

How to show up for your loved ones in times of need

"Please let me know if there's anything I can do."

It comes from a good place, but when someone is sick, recovering, grieving, caring for a new baby, or supporting an aging loved one, figuring out how others can help can feel like one more thing to manage.

Instead of asking a wide-open question, offer something specific. A clear, thoughtful offer can make it much easier for someone to accept support.

Offer specific care and help

The more specific you can be, the better. Everyday tasks still need to get done, even when life feels overwhelming. Offer a few things you can realistically take care of, such as walking the dog, mowing the lawn, running errands, washing and folding laundry, taking the kids to the park, or providing a ride to an appointment. You could also bring over dinner, pick up groceries, or organize a meal train. Giving a few clear options makes it easier for your loved one to say yes without having to decide what to ask for.



Create a care package to drop off

Think about what would provide a little pick-up for a friend who needs extra care and support. Collect an assortment of hydrating drinks, lip balms, magazines, flowers (in a vase) or a low-maintenance plant, face masks, or hand lotion.

Practical items can be just as appreciated. Paper towels, toilet paper, tissues, hand sanitizer, and cleaning wipes can help take a few everyday tasks off their plate.

If there's a new baby in the house, consider diapers, wipes, snacks, drinks, or other essentials for the whole household. Even something as simple as fresh fruit and a case of water bottles can make a difference.



Be mindful with visits

Always ask before visiting. Visiting and socializing, even with family or an old friend, can take more energy than usual, so keep visits manageable, and follow your loved one's lead. They may want to talk about what they're going through, or they may prefer a welcome distraction. Watch a movie, chat about something they enjoy, or simply spend some quiet time together.

Stay in touch

Small, consistent gestures can mean a lot. Send a quick text, mail a card, or make a phone call. Checking in regularly can remind your loved one that you're there for them, without creating pressure to respond.

Know what to avoid

Unless they ask, try not to offer advice about treatments, medical decisions, or parenting. Focus on listening and supporting, rather than trying to solve the situation. If you're feeling overwhelmed yourself, it may be better to visit another time, when you can focus on what your loved one needs.



Take care of you

Supporting someone who is sick, hurting, or going through a difficult time can be stressful for you, too. Give yourself space to process what's happening, rest, and recharge. Journalling, meditation, deep breathing, or a walk outside can help you care for your own wellbeing while continuing to support someone you care about.

Breast cancer and younger women: understanding your risk



Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Canada, and it is most often found after age 50. Rates in women under 50 have been slowly rising, though — which is why breast health is worth paying attention to at any age.[1]

A few things can make breast cancer harder to find early in younger women:

Breast cancer found at a younger age is more likely to be a faster-growing type.

About 5 to 10% of breast cancers are linked to an inherited gene change, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2. A family history on either side of your family can be a clue.[2]

Younger women are more likely to develop aggressive cancers such as triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC).

Most screening programs begin at age 40, so cancers that appear earlier are usually noticed at home rather than found by a mammogram.[3]

Understanding your risk factors

Your own health history and your family's are a good place to start. Asking relatives about their health can feel awkward, and you do not have to cover everything at once — even a short conversation gives you and your healthcare provider something useful to work with. Having a risk factor does not mean you will develop breast cancer, and many people who are diagnosed have none.[2]

Risk may be higher for women who:[2]



- Had their first menstrual period before age 12.
- Had a first full-term pregnancy after age 35, or have not given birth.
- Have one or more family members who:
  - → have been diagnosed with breast cancer before age 50.
  - → had cancer in both breasts.
  - → had male breast cancer.
  - → had ovarian, pancreatic or prostate cancer that spread (metastatic).

Small things that help:



Learn how to do a breast self-exam.
Learn what looks and feels normal for you, including up to your collarbone and under your arms. Tell your healthcare provider if you notice a change.



Ask about screening.
Talk to your healthcare provider about timing for a baseline mammogram, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), ultrasound or other screening options. Most provinces and territories let you book your own mammogram from age 40, and some start later.



Ask about your risk level.
If breast or ovarian cancer runs in your family, ask your healthcare provider whether a formal risk assessment or genetic counselling would be helpful.



Build habits you can keep.
Steady sleep, regular movement and balanced meals do more for long-term health than any one number.



Be physically active.
Canadian guidelines suggest about 150 minutes of moderate activity a week — roughly 30 minutes, five days a week.



Eat healthy food.
Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit, and add whole grain foods and protein foods. Limit highly processed foods and sugary drinks.



Make healthy choices.
Avoid or limit alcohol. Don't smoke or use tobacco.



Keep up with regular check-ups.
Use those visits to raise any breast changes or questions about screening.

Knowing your risk, building habits that suit your life and speaking up about changes are all real steps you can take.

Before starting any new exercise routine, talk to your healthcare provider to make sure it's safe.
[1]https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2025054-eng.htm
[2]https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/breast/risks
[3]https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/find-cancer-early/get-screened-for-breast-cancer/how-do-i-find-a-breast-cancer-screening-program



Classic fall snacks made healthy

Fall brings with it all kinds of classic treats. Whether it's the candy received at Halloween or perhaps a caramel or candy apple from a fall festival, these flavours bring about nostalgia. Many incorporate what's available and fresh in the season—apples, apple cider, cranberries and pumpkin. The following recipes take the classics and make them healthier. Choose your favourite and share with those you love.

Cranberry nut popcorn balls



Makes: 12 servings | Total: 1 hour

Back in the days when people gave out homemade treats at Halloween instead of packaged candy, popcorn balls were the best score. These combine protein and fibre, salty and sweet.

