

Taking That FIRST Step

It's easy to start a walking programme.

From shopping malls to nature trails, millions of Canadians enjoy the health benefits of regular walking, the easiest exercise.

Are you a would-be walker? Here's a 5-step plan to get you in the habit:

- 1 **Warm up** your muscles for 5-10 minutes by gradually increasing your walking pace.
- 2 **Wear** comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and supportive shoes designed for walking or running.
- 3 **Walk** in well-lit, safe, populated areas. Stay aware – avoid phone chat and wearing ear buds.
- 4 **When** you don't feel like exercising, think of ways to get going again – such as walking with a friend or walking in a mall during bad weather.
- 5 **Take** the write step. Record distance, duration and how often you walk to follow your progress – and enjoy the results.

Doctor approval? It's generally safe to start a mild exercise program such as walking regardless of age, if you are reasonably healthy and without medical issues, such as chronic backache, arthritis or hypertension. For moderate to vigorous exercise,



MARCH GOAL:
Walking too routine?
Pick new, interesting routes through parks or past gardens, historic sites or waterways.

get your health care provider's okay before significantly increasing your physical activity.

Step Into A Walking Routine

Pace yourself. Remember, your body isn't used to regular physical activity. Start with Healthy Living's walking program below, which is based on using a pedometer and walking about an average of 6,000 steps a day during the first week. *The goal:* 10,000 steps by Week 10. This program is intended for healthy adults ages 20-54.

WEEK 1	Wear your pedometer for a week and record your steps every day. At week's end, calculate average number (6,000) of steps per day for 7 days.
WEEKS 2-3	Add 500 steps each day each week. WEEK 2: 6,500 steps each day. WEEK 3: 7,000 steps each day.
WEEKS 4-5	Add 500 steps each day each week. WEEK 4: 7,500 steps each day. WEEK 5: 8,000 steps each day.
WEEKS 6-7	Add 500 steps each day each week.
WEEKS 8-10	Gradually increase your steps until you reach 10,000 steps.

Did you know ... more than half of your muscles are designed for walking.

HEALTH notes

■ **A National Cancer Institute (U.S.) study found** that selenium and vitamin E taken alone or together for an average of 5 years did not appear to help prevent prostate cancer. The study involved more than 35,000 men age 50 and older. However, researchers caution that this is an early review of the study. Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer in Canadian men. In 2008, prostate cancer was diagnosed in an estimated 24,700 men and resulted in 4,300 deaths.

■ **Child-resistant packaging is child-proof.** True or False? *False.* Child-resistant packages are not impossible for children to open. To be considered child-resistant, 85% of tested children less than 5 years old cannot open a package in 5 minutes (the other 15% can open it quickly). Why take chances? Keep household products and medications in their safety packaging, locked up and out of children's reach. Secure weekly pill planners, too.

■ **A sore throat can make talking, eating or drinking painful.** What can you do to soothe it? Use a humidifier, drink more fluids, gargle with warm salt water, use honey and lemon, or suck on a throat lozenge or hard candy. Avoid smoke or other pollutants. Don't talk – rest your voice or you'll lose it.

■ **March is National Nutrition Month** – a good time to ask yourself how much you know about good nutrition. Try this mini-quiz: True or False – Eating excess carbohydrates causes weight gain. *False* – Too many calories from any source – carbohydrate, protein, fat – combined with inactivity, increases the likelihood of weight gain. Keep meals balanced for successful, long-term weight control.

Break The Busy-Ness Habit

Feeling overwhelmed? It's a common thread in the hectic fabric of Canadian life. But are you as busy as you think you are? Or do you just need to manage your time better?

We tend to fill every moment of our time, which can build stress and reduce our focus at home and at work. If this describes your life, it's time to simplify and challenge yourself to become a time manager:

Identify what's important. List your activities for the coming week, month and year. Aim to only take on tasks that further your priorities. Review your list as needed.

Adjust what you can. Break large tasks down into manageable chunks of time. You don't have to paint the living room and kitchen in one day.

Share the load. For example, if you're planning a gathering, invite others to help with a potluck. Hire a high school student to help with yard work.

Cut back where you can. Examples: Combine errands to minimize trips – when you go to the post office, swing by the market on the way. And do you need to watch so much TV or online videos?

Say "yes" to a balanced life – by saying "no." No one can make things perfect for everyone. Put your priorities first.

