



Health Canada – a partner in health for all Canadians



At Health Canada our role is to help Canadians maintain and improve their health. While the provinces and territories are responsible for delivering healthcare to the majority of Canadians, the federal government also has a number of key roles and responsibilities in areas that affect health and healthcare. In addition to working closely with provincial and territorial governments, we also work with other federal departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations, other countries, Aboriginal partners and the private sector to help achieve our goal of Canada being one of the healthiest countries in the world.

As a partner in health, Health Canada:

- **protects Canadians** from unsafe food, health and consumer products.
- **supports the delivery** of healthcare to First Nations and Inuit.
- **promotes innovation** in healthcare.
- **informs Canadians** to make healthy choices.

The meals we serve our families, the pesticides farmers put on crops, the herbal remedies, vitamins and drugs in our medicine cabinets, the toys we buy our children – they are all products regulated by Health Canada for safety. Hundreds of new products, with new ingredients and new purposes, are introduced by industry every year in Canada. Decisions

about new products are made in the public interest, and are based upon current scientific evidence to support their safety and quality.

We support the delivery of front-line health services to First Nations and Inuit communities, often in remote and isolated parts of our country. We recognize that partnering with First Nations and Inuit in the management of their health services is key to improving their health.

Our department is committed to a strong, publicly funded healthcare system guided by the principles in the *Canada Health Act*. We work closely with the provinces and territories to strengthen our system so that quality healthcare is available to everyone, wherever they live. We also promote innovation and the use of best practices across Canada.

Health Canada’s vision is to help make Canada’s population among the healthiest in the world. From coast to coast to coast, we have over 9,000 employees – scientists and researchers, inspectors, doctors and nurses, policy analysts and administrative professionals, and many others – working to help Canadians maintain and improve their health.

As a regulator, service provider, promoter of innovation, and trusted source of information, we are a partner in health for all Canadians.



“ Health Canada provides credible and timely information to Canadians to make informed choices about their health and safety.”

1. Protecting Canadians

Managing and communicating to Canadians the risks and benefits associated with food, health and consumer products, and environmental factors.

Product Safety

Anyone who sells a health product or food, consumer product or pesticide to Canadians must meet Health Canada's strict regulatory requirements, designed to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We have one of the best and most respected health product approval systems in the world.

Before a drug, a medical device or a natural health product can be sold in this country; Health Canada must receive from industry the scientific evidence demonstrating the safety, efficacy and quality of their product, and must assess its benefits and risks before taking a decision on whether it should be made available to Canadians. These requirements align with many of our international partners. For consumer products, like toys or corded window coverings, Health Canada forbids the sale of anything that may pose a danger to Canadians. The goals of our pre- and post- market programs for pesticides are to prevent unacceptable risks to human health and the environment from the use of these products.

Health Canada sets food safety and nutrition standards and rules to help Canadians make healthy food choices. We require labels that explain ingredients and instructions for safe use on health, food, consumer and pesticide products. We also require a Nutrition Facts Table on all pre-packaged foods to allow consumers to compare products. Labels must also make it easier for consumers with allergies to find foods they can eat safely.

Companies are required by Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to report when a health, food, consumer or pesticide product is a safety risk to Canadians and take corrective actions such as recalling unsafe products. At the same time, we inform Canadians so that they can take action to protect themselves and their families.

Companies who fail to comply may be banned from selling their products or operating in Canada or – if a violation is serious enough – find themselves before the courts.

Reducing Environmental Risks

Health Canada sets national standards to keep the environment healthy – standards that keep water and air pollution low and Canadians safe. We maintain a nationwide network of radiation monitoring stations and can act if levels spike. Under the world-leading Chemicals Management Plan, we assess health risks from chemicals used in manufacturing and agriculture and require users to prove they actually need the chemicals to make their products. To limit human exposure, we also set strict rules on how chemicals are used.

Health Canada's standards are based on the best science available. In addition to the research carried out by our scientists, we review independent academic and other research studies to make sure that we're on top of the latest developments.

did you know?

