



## Nutrition Check-up for Women

Women have unique nutrition needs throughout all stages of life. Good nutrition plays an important role in promoting wellness and vitality as well as reducing the risks of heart disease, different types of cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis and other conditions.

**Test your nutrition knowledge by answering TRUE or FALSE to each of these statements below:**

1	Women should eat 5-10 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.	True or False
2	Cutting out cholesterol from your diet is the most effective way to reduce your blood cholesterol level.	True or False
3	Eating a healthy diet can reduce your risk of many different types of cancer.	True or False
4	Low carbohydrate diets are the best way to lose weight.	True or False
5	Premenstrual (PMS) symptoms can be relieved by taking vitamin supplements.	True or False
6	Women who include physical activity on a daily basis reduce their risk for chronic disease.	True or False
7	During the childbearing years, women need to take a folic acid supplement <b>before</b> they become pregnant.	True or False
8	Vitamin D is just as important for bone health as calcium.	True or False
9	All women should take soy tablets.	True or False
10	Registered Dietitians are the best source of nutrition information and advice.	True or False

## Answers

- 1 TRUE** According to recent Canadian statistics, 57% of Canadian women still do not meet the recommended requirement of five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is most important to promote healthy weight, improve iron absorption, protect bone density, and lower the risk of certain types of cancer. For a copy of Canada's Food Guide, call your local health department or link to the Health Canada website at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pubef/foodguid/foodguide.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pubef/foodguid/foodguide.html).
- 2 FALSE** Eating less **fat** is one of the most effective ways to reduce your blood cholesterol level, which in turn helps to cut your risk of heart disease. Lower fat foods, such as whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables and fruits, also contain fibre, which helps to control blood cholesterol too. Whenever possible, choose lower fat milk products and leaner meats or meat alternatives such as fish and legumes. For more information on how you can prevent heart disease, call your local office of the Heart Stroke Foundation or visit their website at: [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca).
- 3 TRUE** According to the Canadian Cancer Society, up to 1/3 of all cancers are related to what you eat. A healthy diet is one of your best defenses against cancer. Start by eating a variety of lower fat foods and plenty of vegetables and fruit. Drink alcohol in moderation or avoid it altogether. If you have more questions about cancer, contact the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Service at 1-888-939-3333 or visit their website at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca).
- 4 FALSE** The long-term effects of low carbohydrate diets on health are not known. These diets are usually high in fat and low in dietary fibre and important vitamins that are protective against many different diseases. In addition, you may be eating more protein than you need, which can interfere with calcium absorption and possibly lead to osteoporosis. Dehydration and kidney problems are other dangers of low carbohydrate diets. If you need to lose weight, make a commitment to eating a well balanced diet, being more physically active and feeling good about yourself! Talk to a Registered Dietitian to help you get started.
- 5 TRUE** Up to 40% of women of childbearing age experience sufficient PMS to affect their daily lives and 3 to 8% experience severe impairment now called Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder ( PMDD) . A high percent age of women (75%) do not meet current Adequate Intakes for calcium. There is evidence that calcium supplementation (1000 mg per day) alleviates the majority of symptoms, including irritability and cramps. You may find that cutting back on caffeine, alcohol and salt and drinking plenty of water may help with some symptoms. Regular exercise also helps to relieve stress, improve mood and helps to decrease bloating.
- 6 TRUE** Physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle and has been shown to reduce stress, strengthen the heart and lungs, increase energy levels, and help maintain and achieve a healthy body weight. Excess body weight increases your risk for diabetes mellitus, heart disease, and certain cancers. An active life style includes participating in physical activities that are enjoyable, require some effort, and promote health. Examples of active living include taking the stairs instead of the elevator, going for a walk at lunch, biking to work, and participating in enjoyable sport or fitness programs. Current recommendations by fitness experts indicate that one should include one hour of exercise per day. This can be done all at once, or in smaller time periods during the day. For a copy of the Canadian Physical Activity Guide link to the Health Canada website at: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/lifestyles/physical\\_activity.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/lifestyles/physical_activity.html).
- 7 TRUE** Folic acid is important during the first weeks of pregnancy, before you may even know that you are pregnant! Folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects in the growing fetus. Combined with a healthy diet, it is recommended that women of child bearing age or planning a pregnancy take a daily multi-vitamin and mineral supplement that contains 0.4 milligrams (or 400 micrograms) of folic acid.

- 8 TRUE** Without vitamin D, no more than 10 to 15% of dietary calcium is absorbed by the small intestine compared to 30% when there is sufficient vitamin D in the diet. Not only hospitalized and homebound elderly suffer from lack of vitamin D. Many younger and adult women are not meeting their need for vitamin D during the winter months. In fact, this is a common problem in Canada that can increase the risk of hip fractures, insulin resistance, common cancers and cardiovascular diseases. Minimum exposure to sunlight during summer months and adequate supplementation in the winter are ways of meeting vitamin D needs. To learn more about calcium and osteoporosis, call The Osteoporosis Society of Canada at 1-800-463-6842 or visit their website at: [www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca). \*National Academy of Sciences, 2001, \*\*Osteoporosis Society of Canada Clinical Practice Guidelines, 2002.
- 9 FALSE** Tofu, soybeans and other soy-based foods can be eaten as part of a healthy diet. However, soy tablets are not recommended until more research is available. Note that soy foods and soy tablets are **not** recommended for women who have breast cancer, who have a family history of breast cancer or who are taking certain medications for breast cancer.
- 10 TRUE** Registered Dietitians have the expertise to provide you with accurate and reliable nutrition information and advice. Visit the award winning Dietitians of Canada website at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca) for more information, including a personalized *Nutrition Profile* of the foods you eat. You can also find a dietitian in your area on-line or by calling 1-888-901-7776.