

Health Fact Sheets

Use of nutritional supplements, 2015



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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^P preliminary
- ^r revised
- X suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- ^E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published
- * significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

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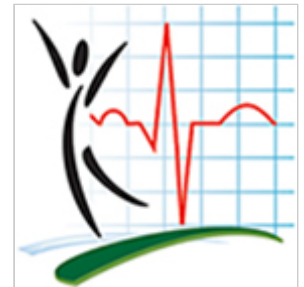
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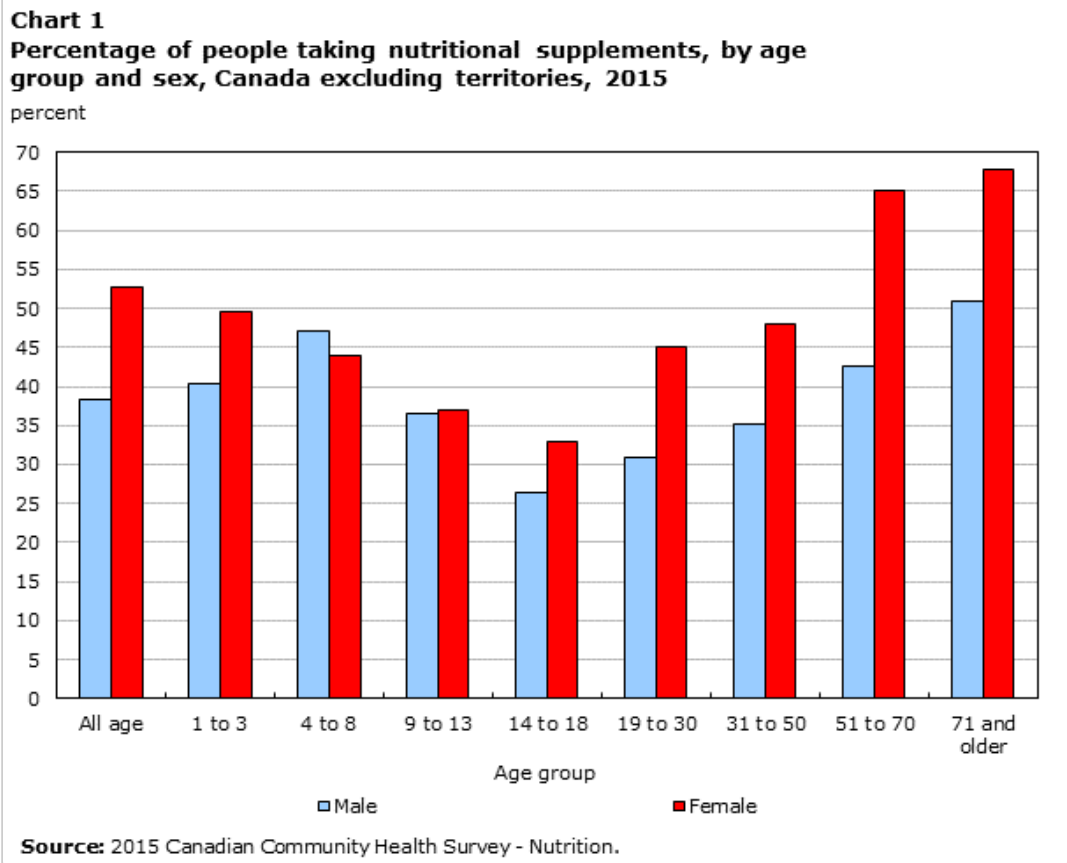
Nutritional supplements are widely available to Canadians and many people supplement their diet with nutritional products such as vitamins, minerals, fibre supplements, antacids, and fish oils. In 2015, the Canadian Community Health Survey - Nutrition asked Canadians aged one year and older about the type and amount of nutritional supplements they consumed in the past month.

Past-month use of nutritional supplements by age group and sex

Health Canada advises that a healthy and balanced diet can provide most people with the nutrients essential for good health. ¹ Supplements are recommended for specific circumstances, such as vitamin D for persons over the age of 50. ² The use of nutritional supplements is an everyday practice for millions of Canadians.

In 2015, 45.6% of Canadians aged one year and older (approximately 15.7 million people) used at least one nutritional supplement.