Health Canada regulates and controls:

- more than 13,000 pharmaceutical drugs
- close to 35,000 medical device licences
- non-marketed drugs authorized for serious or life-threatening conditions
- more than 300 biologics and biotechnology products (such as vaccines and blood cells)
- more than 1,350 veterinary drugs given to food-producing animals and household pets
- more than 72,000 natural health products

Reducing Drug and Tobacco Use

Drug abuse, including the abuse of prescription drugs, poses a serious public health and safety risk to Canadian families and communities. Health Canada's *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* places tight controls on the production and distribution of legal drugs and their ingredients to curb diversion. For example, legal ingredients in cough and cold medicines can be used to make

illegal drugs such as crystal meth. In addition to these tight controls on legal drugs and their ingredients, scientists in our laboratories provide expert support to drug prosecutions across Canada by confirming for the courts that substances seized by police are illegal drugs.

Health Canada, through the National Anti-Drug Strategy (NADS) fights the production and distribution of illegal drugs, and prevents illegal drug use. The 2013 Speech from the Throne commitment to expand the scope of NADS to include prescription drug abuse will allow the Government to move forward on key issues,

including enhancing prevention and treatment initiatives in communities, improving the evidence base on the treatment of pain and prescription drugs for prescribers and engaging in public awareness activities about prescription drug abuse.

Each year, more than 37,000 Canadians die of tobacco-related illnesses. Through tight controls on the manufacture, sale, labelling and promotion of tobacco products, Health Canada's Tobacco Control Program works to reduce tobacco use. The Program also promotes initiatives to help Canadians quit smoking.

2. Supporting the delivery of healthcare

First Nations receive health services and benefits that respond to their needs and improve their health status.

The delivery of health services to First Nations and Inuit communities is a shared responsibility among federal, provincial, territorial, First Nations and Inuit partners. Each plays an important and complementary role. Provinces and territories are responsible for universal insured health services such as doctor care and hospital services. Through funding, training or direct delivery, Health Canada supports the availability of a wide range of health programs and services to over 640 First Nations communities on-reserve, and to Inuit communities, including:

- Primary Care and emergency nursing care in 130 remote and isolated First Nations communities; home and community care, such as personal nursing care, meal preparation, and in-home respite care in over 600 First Nation and Inuit communities, and treatment services for addictions are provided through 55 alcohol and drug treatment centres.
- Public Health services in First Nations communities, such as immunization, controlling communicable diseases, and testing for safe drinking water.
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention activities, such as maternal and child health, mental health services, diabetes education, and programs to prevent suicide, alcohol and substance abuse.

There are approximately 575 Health Canada nurses who provide health services to First Nations communities, and are often the one healthcare professional in some of the most remote and isolated communities.

As part of its work, Health Canada provides medically-necessary health benefits to over 900,000 eligible First Nations and Inuit. This includes access to prescription drugs, dental services, medical transportation, medical supplies and equipment, vision care and crisis mental health counselling.

Since the 1980s, Health Canada has had a policy of transferring administrative control to First Nations and Inuit communities for their health programs, according to their capacity. Today, more than 75 per cent of First Nations and Inuit communities have taken on various levels of responsibility to direct, manage and deliver a range of health services. The *First Nations and Inuit Health Strategic Plan: A Shared Path to Improved Health* outlines the shared approach to delivery of health programs and services.

Agreements in the 1980s and early 1990s transferred responsibilities for the delivery of health services to First Nations and Inuit from Health Canada to the Yukon, North West Territories and Nunavut governments. More recently, we signed an innovative, precedent-setting arrangement with the Government of British Columbia and British Columbia First Nations. The First Nations Health Authority will plan, design, manage, deliver and fund the delivery of First Nations health programs in British Columbia that were previously provided by Health Canada, incorporating their cultural knowledge, beliefs and values into their health programs and services. This will result in better health outcomes for First Nations in BC and a more responsive and integrated model of health service delivery in the province.

