

# Make healthy eating a lifetime habit

How many times have you resolved to go on a diet or to cut the fast foods, fat and sugar that your family craves? If you're like most of us, the chances are you've tried and given up more than once.

The truth is, poor eating is an ingrained habit that has developed over many years and healthier habits aren't going to happen overnight. So start by making small changes and when these become routine for the whole family, introduce more. Remind yourself that small changes can make a big difference. For example, if you eat 4 slices of bread a day with margarine, a simple shift to bread with jam or mustard can save you 16 grams of fat a day.

Try not to be too hard on yourself - providing you use moderation, there really aren't any 'bad' foods. So don't give up if a craving proves irresistible. A long-term healthy diet has room for occasional indulgences.

Remember that healthy eating isn't really about depriving yourself and your family in any way. Instead, it's about eating well. That means getting in the habit of preparing and enjoying foods that appeal to the appetite and provide balanced nutrients for optimum health. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Eat at least 5 servings of vegetables and fruit a day. Splurge on pre-washed and peeled packs - you're likely to eat more.
- Slip fruits into main meals. Serve peach or mango slices with meats, and fruit salsa with fish. Jazz up a salad with apple slices or oranges and berries.
- Eat more canned, fresh or frozen fish plus meat alternatives like beans, lentils and eggs.
- Cut back on fried and high-fat foods. Choose tomato-based sauces over creamy ones.
- Cut back on saturated fats like shortening and butter and switch to

unsaturated fats such as oils made from sunflower, canola, olive and safflower etc.

**Helpful Link:** Canada's food guide  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pubefoodguid/index.html>

This newsletter is provided by your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), to help address the everyday challenges you face in your life at work and at home. WorkLife Solutions offers helpful and time-saving telephonic advice and coaching, information and resources on many issues, including childcare, parenting, education, special needs, homecare, eldercare, pre-retirement planning, legal, career, financial and nutritional services. These 'telephone-only' services can save you time and reduce the stress of finding information and support.

## Coping with Children's Disabilities or Acute Illnesses

When a child is diagnosed with a disability or an acute illness, most parents feel overwhelmed and more than a little frightened. We often think of serious medical issues as only happening to others, and the stress can be considerable when they unexpectedly strike our own children.

Although some of this initial shock will fade, many parents continue to live with severe stress. Let's face it, all children present challenges that need attention, but children with special needs or acute conditions require much more than most. Integrating their needs with other work and life responsibilities can seem like an uphill battle.

Other parents have found these strategies helpful:

- It's easy to focus attention on the disability or illness, but the rest of your child needs attention and time, too. Remember the power of laughter and fun.
- Become educated about your child's condition - knowledge is a powerful tool when it comes to managing the healthcare system.

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- Listen to professional providers but make sure you are also clearly heard. Be assertive and get answers to questions. Be persistent and involved in your child's care.
- Join a support group - parents who have been through similar situations can offer support and advice.
- Medical appointments, at-home care or constant worrying can affect your work performance and may require flexible hours or a period of absence. Talk to your supervisor. He or she may have practical suggestions that could be helpful.
- Taking care of yourself is good for your child. Build personal time into your week. Practice stress-relief and accept help from family, friends or community services.

## Did you know?

- Families coping with disabilities or acute illness face financial challenges. One partner is often required to take time off work or to cut back on hours, losing income.
- A child's disability or illness can put a severe strain on marital relationships. Many couples struggle to stay together.
- An employee who is coping with a child's health condition is greatly helped by having a supportive manager. Stress is reduced and it may be possible to reach practical solutions like flex hours that lessen the negative impact of missing time at work due to medical appointments etc.

### Helpful Links

[http://communication.gc.ca/children-enfants/09\\_e.htm](http://communication.gc.ca/children-enfants/09_e.htm)

[http://communication.gc.ca/children-enfants.09\\_f.htm](http://communication.gc.ca/children-enfants.09_f.htm) (français)

## Assistance with pre-retirement planning

As we move into our middle-aged years, we begin to realize that retirement may not be that far off. While some relish the notion, many dread the thought of being unproductive, or fear surviving without a salary.

The facts are, with today's increased life-span, retirement is going to be a major life stage, accounting for a third of our life. With this in mind, it makes sense to put some thought into lifestyle and financial planning well before we get there. But even if the date is fast approaching, there's still time to put plans in place for a more fulfilling retirement.

Recognize that retirement from work doesn't mean retirement from life. Devote time to self-assessment to help identify future activities that will provide a sense of purpose through hobbies, volunteerism or some level of employment. Then develop an action plan for each of the activities you'd like to implement.

Here are some questions to help start the self-assessment process:

- What are your 6-8 best skills? What core values must be met in retirement?
- What do you wish you could have achieved or done in life, that you haven't done?
- Would you like to do volunteer work or find a job?

- What hobbies or interests would you like to go back to or learn more about?
- Where could you find out more about these activities? Whose help could you enlist?

You should also review practical needs like accommodation and consider options. Importantly, future income needs should be assessed. Will goals need to be modified to fit predicted income? Could the ideas below help you increase future income?

- A home with a lot of equity can be used as collateral for a Reverse Mortgage, providing additional income.
- Working a few more years can make a big difference to retirement income.
- Debt payments, including mortgages, can take up the majority of your income. Aim to pay off debts prior to retirement.
- Start scaling down living expenses now. Put money saved into your retirement nest egg.

FGI offers counselling to assist those who are planning their retirement future. In your consultation with FGI's career/lifestyle or financial counsellor, you will also be offered a Pre-Retirement Planning Information Package, which offers tips and information about finding purposeful activities or jobs, accommodation options, forecasting income and budgeting.

**Helpful Link:** <http://www.hrhc-drhc.gc.ca/isp/common/home.shtml>

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## WorkLife Solutions

**For more information or telephonic assistance with any WorkLife Solutions, including nutrition, special needs and pre-retirement planning, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It's a free, confidential service for you and your family.**

**1-800-268-5211**  
(English)

or

**1-800-363-3872**  
(en français)

You can also visit our website at **[www.fgiworldmembers.com](http://www.fgiworldmembers.com)** for more information and resources.

We welcome any suggestions you may have about topics you'd like to see covered in *Living Well*.

Please contact Barbara Jaworski, Director, WorkLife Solutions by e-mailing [bjaworski@fgiworld.com](mailto:bjaworski@fgiworld.com), writing to the address below, or calling her at FGI at: 1-800-263-4533.

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