

Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition: Nutrient intakes from food and nutritional supplements

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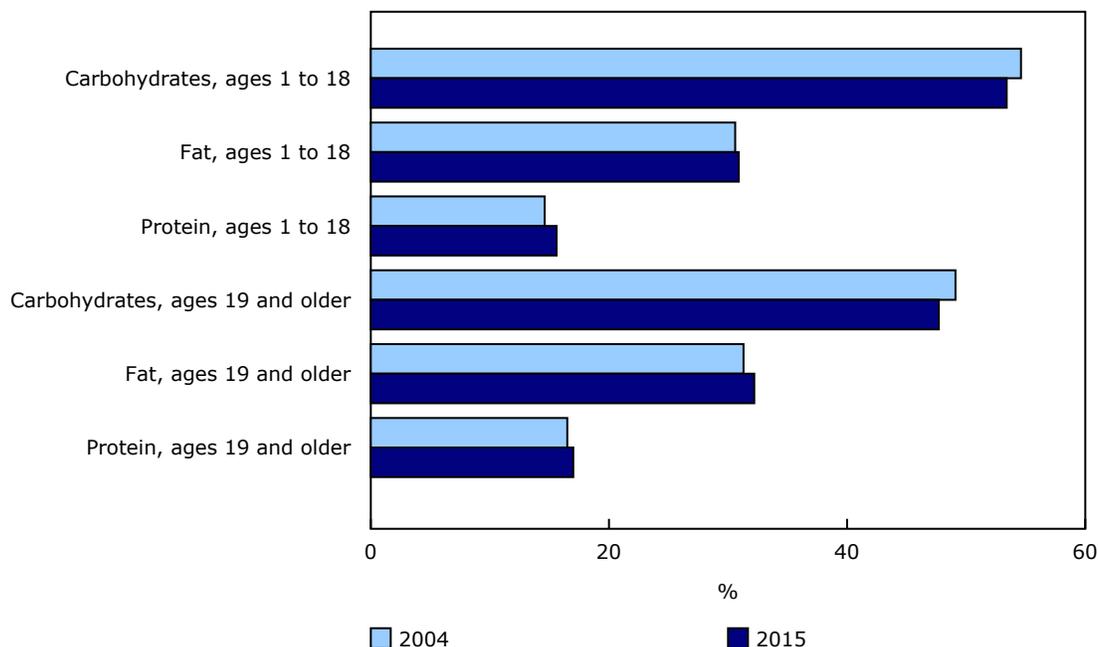
Canadians report consuming more of their calories from protein and fat and fewer from carbohydrates than they did a decade ago, according to new data from the 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.

At the same time, almost half of Canadians (45.6%) aged 1 year and older (approximately 15.7 million people) reported using a nutritional supplement in 2015.

Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in food. Carbohydrates, fat and protein are the main sources of energy from food and are essential macronutrients that help our bodies function properly. Keeping the proportion of total energy intake for each macronutrient within healthy ranges is related to a reduced risk of chronic diseases and to a diet that provides adequate amounts of essential nutrients.

The average percentage of daily energy intake by Canadians from each of these macronutrients has shifted slightly over the past decade. Canadians consumed higher percentages of their energy from protein and fat in 2015 compared with 2004. Conversely, the percentage of energy intake from carbohydrates was lower.

Chart 1
Percentage of energy intake from carbohydrates, fat and protein by age group, Canada excluding the territories, 2004 and 2015



Note(s): Data exclude women who were pregnant or lactating and children who were breastfed. The difference between 2004 and 2015 is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) for all comparisons except the percentage of energy intake from fat for ages 1 to 18.

Source(s): 2004 and 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey – Nutrition.



Canadians still get most of their daily energy intake from carbohydrates, with a slight decline from a decade earlier

There are two major types of carbohydrates: starch and sugar. Starch comes from grain products and vegetables such as breads, pasta, rice, corn or potatoes. Naturally occurring sugars, in turn, are found in many foods such as fruit, milk and vegetables. Sources of added sugar include desserts (such as cookies, cakes and pies), soft drinks and candy.

Among children and teenagers, the percentage of daily energy intake from carbohydrates edged down from 54.6% in 2004 to 53.4% in 2015, while among adults, it decreased from 49.1% to 47.7%.