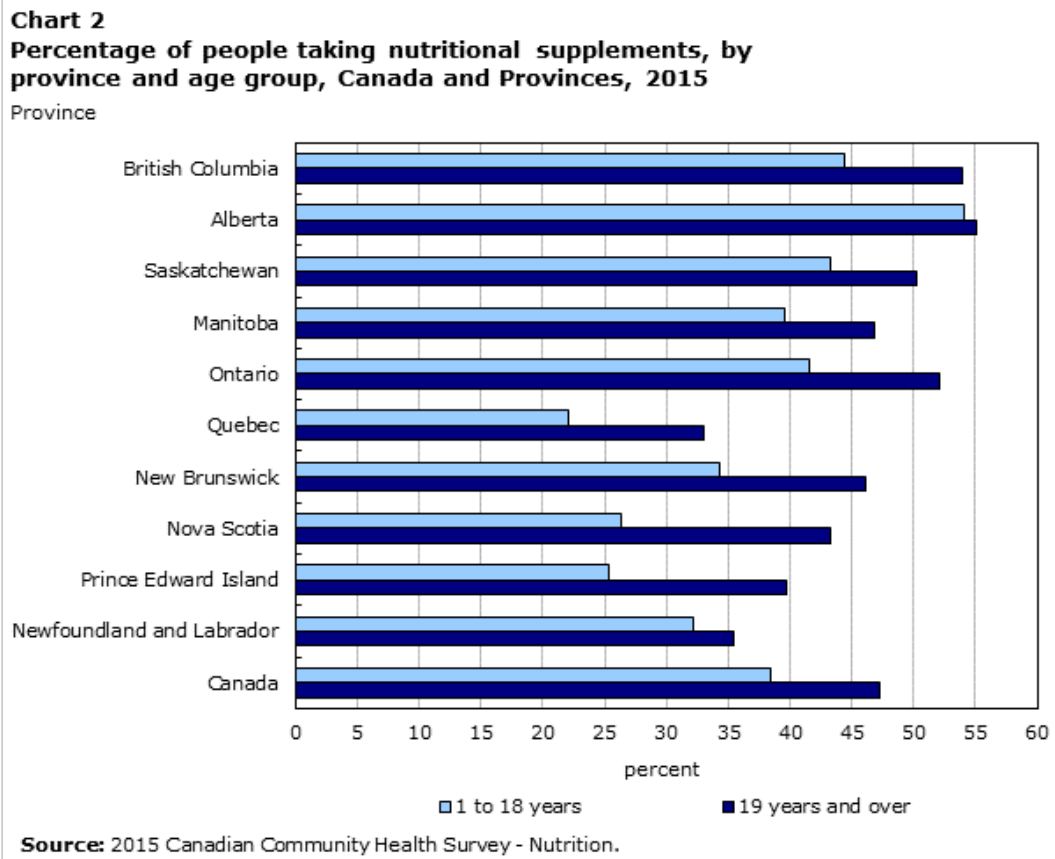
About 45% of children aged 1 to 3 years and 4 to 8 years old took nutritional supplements. Supplement use then decreased to 36.8% among 9 to 13 year olds. For teenagers aged 14 to 18, 26.5% of males and 32.9% of females used supplements - the lowest prevalence among all age groups for both sexes. After entering adulthood, the percentage of people taking nutritional supplements increased with age. Nutritional supplement use was more common among Canadian adults aged 19 and over (47.3%) than among children and youth (38.5%). Women were more likely than men to take nutritional supplements, with the most notable difference among those aged 51 to 70 years, where almost two-thirds (65.1%) of women used supplements compared with 42.5% of men (Chart 1).



Use of nutritional supplements in the provinces

Canadians living in the west were more likely than those in the east to take a nutritional supplement in 2015 (Chart 2).

Compared with the national average, for both children and adults, the prevalence of using nutritional supplements was higher in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The highest rate of using supplements was in Alberta, both among children and teenagers at 54.1%, and among adults at 55.1%. Quebec and the Atlantic provinces had lower than national average rates of using nutritional supplements. The lowest rates were in Quebec, at 22.1% for children and teenagers, and 33.0 % for adults.



Comparison with 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey - Nutrition

The 2015 Canadian Community Health Survey - Nutrition is a national health survey that collects information from Canadians in all provinces about their eating habits and use of nutritional supplements, as well as other health factors. This survey was last done in 2004. In 2004, information about vitamins and mineral supplements was collected. In 2015, information collected was expanded to cover a wider range of supplements than in 2004. As a result, direct comparisons between surveys can be made only for the types of products and nutrients that were collected in both surveys.

Multivitamins are defined as nutritional supplements that contain at least three vitamins and may or may not contain minerals.³ Multivitamins were the most common nutritional supplement products used by Canadians in both 2004 and 2015. Nearly a quarter (23.1%) of Canadians consumed at least one multivitamin supplement in 2015, compared with 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.^{4,5} 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 indicates that the need for vitamin D increases after the age of 50.² Use of nutritional supplements containing vitamin D increased from 28.5% in 2004 to 33.5% in 2015. The increase was most apparent for adults aged 31 to 50 (25.0% to 29.7%), aged 51 to 70 (36.5% to 40.7%) and aged 70 and older (36.9% to 45.8%).

Notes

- 1 Health Canada. A Consumer's Guide to the DRIs (Dietary Reference Intakes). *Food and Nutrition*. (accessed May 31, 2017).
- 2 Health Canada. Men and Women Over the Age of 50. *Food and Nutrition*. (accessed May 31, 2017).

- 3 Radimer, K., B. Bindewald, J. Hughes, B. Ervin, C. Swanson and M.F. Picciano. 2004. "Dietary supplement use by US adults: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999–2000." *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Vol. 160, no. 4, p. 339–349.
- 4 Dusheck, J. 1985. "Fish, fatty acids, and physiology; fish, long called brain food, turns out to be heart food as well". *Science News*. Vol. 128, no. 16, p. 241–256.
- 5 Holman, R.T. 1998. "The slow discovery of the importance of omega-3 essential fatty acids in human health". *The Journal of Nutrition*. Vol. 128, no. 2, p. 427S–233S.