindfulness, the practise of being in the moment, and envisioning play big roles in brain retraining," he says. "But whatever method you choose, it must be practised regularly," he says.

Robinson concludes. "In some ways, retraining is all about ceasing to say 'no' and starting to say 'yes.' If you keep telling your brain 'yes,' it's more apt to process as 'yes' over time."



"Your day will go the way the corners of your mouth turn."
- Winston Churchill, former politician and author

Overthinking can Kill Performance

We all dwell on particular situations at one time or another, but when healthy consideration of an issue crosses into overthinking it can have detrimental effects on our bodies, minds and daily lives.

Dr. Todd Hill, director of Behavioural Medicine in Family Medicine at the University of Calgary, explains that while overthinking is not a formal psychological term, it does lineup with the psychological state of “worrying.”

Hill says that worry can be based on any number of things, from personal issues such as your health or finances, or larger scale issues like climate change or politics. “None of these things are bizarre things to worry about, but when it starts to impact your daily activities or performance – you find yourself cancelling appointments and social engagements – this is when we know we are overthinking things.”

Overthinking may also cause you to feel unable to relax, explains Hill. “When your sympathetic nervous system – known commonly as the ‘fight or flight’ system – is on all the time, you may have difficulty sleeping, concentrating, not being able to focus on the task at hand.”

“People who struggle with overthinking may also have an underactive para-sympathetic nervous system – the rest and digest system – which could translate into problems such as trouble relaxing.”

To address overthinking, Hill suggests first separating productive worry from non-productive worry by allowing yourself to think about things that you have the power to address, while trying to minimize time spent



thinking about things that you cannot change.

“A good way to minimize these unhelpful thoughts is to practice mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing or different relaxation techniques,” says Hill.

Anxiety Canada (anxietycanada.com) can help people learn how to use such techniques effectively, he adds. “It offers a full set of skill-development tools to help people manage their worry, stop overthinking and bring their nervous system back into balance.”



Time to Tough out the Pain

With increasing focus on Canada’s opioid crisis, one of the questions we should be asking ourselves is, when should we take painkillers and when should we tough out pain?

Latest data by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) indicates that the overall amount of opioids (OxyContin or Vicodin or Percocet) that Canadians are getting in their prescriptions is dropping, while the number of prescriptions for the drugs is rising. These opioids can be highly addictive and have negative impacts on your mental health. In fact, recent reports that Canadian life expectancy at birth has stopped rising for the first time in over four decades have been attributed by Statistics Canada to the ongoing opioid crisis.

“Opioid prescriptions for acute pain should be for a short period of time only, with ongoing

reassessment for repeat prescriptions,” says Dr. Robert Strang, chief medical officer for Nova Scotia.

A recent TEDx Talk by Travis Rieder called *The Agony Of Opioid Withdrawal – And What Doctors Should Tell Patients About It*, provides a very clear message: You have a choice. Understanding there are alternatives is essential in making the right decision. Depending on the pain, whether it is post operation or chronic pain, over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen (Tylenol and generic), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, and generic), and naproxen (Aleve and generic) may in fact be enough.

While we may all think we are immune to addiction, the recent statistics tell us otherwise. Don’t forget to ask about the alternatives!

“This is a wonderful day, I have never seen this one before.”

- Maya Angelou, poet

How to Overcome Isolation



As days grow shorter and colder, many Canadians will be spending more time indoors to stay warm on long winter nights. However, it's good to be aware that hiding away from the wintry weather can open the door to increased feelings of isolation.

Finding yourself feeling disconnected from the outside world and isolated during the winter can stem from a wide range of factors and sometimes may even be linked to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), as it can lead to a more avoidant or sedentary lifestyle during the winter months.

According to the Canadian Psychological Association, Canadians are particularly at risk of developing SAD and feelings of isolation, with an estimated 15% of Canadians expected to report at least a mild case of SAD in their lifetime.

To keep those lonely winter blues away, Carly Eagles, Wellness Coach and Registered Holistic Nutritionist at Sweet Simple Nutrition, recommends keeping well being a top priority. "Try some good mood foods," says Eagles. "Foods high in

vitamin D, like fatty fish, eggs, beef liver and yogurt can help boost your mood, as well as foods high in brain-supporting omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, oysters, shrimp, chia seeds and walnuts."

Eagles not only recommends putting healthy foods on your plate, but to do so with friends or family to keep things social. "A great way to do this is by starting a dinner club with a group of friends that meet regularly – once a week or even once a month – for a potluck style dinner. You can frame it around a theme, such as a country's cuisine, a particular spice or secret ingredient."

Another great way to battle those lonely winter blues is to bundle up and get outside for a dose of sunshine, suggests Eagles. "The trick is to be prepared for the cold so that you can truly enjoy your time outdoors."

Getting active inside is also a great option to boost your mood throughout the winter, according to Eagles. "Try a new indoor activity such as yoga, dance, a sport, or pottery that gets you out of the house and socializing at least one night a week."

If you still find yourself wrestling with feelings of loneliness or depression, be sure to talk with your doctor who can recommend appropriate treatment options, which may include counselling or light therapy.

Tell-Tale Signs of Social Isolation

Staying connected without compromising your solitude can be difficult.

Here are some signs you could be entering into a cycle of social isolation:

- 1 The thought of interacting with other people makes you feel very uneasy.
- 2 You feel anxious a lot of the time.
- 3 You create reasons to justify being alone.
- 4 You get easily annoyed at people on your social network feed.
- 5 You feel disconnected and disenchanting with the world, and blame other people.



Wellness Matters is published quarterly by Canada Wide Media Limited. A French version (*pause sant *) is also available. Correspondence may be addressed to: CANADA WIDE MEDIA LIMITED, 230, 4321 Still Creek Drive, Burnaby, B.C., V5C 6S7. fax: 604.299.9188 website: canadawide.com/Wellness-Matters

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