Tune out and take a break. Turn off the phone, pager, PDA, TV, media player and laptop. Enjoy doing absolutely nothing now and then.

Forget perfection. So what if you don't have a spotless house, or time to cook gourmet meals? If your family is basically happy and healthy, isn't that what counts?

Top Time Wasters – which ones are stealing your time? Which ones can you reduce?

Watching TV

Texting and talking on the phone

Surfing the Web

Email and instant messaging

Junk mail

Searching for lost items

Procrastination

Waiting

Inability to say "no"

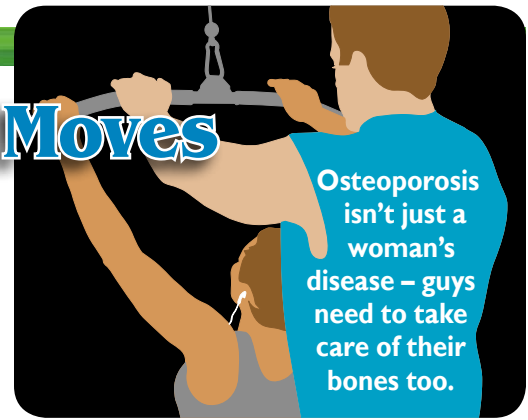
Bone-Building Moves

The key to keeping bones strong is regular **weight-bearing activity.** That's any movement that causes you to move against gravity while you're upright. The force helps your bones stay strong and dense. The more bone-strengthening activities you do at any age and every stage of life, the better your chances of warding off bone loss (osteoporosis).

For bone health, fitness experts suggest performing bone-building exercises 30 minutes a day most days of the week. If time is a factor, break the 30 minutes into 10- or 15-minute spurts.

High-impact weight-bearing activities include hiking, dancing, jogging, stair climbing, backpacking or tennis. **Low-impact,** less intense options include elliptical training, walking, and gardening.

Strength (also called resistance) exercises build muscle by using resistance from your weight, dumbbells, bands, Pilates or other activities that work your muscles. Aim for 2 or 3 weekly workouts. Exercise each muscle group – shoulders, upper back, lower back, middle back, upper arms,



forearms, chest, abdominals, calves, thighs, and hips. Alternate by working 4-6 muscle groups during each session.

Injury prevention tips: Start gradually, adding more time, weight or repetitions as you get stronger. Stretch, warm up before, and cool down after. **Important:** If you have a chronic condition, such as osteoporosis or heart disease, or you are prone to fractures or fall frequently, use extra caution or ask for help from a trainer. Be sure to consult your health care provider before starting regular muscle workouts.

Dental Hygiene, For Health's Sake

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

Unhealthy teeth and gums can lead to serious **health risks.** Your body reacts to bacterial plaque in your mouth by producing toxins and inflammatory substances that can enter your bloodstream and inflame tissues far from your mouth.

Research links periodontal disease with several disorders:

Cardiovascular disease. People with gum disease have a higher risk of heart disease and stroke than those with healthy gums, according to research published by the American Dental Association.

Diabetes. Poor dental hygiene may worsen blood sugar control in people with diabetes. The good news is that people who take good care of their teeth may find it easier to manage their diabetes.

Premature childbirth. Mothers with gum disease are more likely to give birth to a premature or underweight infant.

Pneumonia. Excess dental plaque can increase your risk of catching pneumonia when your resistance is low—such as when you're sick or recovering from surgery.

Dementia. Preliminary evidence links periodontal disease with an increased risk of age-related memory loss and dementia.

Warning signs of gum disease: bleeding when you brush your teeth, painful or swollen gums, loose teeth in adults, tooth loss, or persistent bad breath. If you notice these signs, promptly contact your dentist.

Prevention steps: There's good evidence that you will stay healthier when you take better care of your teeth. Brush twice a day; floss daily; and see your dentist at least once a year for regular checkups and cleaning. Also, eat a nutritious diet and avoid exposure to tobacco products.

The health of your whole body may depend on it.



Q: Energy drinks good for you?

