

## Chronic Disease – A Public Health Issue

AUGUST 2005

“Public Health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through organized efforts of society.”

John Last, *A Dictionary of Epidemiology*

### What is chronic disease?

A long term disease – such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, respiratory illness, and mental disorders – that requires ongoing management. Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in Canada, but many of these diseases can be prevented or managed.

### Did you know?

- Over half of Canadians live with a chronic disease.
- So far in 2005, just five diseases – cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory illness, diabetes, and mental disorders – cause 99% of chronic disease deaths.
- People can suffer from more than one chronic disease. For example, depression can exist alongside other chronic conditions.
- Chronic diseases are expensive: they cost the economy 77 billion dollars – almost half of the annual cost of illness in Canada.
- Two thirds of direct health care costs, and about 60% of indirect costs result from chronic disease.
- Many factors contribute to people getting sick and staying well – factors such as genetic makeup, attitudes and behaviours, available food and recreational activities, environment, income, and the support of our communities.
- The majority of Canadians (65%) have at least one factor that puts them at risk for chronic disease and many Canadians have more than one.

- Smoking, unhealthy eating habits, obesity, and physical inactivity are the main behavioural risk factors leading to many chronic diseases.
- Supporting positive lifestyle requires commitment and support from individuals and their families, workplaces, policy makers, health care providers and their communities.

### What can we do?

Individual Canadians, communities and governments play key roles in public health by supporting the prevention and management of chronic disease.

Together we can:

- create healthy, tobacco free environments with clean air and water; safe places to play, walk, and cycle; access to healthy food; and safe roads and sidewalks;
- demand that government put more of our tax dollars into promoting health and preventing and managing chronic diseases;
- live our lives in a healthy manner, with support and information from health care providers, and other reliable sources;
- make sure that those with a chronic disease get the coordinated health care and community services needed to manage their conditions and participate in community life.

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**S U P P O R T P U B L I C H E A L T H !**

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This message brought to you by the Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century (CCPH21)  
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**Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Membership (April 2009)**  
**Coalition canadienne pour la santé publique au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle – organisations membres (avril 2009)**

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Association of Canadian Academic HealthCare Organizations	L'Alliance canadienne de la maladie mentale et de la santé mentale
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health	L'Alliance pour la prévention des maladies chroniques du Canada
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists	L'Ambulance SaintJean
Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists	L'Association canadienne de physiothérapie
Canadian Association for School Health	L'Association canadienne de santé dentaire publique
Canadian Association of Public Health Dentistry	L'Association canadienne de santé publique
Canadian Chiropractic Association	L'Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes
Canadian Dental Association	L'Association canadienne des hygiénistes dentaires
Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness & Promotion	L'Association canadienne des institutions de santé universitaires
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association	L'Association canadienne des soins de santé
Canadian Diabetes Association	L'Association canadienne des médecins vétérinaires
Canadian Healthcare Association	L'Association canadienne du diabète
Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Population and Public Health	L'Association canadienne pour la santé en milieu scolaire
Canadian Medical Association	L'Association chiropratique canadienne
Canadian Nurses Association	L'Association dentaire canadienne
Canadian Paediatric Society	L'Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada
Canadian Pharmacists Association	L'Association des pharmaciens du Canada
Canadian Physiotherapy Association	L'Association médicale canadienne
Canadian Psychological Association	L'Association pour la prévention des infections à l'hôpital et dans la communauté
Canadian Public Health Association	L'Association pulmonaire
Canadian Society for International Health	La Coalition canadienne pour la sensibilisation et la promotion de la vaccination
Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science	The Dalla Lana School of Public Health, l'Université de Toronto
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association	Les diététistes du Canada
Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada	La faculté de Santé, l'Université de York
The College of Family Physicians of Canada	L'Institut de recherche Élisabeth-Bruyère
Community & Hospital Infection Control Association Canada	Les Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada, l'Institut de la santé publique et des populations
The Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto	Médecins pour un Canada sans fumée
Dietitians of Canada	SécuriJeunes Canada
Élisabeth-Bruyère Research Institute	La Société canadienne de pédiatrie
Faculty of Health, York University	La Société canadienne de psychologie
National Specialty Society for Community Medicine	La Société canadienne de santé internationale
St. John Ambulance	La Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical
Physicians for a SmokeFree Canada	La Société nationale de spécialistes pour la médecine communautaire
Safe Kids Canada	
The Lung Association	