Building on this momentum, Health Canada will continue to support First Nations and Inuit to advance collaborative models of health and healthcare that support individuals, families and communities from a holistic perspective, while respecting jurisdictional roles and responsibilities. Key to moving forward is innovation: from new service delivery arrangements to technological innovations that allow more people to receive services closer to home. Health Canada is working with partners to improve health outcomes, provide access to quality health services and support greater control of the health system by First Nations and Inuit.

did you know?

Health Canada supports:

- 300 tele-health and videoconferencing sites in First Nations and Inuit communities offering a wide range of electronic health services
- 947 health facilities and nursing stations in First Nations communities
- 572 registered nurses, 198 licensed practical nurses and 1,044 program support workers
- Primary care emergency nursing services in 76 remote First Nations communities
- Aboriginal Head Start On-Reserve, which serves approximately 9,100 children in approximately 300 sites
- Home and community care in 669 First Nations and Inuit communities
- 55 addiction treatment centres; over 700 addiction workers – providing 550 prevention programs
- 150 community-based projects through the National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Accreditation of First Nations health facilities has risen from 25 in 2008 to 75 at present, all providing access to quality health services to the residents of 175 First Nations communities
- All First Nations communities south of 60 degrees have access to trained personnel to sample and test drinking water quality at tap, and to monitor the quality of their drinking water according to the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*.

3. Promoting Innovation

Canada's healthcare system responds to the needs of all Canadians, now and in the future.

Canada's publicly funded healthcare system is an interlocking set of 13 provincial and territorial health insurance plans that provide access to universal, comprehensive coverage for medically necessary hospital and physician services based on need, not ability to pay.

Although the management, organization and delivery of healthcare services is primarily under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, the federal government plays an ongoing role in providing financial support for provincial and territorial health insurance plans and maintaining the core principles of the *Canada Health Act*. The Act, which sets out the conditions the provinces and territories

must fulfil to receive the full federal contribution under the Canada Health Transfer, establishes the principles of universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration for the system.

In Canada, as in other jurisdictions, the healthcare system is facing challenges to its long-term sustainability. Fiscal restraint and regional economic disparities, the rapid growth of health technologies, rising prevalence of chronic diseases like arthritis, diabetes and cancer, and demographic shifts are changing the environment in which Health Canada carries out its health and safety mandate.

did you know?

- Total health expenditures in Canada were approximately \$207 billion in 2012, of which 70% were publicly funded.
- Since 1984, under the *Canada Health Act* (CHA), federal spending on healthcare is tied to national principles of universality, accessibility, portability, comprehensiveness and public administration for the system.
- The CHA also contains specific provisions to discourage provinces and territories from allowing extra billing and user charges for insured hospital and physician services.
- Every year, the Minister of Health tables a report in Parliament on the administration of the *Canada Health Act*. This report is available on the Health Canada website.

Addressing these challenges requires leadership and collaboration across jurisdictions. Health Canada places a priority on working with provincial and territorial governments and health partners to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the system. We work to develop

national approaches to issues and priorities that are common across provinces and territories. And we promote innovation and the adoption of pan-Canadian best practices.

To support innovation for a sustainable healthcare system that meets the needs of Canadians now and in the future, Health Canada invests in key national health organizations. For example, we support the Canadian Institute for Health Information which generates reliable, comparable data about the healthcare system. We fund the development of infrastructure for electronic health records through Canada Health Infoway. We fund critical assessments of new technologies and drugs through the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health. We invest in areas important to Canadians, like mental health through the Mental Health Commission of Canada, cancer, through the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, and alcohol and drug abuse through the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. We also invest in targeted areas to improve healthcare services like family medicine, patient safety and wait times through the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement.

4. Informing and Engaging Canadians

Canadians have access to the information they need to take action regarding their health and safety.

Canadians look to Health Canada for the trustworthy and timely information they need to make informed choices about which food, health, and consumer products are best for them and for their families.

