

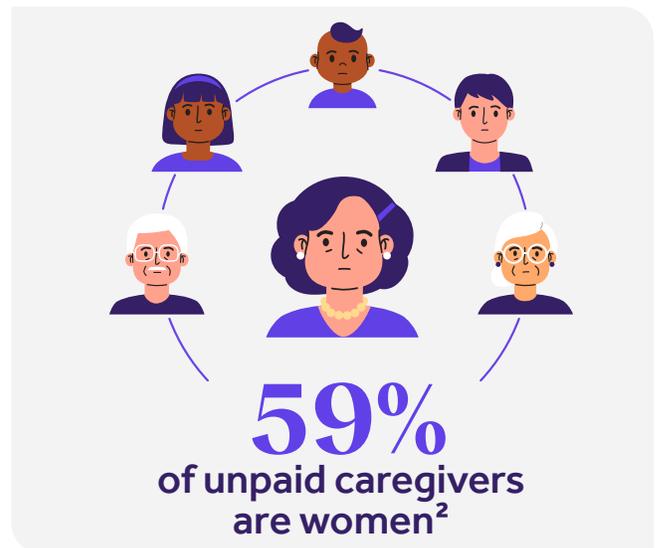


## What women want and need from healthcare

Women have a lot on their plates. Careers and relationships fight for priority status. In most cases, they're the go-to parent, the manager of the family home and activities, and they're the first call when parents or elderly family members need help. It's a lot to juggle.

But who should take priority, especially when it comes to health needs? Themselves.

There's a dizzying array of ways women should take care of themselves, starting with prioritizing health and wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> This includes eating well, sleeping well and regular physical activity. It also means managing stress, practicing mindfulness, finding joy and more. But that's just the start.



### Consider mental health

Is it any surprise women experience high rates of emotional distress, depression, anxiety, stress and burnout?<sup>2</sup> Recognizing symptoms can be hard. Actions that can help you be in touch with your feelings include:



Taking personal time (self-care)



Sharing thoughts and feelings in a journal or with a licensed counsellor



Developing a meditation or mindfulness practice

## The phases of life

Women go through distinct physical phases of life. Each requires specific preventive healthcare. Screening and counselling, including well-woman and reproductive care, are targeted depending on one's age and stage. Some broad guidelines to follow:<sup>3</sup>



### Adolescence (19 & under)

A family care provider, or pediatrician, can offer support and guidance. Topics include menstruation, general well-being, age-appropriate vaccinations and sexual health.



### Perimenopause (40s)

A primary care provider or gynecologist can offer guidance on screenings and well-woman care. This includes breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screenings, skin checks, cholesterol and A1c tests and more.



### Early adulthood (20s-30s)

A primary care provider or gynecologist can assess general health and risk factors. Focus is on sexual health, breast and cervical cancer screenings, birth control and age-appropriate vaccinations.



### Menopause and postmenopause (50s-plus)

A primary care provider, gynecologist or menopause specialist can address the previously mentioned screenings. Discussions may also include bone density, mobility and memory assessments, sleep disorders and age-appropriate vaccines.

## Be your own best health advocate

Women's health concerns should be a priority for proper diagnosis and treatment. Sadly, gender bias exists everywhere, even in healthcare. Medical "gaslighting" is a real thing.<sup>4</sup> It happens when a healthcare provider discounts a patient's complaints. They may make them feel it's all in their head. To prevent this from happening, it helps to be prepared for medical appointments.

Consider:

- Bringing a journal documenting your symptoms.
- Researching what you are experiencing. Be familiar with the terms and be able to express your concerns.
- Preparing a short list of questions for your provider.
- Asking a friend to join you for support, help take notes and observe.

**Women's healthcare affects us all. Be aware and supportive.**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.harvard.edu/in-focus/healthy-living/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-aftermath-of-trauma/202503/navigating-the-mental-strain-of-gendered-caregiving>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2021/0215/p209.html>

<sup>4</sup><https://globalnews.ca/news/10953513/university-of-windsor-study-medical-gaslighting/>



## Sweet dreams: How to fix your sleep

We all need more sleep. It sounds like a luxury, but it's a functional need. Regularly getting less than the minimum recommended seven hours each night<sup>1</sup> for adults is linked to many health issues. They include:

- Impaired immune function
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Mood disorders
- Increased risk of accidents
- Obesity