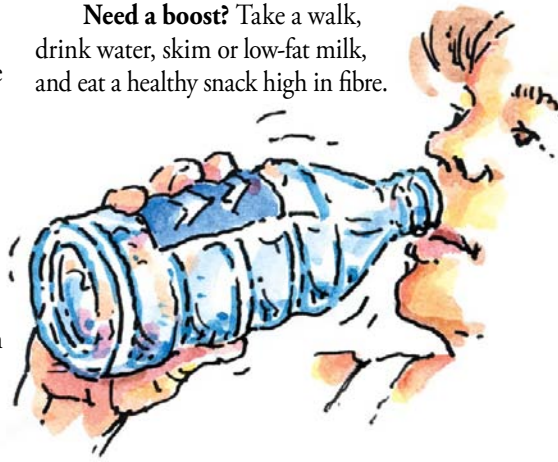
A: Energy drinks promise enhanced athletic performance and a quick boost. But are they healthy? And do they live up to their claims?

Despite the hype, energy drinks are little more than thirst quenchers high in caffeine and sugar, like typical soft drinks. Caffeine in heavy doses can be dehydrating and interfere with sleep, especially if you are caffeine-sensitive, which seems to defeat the purpose of an “energy” drink.

Some fans of energy drinks mix them with alcohol – an unhealthy and potentially dangerous combination. An alcohol-energy drink cocktail can raise heartbeat and blood pressure – which could lead to heart attack in some individuals. Energy

drinks to relieve the effects of alcohol? Like coffee, they won't help – even if you feel sober, your blood alcohol level remains the same.

Need a boost? Take a walk, drink water, skim or low-fat milk, and eat a healthy snack high in fibre.



Are You Weight-Loss Ready?

People choose to lose weight to *gain something – better health, self-esteem or energy*. The Partnership for Healthy Weight Management says setting sensible weight loss goals increases your chances of success.

What's “sensible” weight loss? Base your weight loss program on several factors: positive eating habits, more physical activity, and general health factors, such as medical history, mental health, age and any chronic problems.

To prepare yourself, think about how and why you want to lose weight. Check all that apply to you:

- I have a medical condition such as diabetes or high cholesterol that could improve if I lose weight.
- I suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem or depression.
- Losing weight will give me the confidence and energy to be more socially and physically active.
- My biggest obstacle to losing weight is _____.
- I am inspired to lose weight by _____.
- My goals (timeline, amount of weight to lose) are realistic.
- I am making lifestyle changes toward my weight loss goal that I can maintain.
- I accept that weight management is long-term, rather than a quick fix.
- I have a support network that will encourage me throughout my program.



Be honest about the effort you're willing to make to succeed, and be ready to accept an occasional setback. Discuss your plan with your provider, especially if you have health conditions that may affect your ability to reach your goal.

Weight loss means life-long changes in your activity level, what you eat and your commitment to better health. As with any habit, it takes time to alter your lifestyle, so be patient and enjoy the benefits of better health along the way.

Advance in detecting autism: Now autism can be diagnosed in infants as young as 3 months, more than a year earlier than in the past, with the use of eye-movement sensors. This test tracks the movements of a child's gaze pattern; one sign of autism is trouble recognizing faces or understanding facial expressions. Early diagnosis is important since behavioural therapy is most effective when started as early as possible.

GYM HYGIENE: Preventing Infection

You can never be too clean when it comes to gym hygiene. Since the germ exchange rate is high from sharing equipment and facilities, you can get more than just a good workout from your gym if you're not careful.

One of the biggest concerns is the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (S. aureus), or Staph, which thrive in warm, moist environments. A third of the population carries S. aureus. Although these bacteria do not always result in infection in carriers, they can be transferred when they enter broken skin, the eyes, nose or mouth. Some types of Staph, called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), can cause life-threatening infections, and have been found in gyms. Gyms also have been identified as sources of fungal and viral infections.

Although most gyms have cleaning policies and procedures, you can take some steps to protect yourself. **Be smart – don't give bacteria room to roost:**

Wipe down exercise equipment before and after workouts, including weights, elliptical machines, treadmills, protective gear, etc. Use disinfectant wipes or spray (if the gym doesn't provide it, ask).

Avoid communal exercise mats. If you do use one, avoid direct contact by putting a towel over it or wearing clothes that cover your skin. Or bring your own mat.

Shower and change clothes immediately after working out.

Never share towels or other personal items, such as razors.

Wear flip-flops in gym showers, saunas and steam rooms. Never walk barefoot around the gym facilities.

Avoid touching your nose, mouth, or eyes after using exercise equipment.

If you have a cut, scratch, scrape or bad bruise, don't use the sauna or whirlpool.

If you're sick, avoid close contact with others.



Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Veggie Trivia

How many of these facts are you aware of? They offer ways to maximize the flavours, freshness and nutritional value of your vegetables. Enjoy *more* of them, especially now during Nutrition Month.