Canadians increase the proportion of their energy intake from fat and protein

Fat is found in both animal- and plant-based foods such as meat, butter, nuts and vegetable oils. Each gram of fat provides 9 calories, more than double the energy provided by each gram of protein or carbohydrate (4 calories/g). The proportion of Canadians' energy intake from fat rose from 31.3% in 2004 to 32.2% for adults in 2015.

Protein comes mainly from meat, eggs, dairy products, beans, and seeds. For children and teenagers, the percentage of daily energy intake from protein increased from 14.6% in 2004 to 15.6% in 2015, while for adults, it edged up from 16.5% to 17.0%.

Older Canadians and children consume similar amounts of calories

An individual's energy requirement varies due to factors such as age, sex, weight, height and activity level. In 2015, the daily average energy intake of children aged 1 to 13 years was 1,680 calories. For teenagers 14 to 18 years old, the energy intake was 2,112 calories. Adult Canadians aged 19 to 50 consumed 1,978 calories on average per day. For Canadians aged 51 years and older, the daily energy intake was 1,762 calories.

By comparison, the daily average energy intake of Canadians as measured in the 2004 nutrition survey was higher: 1,962 calories for children, 2,483 calories for teenagers, 2,234 calories for adults and 1,856 calories for older adults. More in-depth analysis is needed to fully explain these differences between the two surveys, but initial results indicate that they are largely due to measurement improvements in the 2015 survey and do not represent a substantial real change in energy intake.

Almost half of Canadians use nutritional supplements

Health Canada advises that a healthy and balanced diet can provide most people with the nutrients essential for good health. Supplements are recommended for specific circumstances, such as vitamin D for people over the age of 50. The use of nutritional supplements is an everyday practice for millions of Canadians.

In 2015, 45.6% of Canadians aged 1 year and older (approximately 15.7 million) used at least one nutritional supplement. Women were more likely than men to take nutritional supplements, with the most notable difference among adults aged 51 to 70 years, where almost two-thirds (65.1%) of women used supplements compared with 42.5% of men.

Multivitamins were the most common nutritional supplement products used by Canadians in both 2004 and 2015. Nearly one-quarter (23.1%) of Canadians took at least one multivitamin supplement in 2015, down from 26.5% in 2004.

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential fats, meaning the body cannot make them and they must be consumed. They play important roles in growth and development, especially visual and neurological development. Awareness of their importance has increased since the 1980s. Supplement products containing Omega-3 fatty acids such as fish oils and flaxseed oils were used by 11.8% of Canadians in 2015. There are no comparable data available for 2004.

Vitamin D and calcium are important for bone strength and to reduce the risk of osteoporosis and fractures in older adults. Health Canada reports that the need for vitamin D increases after the age of 50. Canadians' use of nutritional supplements containing vitamin D rose from 28.5% in 2004 to 33.5% in 2015. The increase was most apparent within certain adult age groups, including those aged 31 to 50 (25.0% to 29.7%), 51 to 70 (36.5% to 40.7%) and 71 and older (36.9% to 45.8%).

Note to readers

The 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – Nutrition is a national health survey that collects information from Canadians ages 1 and older in every province about their self-reported eating habits and use of nutritional supplements, as well as other health factors.

This survey provides a detailed and up-to-date picture of what people report to be eating, what nutritional supplements they take, and the impact this has on health and well-being. It also evaluates changes in food consumption, nutrition and health since this survey was last conducted in 2004. There were some changes between 2004 and 2015 within the measures used and therefore caution must be exercised when making comparisons over time.

In the 2015 CCHS – Nutrition survey, the definition of nutritional supplements was broadened by including not only the vitamins and minerals collected in the 2004 survey, but also fiber supplements, antacids, fish oils and other oils. Multivitamins are defined as nutritional supplements that contain at least three vitamins and may or may not contain minerals. Omega-3 fatty acids include alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA).

All estimates published are based on the average daily intake. Future releases from this survey will feature more in-depth analysis with usual intake estimates of nutrients from food.

For more information, consult the page [2015 Canadian Community Health Survey — Nutrition: Questions and answers](#).

Available in CANSIM: tables [105-2017 to 105-2022](#), [105-2027](#) and [105-2028](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5049](#).

The fact sheets "[Nutrient intakes from food, 2015](#)" and "[Use of nutritional supplements, 2015](#)" that are part of the publication *Health Fact Sheets (82-625-X)*, are now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).