### We're losing sleep.

**Over 25%**  
of adults do not get  
**7 hours of sleep**  
each night<sup>2</sup>

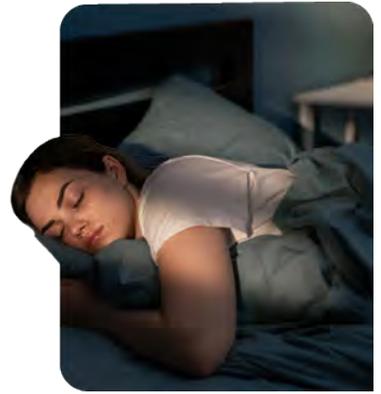
**1 in 2**  
adults have trouble  
**falling asleep or**  
**staying asleep**<sup>2</sup>

**1 in 3**  
adults have difficulty  
**staying awake during**  
**waking hours**<sup>2</sup>

## Set yourself up for success

Knowing that sleep is one of the most important things your body needs, create an environment that will encourage the best rest:

- Use your bedroom only for sleep, not watching TV.
- Keep your bedroom quiet or consider soothing sounds—a fan, an app on your phone or a white noise machine.
- A cool, dark room tells your body it's time to sleep. Draw the shades and turn down the thermostat.
- Consider comfort accessories like a posture-correcting pillow or cooling sheets.



## Plan your day for sleep

We should all get physical activity every day to stay healthy.<sup>3</sup> Taking a walk, a bike ride or a yoga class for 30 minutes five days a week sets you up for health and will help you sleep better. Better yet, do your activity outside, in the daylight. Exposure to light, especially in the morning, adjusts your internal body clock.<sup>4</sup> Your body will want to sleep when it's dark outside.

## Routine brings rest

The daily decisions you make around what and when you eat, how much you drink and your physical activity can set you up for better sleep. And when it comes to bedtime, following a ritual can lead to successful slumber:<sup>4</sup>

- Avoid eating too late in the day.
- Put away the electronics two hours before bedtime.
- Skip the alcohol and instead try a mocktail.
- Take a bath or shower to wind down.
- Set an alarm to wake up and go to bed—consistency matters.
- Do a brain dump of anything making you anxious in a journal, a voice memo or just make mental notes.
- Visualize a night of good, uninterrupted sleep.

Waking up from a restful night of sleep is one of life's greatest feelings. Setting yourself up for successful nights will bring on better days too.

## Good night.

<sup>1</sup><https://sleep.hms.harvard.edu/education-training/public-education/sleep-and-health-education-program/sleep-health-education-45>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-adults-getting-enough-sleep-infographic.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://csepguidelines.ca/>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.heartandstroke.ca/articles/how-to-get-a-better-nights-sleep>

Also, <https://www.bettersleep.com/sleep-better>

# The chew: Let's talk about digestive and colon health

Why is poop such an awkward topic to discuss? Kids and tweens love to chatter on (and on) about it. The poop emoji is one of the most used icons ever<sup>1</sup> and has made its way onto everything from stickers and T-shirts to bed linens. It makes perfect sense—we all do it.



The amazing thing about poop is that it's a window to your health and possible digestive issues. Texture, colour, frequency and smell can provide clues to the health of your entire digestive system and even your overall health.<sup>2</sup>



## Poop facts

Optimal poop is brown and soft, smooth and easy to pass.

Poop can change from day to day depending on what you eat, how much you drink and how active you are.

Pebble-like pieces are a sign of constipation.

"Being regular" is different for every person. This can range from three times a day to three times a week.

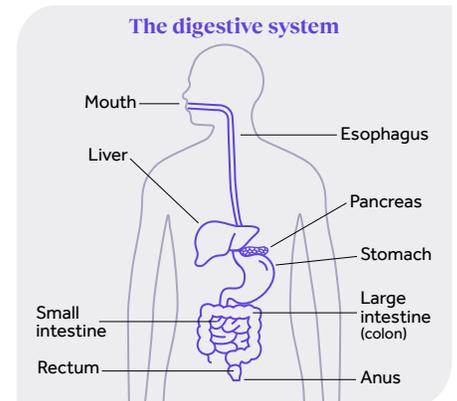
Foods you eat and medications you take may cause changes in colour. Consistent green, yellow, black, gray or red stools are indications that all is not as it should be.

## Healthy colon = healthy you

Observing your digestive health is important to your overall health. Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death in Canada, but it doesn't have to be.<sup>3</sup> Regular colorectal cancer screening is one of the most powerful tools for preventing this type of cancer.<sup>4</sup> Early detection offers more treatment options. It's recommended that colon cancer screenings start at age 45 and continue at regular intervals based on individual risk factors.

There are several options when it comes to screenings:<sup>4</sup>

- At-home tests allow you collect samples and return them to a lab. These can be done on one- to three-year intervals.
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon. It is usually repeated every five years.
- A colonoscopy allows doctors to physically examine the entire colon and remove polyps and even some cancers. This exam is usually repeated every 10 years.
- A CT colonography is a virtual examination of the colon using X-rays and computers. This is usually repeated every five years.



