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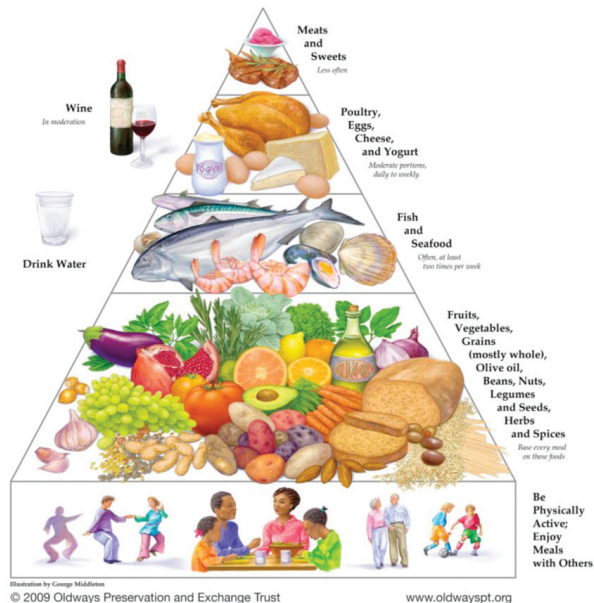
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THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD DIET

No matter what your age, a balanced, nutritious diet is essential to good health. All adults need to eat a balanced diet with foods from all the food groups. Eating a variety of foods helps ensure adequate levels of vitamins and minerals in the body. Canadian Dietary Guidelines also recommend that adults reduce the fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugar in the foods they eat. Some adults find they have problems being overweight as they age. This is generally due to overeating and inactivity.

Recent studies show that the healthiest diet in general for adults of all ages is the Mediterranean Diet (see Pyramid below). Essentially, a diet high in fruit, vegetables and grains is recommended with more frequent eating of fish and less intake of meats, dairy and sweets.

Canada's Food Guide places emphasis on the selection of similar food groups as the Mediterranean Diet and also provides information as to portions of healthy foods to be consumed each day. The Canada Food Guide can be viewed at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>



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National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly
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CAREGIVER SELF-CARE

Due to the stress associated with caring for a family member with a chronic disease, caregivers are at risk of developing physical and mental health problems which include the following:

- » Poor physical health
- » Poor quality of life
- » Emotional distress
- » Depression and anxiety

In addition to managing the challenges of caring for a person with a chronic disease such as dementia, caregivers need to attend to their health needs so as to prevent the onset of disease and increase overall quality of life. Research shows that optimal health outcomes for adults throughout the life course are dependent on the maintenance of healthy lifestyle behaviors – **physical activity and diet**.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Recent scientific studies show that exercise benefits everyone – regardless of age. Exercise can help you take charge of your health and maintain the level of fitness necessary for an active, independent lifestyle.

Many people think that as we age, we tend to slow down and do less and that physical decline is an inevitable consequence of aging. This is not entirely the case. Studies show that much of the physical frailty attributed to aging is actually the result of inactivity, disease, or poor nutrition. The good news is that many problems can be remedied or reversed by improving lifestyle

behaviors. For instance, one of the major benefits of regular physical activity is protection against coronary heart disease. Physical activity also provides some protection against cognitive decline and other chronic diseases such as adult-onset diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, osteoporosis, depression and even certain cancers. In addition, research has shown that exercise can ease tension and reduce the amount of stress you feel.

To put it simply – engaging in PHYSICAL ACTIVITY is one of the best things you can do for your health.

WALKING FOR HEALTH

For people who are not physically active, not interested in trying new sports activities, and not interested in joining a gym or fitness facility, starting a walking program is easy and can be rewarding in terms of improving overall well being. A program that uses pedometers to help you set and achieve walking goals while tracking calories could help you to increase daily levels of physical activity.

Studies show that pedometer-based walking increases physical activity (Williams et al. 2008). In a synthesis of studies addressing the use of pedometers to increase physical activity, Bravata and colleagues (2007) reported that on average, pedometer users increase their physical activity by 27% over baseline levels. A key predictor of increased physical activity is setting a step goal (e.g., 10,000 steps per day) for participants. Pedometer-based walking programs are associated with significant decreases in body mass index, body weight, and systolic blood pressure, and improved blood glucose levels in patients with impaired glucose tolerance (Bravata et al. 2007; Richardson et al. 2008).

NOTE: *Prior to beginning a walking program it is important that you obtain an assessment of your physical activity readiness from a regulated health professional. A health professional can recommend a walking program tailored according to the limitations imposed by a chronic disease. A professional assessment will help you to start your walking program with reasonable goals to avoid injury and discomfort from doing too much too soon.*

WALKING USING A Pedometer

Take a pedometer wherever you go! Just as you wouldn't leave home without your cell phone, make a pedometer a must-have accessory.

A pedometer can help you determine how many steps are taken in 60 minutes, and you don't have to do it all at once. For example, one could take a 20-minute walk to and from work, a 10-minute walk on breaks and lunchtime, to achieve that 60-minute goal

Research has shown that walking programs are more successful when done with others – walking with family, friends, or co-workers increases motivation, relieves stress, and makes the time pass quickly.

Make sure that you are walking at a pace which ensures your ability to carry a conversation. If you are unable to do so, slow down. On the other hand, if you are able to sing or whistle a tune, you may need to speed up a bit. The goal is to break a light sweat after about 10 minutes of walking and be able to maintain that pace.

Make sure that you stretch your legs and upper body after 5 minutes of walking, and to do so again after the walking has stopped to prevent muscle cramps and tightening.

Increasing your physical activity by walking and using a pedometer can help reduce blood pressure and blood glucose levels which can be contribute to well being of people with hypertension and/or Type II diabetes.

A sample "prescription" for starting a walking program (Korownyk, C., MD & Allan, M., MD. (2010).

1. Wear your pedometer every day for one week and calculate your daily steps.
2. For the following week add 500 steps per day to your daily average.
3. Wear your pedometer every day for one week and calculate your daily steps.
4. For the following week add 500 steps per day to your daily average.
5. Repeat step 3, adding 500 steps to the daily goal, and walk that each day for the following week.
6. Continue this weekly pattern of adding 500 steps daily until you reach 10 000 steps per day.