We make more relevant, useful and timely information available to Canadians than ever before. Health Canada's web presence provides Canadians with easy access to information about health and safety and about healthcare delivery. The site features more than 30 topics, including quitting smoking, healthy eating, and recalls and safety alerts.

For example, the website's Recalls and Safety Alerts Database provides Canadians with easy access to information about risks associated with food, health and consumer products. From recalls and

did you know?

Health Canada's presence on web and social-media based platforms is instrumental in reaching target audiences:

- more than 16,000 fans on the Healthy First Nations and Inuit Facebook page
 - more than 19,000 fans on the Healthy Canadians Facebook page
 - close to 110,000 followers on the Health Canada Twitter account
 - 230 Health Canada YouTube videos viewed more than 200,000 times
 - 16 million total visits to Health Canada's website in 2013 with over 7 million views of the Canada Food Guide
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alerts about everything from strollers to weight loss products, the database provides credible and timely information to Canadians. Information on adverse reactions to approved health products can be found on the Canada Vigilance Database. Information about drugs approved for use in Canada can be found on the Drug Product Database and information on specific products and active ingredients related to pesticides regulated by Health Canada can be found on the Pesticide Product Information Database.

We use social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube to actively provide information to Canadians when and where they

need it. We also use these channels to create a community where Canadians can connect, share tips and learn facts. In total, Health Canada reaches more than 6 million Canadians through its online and social media presence.

We also use technology to engage Canadians and better listen to the conversations they are having about their health. This complements the robust public consultation and engagement agenda that we have at Health Canada. Our consultations are posted on the Consulting With Canadians website, which provides single-window access to consultations from government departments and agencies.

5. Working for Canadians

A great organization powered by a diverse and talented workforce.

Health Canada's vision is to make Canada's population among the healthiest in the world. Our 9,000-plus employees are dedicated to achieving this vision coast to coast to coast. This includes adapting to new ways of working while improving networking, access to data, and excellence in customer service.

We work with our partners in the Health Portfolio to protect and promote the health of Canadians. Our portfolio partners include the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) and the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB).

For example, Canada boasts a world-class food safety regime thanks to the Healthy and Safe Food for Canadians Framework. The Framework is a close collaboration with two of our portfolio partners: the PHAC and CFIA. For food safety, Health Canada develops food safety standards and policies, and public awareness campaigns about safe food practices. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency verifies that industry is meeting federal food safety and regulatory requirements. The Public Health Agency of Canada conducts food-related illness outbreak surveillance and advises Canadians on how to protect themselves during an outbreak.

Health Canada also depends on credible outside sources of research from provinces and territories, health institutions, academia, and international partners. This includes research by our portfolio partners such as the network of 14,000 health researchers and trainees supported through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. It also includes the research carried out by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board to ensure that the prices of patented medicines sold in Canada are not excessive.

did you know?

- Health Canada has 800 points of service across Canada for delivering counselling, organizational development and critical incident support services to federal government Departments.
 - Health Canada delivers the Employee Assistance Program to 1.6 million federal employees across the Government of Canada. The program delivers confidential employee counselling, psycho-social workshops, workplace interventions, and immediate response to employees following traumatic incidents in the workplace.
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Maintaining a healthy Canada requires a coalition of federal, provincial, and territorial partners that include patient advocates, provincial, territorial and municipal health authorities, researchers, charities, the pharmaceutical sector, health professional organizations, industry, international partners, and Canadians themselves. We are working together with these partners to identify and address shared priorities. For example, since 2012, Health Canada, provincial and territorial governments and industry have worked together to address shortages of critical drugs that could result in interruptions of treatments for patients. We also work closely with many of these partners on pandemic and emergency preparedness in order to help Canadian families respond to these situations should they arise. This important work could not be done without a concerted effort with all our partners.

Health Canada is committed to its team of professionals. Our people agenda creates and supports a high-performing, collaborative environment where employees excel. Our workplace adheres to public service values and ethics, with particular focus on the importance of respect, lifelong learning, and career development. Health Canada is an active participant in shaping the vision of Canada's public service of today, and in the future, for the benefit of all Canadians.