Earlier testing or repeat testing at shorter intervals may be warranted if you suffer from things like inflammatory bowel disease or have a family history of polyps or colorectal cancer. Your doctor can guide you through which test is best for you.

## Fibre is your friend

One of the keys to keeping your digestive system moving is eating the right foods. It's recommended that we eat between 25 and 35 grams of fibre each day.<sup>5</sup> Balanced nutrition that includes fruits and vegetables is your best chance at hitting those numbers. Adding high fiber grains and legumes is also an excellent choice.

Consider these options to help get your daily dose:<sup>6</sup>



### Black beans

cooked ½ cup = 8 grams fibre



### Green peas

cooked ½ cup = 5 grams fibre



### Raspberries

1 cup = 5 grams fibre



### Lentils

cooked ½ cup = 8 grams fibre



### Pear

(with skin)  
1 medium = 7 grams fibre



### Broccoli

1 cup = 5 grams fibre



### Apple

(with skin)  
1 medium = 5 grams fibre



### Baked sweet potato

(with skin)  
1 cup = 6 grams fibre



### Almonds

28 g = 4 grams fibre



## Cranberry almond crunch

Makes: 6 servings | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 20 mins

It's not hard to reach your daily fiber goals when you pair delicious fruits and grains. This quick and easy recipe can be eaten as a breakfast cereal or used to top a low-fat protein like yogurt, silken tofu or cottage cheese.<sup>7</sup>

### Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup wheat or rye bran flakes
- ½ cup slivered almonds or any chopped nuts (hazelnuts, pecans or walnuts)
- ¼ cup unroasted, unsalted pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- ½ cup flaked coconut
- ½ cup dried cranberries, cherries, currants or raisins
- ½ cup diced dried apricots, apples, dates or figs
- 2 Tbsp ground flaxseeds (optional)
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- ½ Tbsp cinnamon
- ½ Tbsp dried ginger
- Pinch of salt

### Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread oats and wheat bran on a large baking sheet. Toast for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to avoid burning. Add almonds, pumpkin seeds and coconut to oat mixture. Stir, spreading on the baking sheet. Toast for an additional 7 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Transfer the oat mixture to a large bowl. Add cranberries and apricots and if desired, flaxseed; mix. Heat honey in a microwave-safe bowl for about 15 seconds. Add vanilla, cinnamon and ginger to honey and blend. Pour over oat mixture and toss to coat.

### Nutrition

Serving size: ¾ cup



Calories: 350 | total fat: 12 g | saturated fat: 3 g | sodium: 55 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg  
total carbs: 54 g | fibre: 8 g | sugars: 25 g | protein: 10 g | potassium: 237 mg

<sup>1</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poop\\_emoji](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poop_emoji)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BristolStoolScalePatientHandout-th.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>[https://cancer.ca/en/research/cancer-statistics/cancer-statistics-at-a-glance?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=11898385148&gclid=CjwKCAiAvaLLBhBFEiwAYCNTf8z-TI8j1gU4M0fi4xuReAcFtwchRIl989bhVoNXEWFJA8-NkqTyBoCBk0QAuD\\_BwE](https://cancer.ca/en/research/cancer-statistics/cancer-statistics-at-a-glance?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=11898385148&gclid=CjwKCAiAvaLLBhBFEiwAYCNTf8z-TI8j1gU4M0fi4xuReAcFtwchRIl989bhVoNXEWFJA8-NkqTyBoCBk0QAuD_BwE)

<sup>4</sup><https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/colorectal/screening>

<sup>5</sup><https://gi.org/topics/digestive-health-tips/>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/food-nutrition/list-reviewed-accepted-dietary-fibres.html>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.eatright.org/recipes/breakfast/cranberry-almond-breakfast-cereal-recipe>

# Webinar Spotlight

## Overwhelmed to Empowered: Mental Health Tools for Caregivers

In February, Nissa LeBaron and Laura Kalef led a webinar that focused on the unique challenges caregivers face and the importance of prioritizing their own mental health and wellbeing. The session explored practical strategies, tools, and support systems to help caregivers throughout their caregiving journey.

### Key takeaways:

- Caregiving impacts every part of wellbeing: Emotional, mental, and physical strain can build over time, making proactive self-care essential.
- Practical strategies help reduce stress: Recognizing your needs, setting boundaries, and accessing supportive tools can lighten the daily load.
- You don't have to navigate the journey alone: Knowing where to find the right resources helps caregivers feel more confident and supported.

Learn how to better care for yourself while caring for others.

[Download the Caregiving Webinar Summary](#)

### Did you miss this webinar?

You can still watch this webinar and explore more expert-led talks anytime in our [on-demand archive](#). Revisit the strategies, insights, and resources designed to help you live healthier and feel more supported.



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