Ingredients

- 6 cups air-popped popcorn (or 1 bag of plain microwave popcorn)
- ⅓ cup honey
- ¼ cup almond butter (or nut butter of your choice)
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries

Preparation

Prepare your popcorn, either in the air popper or the microwave. While the popcorn is popping, heat the honey with the nut butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Allow the mixture to simmer for a few minutes before removing from heat. Pour the popcorn into a large bowl, then drizzle the almond/honey mixture over the popcorn. Use a large spoon to mix and coat everything thoroughly. Add the cranberries and stir to combine. Allow the mixture to sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes before forming into balls. Make them as big or as small as you'd like. Be sure to pack them firmly, to keep it all together. Wrap in plastic wrap, waxed paper or store in an airtight container. Popcorn balls will keep at room temperature for 3-4 days.

Nutrition

Serving size: 1 ball

Calories: 88 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 7 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 15 g | fibre: 1 g | sugars: 11 g | protein: 2 g | potassium: 59 mg

Air-fried cinnamon apple chips with caramel sauce



Makes: 4 servings | Prep: 10 min | Total: 25 minutes

What a treat caramel and candy apples are for kids (and adults)! This version is less messy and avoids the half-eaten leftovers that are inevitable when there's a big apple and small appetite.

Ingredients

- 1 (8-oz.) apple such as Fuji or Honeycrisp
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp canola oil
- Cooking spray

Preparation

Slice apple thinly. Place slices in a bowl with cinnamon and oil; toss to coat evenly. Coat the air fryer basket well with cooking spray. Place 7 to 8 apple slices in single layer in the basket and cook at 375°F for 12 minutes. Turn the slices every 4 minutes, rearranging to flatten them, as they will move during the cooking process. After cooking, slices will not be completely crisped but will continue to crisp upon cooling. Repeat with remaining apple slices. To serve, place 6 to 8 apple slices on each plate with a small dollop of caramel sauce (recipe below).

4-ingredient date caramel sauce

Makes: 4-6 servings | Prep: 2 min | Cook: 5 min | Total: 1 hour

Ingredients

- 16 medjool dates, pitted (soft)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¾-1 cup of unsweetened almond milk (or low-fat milk of your choice)
- ½ Tbsp sea salt

Preparation

Add all ingredients (starting with ¾ cup almond milk) into a high-powered blender or food processor. Blend until mixture is smooth and there are no date chunks detectable. Add more almond milk, 1-2 Tbsp at a time, if needed to help the blending process or to thin the caramel. Note: If dates are dry or hard, soak them in water for about 30 minutes, drain and then use them in the recipe. Use immediately or store in the fridge for later. Drizzle over cooled apple slices.

Nutrition

Serving size: 6-8 apple chips, about 1 Tbsp sauce (should make 4 servings)

Calories: 166 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 694 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 37 g | fibre: 4 g | sugars: 31 g | protein: 1 g | potassium: 358 mg



Healthier pumpkin spice latte

Makes: 1 latte | Prep: 5 min | Cook: 6 min

PSL season is a celebration for those who love these flavours. This version is much lower in sugar than the commercially prepared ones. Enjoy this seasonal favourite without the guilt.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 Tbsp pumpkin puree (fresh or canned)
- 2 tsp agave syrup (or granulated sugar)
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 6 oz hot coffee

Preparation

Place almond milk, pumpkin and agave syrup in a small saucepan over medium heat. Whisk to combine ingredients. Continue to heat until steamy, about 5-6 minutes, whisking vigorously for the last minute until frothy. While warming, prepare coffee in a large mug. Remove the saucepan from heat. Add the mixture to the coffee. Stir to combine. Sprinkle with pumpkin pie spice.

Nutrition

Per serving

Calories: 80 | total fat: 0 g | saturated fat: 0 g | sodium: 47 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 16 g | fibre: 5 g | sugars: 5 g | protein: 3 g | potassium: 313 mg

Sweet potato cranberry muffins



Makes: 12 muffins | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 25 min | Total: 35 min

These muffins combine the beloved flavours of the Thanksgiving holiday in one treat.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups whole-wheat pastry flour
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup finely ground flax seed
- 1 Tbsp pumpkin pie spice
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1 cup sweet potato puree (fresh or canned)
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup plain low-fat Greek yogourt
- ¼ cup unsweetened almond milk (or low-fat milk of your choice)
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- ½ cup dried cranberries

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix the dry ingredients (flour, brown sugar, flax, pumpkin pie spice, salt and baking soda). In a separate bowl, combine the wet ingredients (pureed sweet potato, eggs, almond milk, Greek yogourt and applesauce). Add the wet mixture into the dry mixture, stirring gently until mostly incorporated. Fold in dried cranberries and shredded coconut. Spoon or scoop equal amounts of mixture into a cooking-oil-sprayed or nonstick muffin tin. Sprinkle some extra unsweetened coconut on top of the muffins, if desired. Bake for 25 minutes (until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out mostly clean).

Nutrition

Per muffin

Calories: 176 | total fat: 3 g | saturated fat: 1 g | sodium: 172 mg | cholesterol: 31 mg
total carbs: 34 g | fibre: 3 g | sugars: 16 g | protein: 6 g | potassium: 168 mg

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Presented by

Theresa Febria
Clinical Operations Supervisor
Teladoc Health Canada, Inc

Tuesday, October 6, 2026
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