■ **Tomatoes:** Ripen and store them in a cool (not cold) place out of the sun. *Tip:* Refrigeration weakens their flavour.

■ **Green vegetables (such as broccoli, green beans, asparagus):** They are most flavourful when they turn bright green in cooking; colour dulls when overcooked.

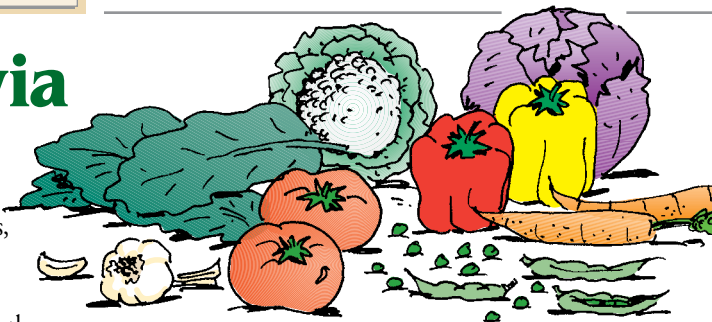
■ **Onions and potatoes:** Avoid those with sprouts or any sign of moisture, which means decay. *Tip:* Don't store them together as onions speed spoilage.

■ **Potatoes:** Store them cool and dry in paper bags. *Tip:* Potatoes are not fattening; a medium one has just 88 calories.

■ **Peas (in a pod):** Best when young and small, pop out of their pods and use raw in salads, lightly steamed or in risottos. How easy!

■ **Herbs:** To extend freshness, roll them in dry paper towels, pack in plastic bags and store refrigerated for a week or so.

■ **Mushrooms:** Store loosely in closed paper bags (no plastic)



for best air and moisture control; refrigerate but not in a crisper. *Tip:* Brush off dirt, rather than rinse, before storing.

■ **Carrots:** Before refrigerating in plastic, snip off their green tops, which draw moisture and cause wilting.

■ **Cruciferous (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage):** All are rich in disease-fighting antioxidants as well as soluble and insoluble fibre. *Tip:* When cooking, sprinkle them lightly with salt and pepper to reduce odour.

■ **Avocado:** It's actually a fruit, probably the only one high in fat – but it's the same healthy monounsaturated kind as in olive oil. *Tip:* Mash a few slices and whip into a vinaigrette.

■ **All vegetables:** Most should *not* be washed before storing – the added moisture may cause decay. To retain nutrients, steam, roast or microwave with as little water as possible; keep cooking time to a minimum.

Frozen or canned vegetables vs. fresh? There is usually little nutritional difference. In fact, most canned produce is packed at its peak and may contain more nutrients. *Tip:* If your canned vegetables have added salt, rinse and drain them.

Recipe of the Month

Tex-Mex POTATO FRITTATA

A frittata is a sort-of omelette cooked on the stove and in the oven, and served in wedges. You can combine almost any vegetables, cheeses or meats on hand. In Italy it's common to take a wedge to work for lunch.

- 1 tbsp/15ml canola oil
- 12 ounces/340g frozen Southwest style hash browns
- ½ cup/74g chopped red bell pepper
- 1 tomato, coarsely chopped
- ¼ cup/4g or 57ml chopped fresh cilantro
- 16 ounces/480ml egg substitute (liquid) (454g frozen; 452g powder)
- ¾ cup/99g reduced fat shredded Mexican-style cheese

- ① Heat oil in a 12-inch/30cm nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add hash browns. Spread in an even layer; press down lightly with spatula. Cook 6-7 minutes or until golden brown on bottom.
- ② Reduce heat to medium-low. Top potato layer with red pepper, cilantro and tomatoes. Pour egg substitute evenly over mixture in skillet. Cook for 10-12 minutes or until eggs are almost set.
- ③ Heat oven broiler. To protect skillet handle, wrap with aluminum foil. Broil frittata 4-6 inches/10-15cm from heat for 3 minutes; watch it. Remove and top with cheese; broil 30 seconds or until cheese is melted. Cut into wedges.

Serving suggestions: Top with salsa and avocado slice as desired.

Nutrition Facts

Makes 6 (generous) slices.

Amount Per Slice	Calories	145
	Protein	6.5g
	Fat	4.8g
	Saturated Fat	1.7g
	Cholesterol	7.5mg
	Carbohydrate	11g
	Fibre	1.3g
	Sodium	390mg

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