



Life insurance that can reward healthy living

You now have the opportunity to save on premiums and earn rewards for your lifestyle choices.

WHEN IT COMES TO THE LONG-TERM HEALTH of Canadians, recent news has been mixed. On a positive note, we're living longer – Canadians now have an average life expectancy of 81.7 years, an increase of 24.6 years since 1921.¹ The bad news is we're not necessarily living healthier during the years we've gained. According to the Canadian Heart & Stroke Foundation, heart disease, stroke and other chronic conditions will cause the average Canadian to live his or her final decade with sickness or disability.²

Lifestyle can contribute to overall health

While the number of occurrences of infectious disease has decreased dramatically over the years, non-communicable diseases and chronic health conditions are now our biggest killers. In 2014, they accounted

¹ Statistics Canada, Ninety years of change in life expectancy, catalogue no. 82-624-X, last updated November 27, 2015, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-624-x/2014001/article/14009-eng.htm (accessed June 6, 2016).

² www.heartandstroke.com/atf/cf/%7B99452D8B-E7F1-4BD6-A57D-B136CE6C95BF%7D/Report-on-Cnd-Health-D17.pdf

for a whopping 88 per cent of all deaths in Canada, with cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and diabetes being the biggest culprits.³ But what is perhaps most interesting is that each of these conditions has strong links to preventable risk factors such as inactivity, poor diet, excess alcohol use and smoking. In other words, lifestyle choices.⁴

Small changes can add up to big results

So why not *do* something about the lifestyle choices that affect our health? Research from the Canadian Heart & Stroke Foundation shows that by making just a few small lifestyle changes, we can reduce our risk of chronic diseases and add health to our later years.⁵ A provincial study found that Ontarians (aged 20 and older) would gain 7.5 years of life expectancy if everyone were in the healthiest category for all five behavioural risks examined, namely smoking, inactivity, poor diet, alcohol use and stress.⁶ Even more importantly, improving health behaviours was found to positively impact people's quality of life as well.⁷

Unfortunately, changing our health habits is often easier said than done. Reaching for instant gratification may seem more appealing than the challenges required for long-term, gradual gains. In fact, some Canadians still have trouble making good health choices. For evidence of that, we have only to look at the Heart & Stroke Foundation's 2013 poll, which showed that less than 30 per cent of baby boomers surveyed were willing to take action towards a healthier lifestyle.⁸

GET MORE ACTIVE – ONE SMALL STEP AT A TIME



For some, the idea of being active can be intimidating, but you don't have to run a marathon or spend hours in the gym to improve your activity level. Just start small, and you'll soon be on your way to better health.

A few simple activities you could add to your week:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- Take a 15-minute walk at lunch
- Get off the bus a stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Play actively with your kids, with a game of tag or by building a snowman
- Take the dog for a walk
- Explore walking/cycling paths, nature trails or beaches close to home

Rewarding positive choices

Insurance companies have long been supporting Canadians' efforts to make healthy choices, reducing premiums for non-smokers, for example. But what about other lifestyle choices that can make such a big difference to health in later years?

New trends in the insurance industry are trying to address this very issue, to support – and recognize –

healthier lifestyle choices. Already introduced in the United Kingdom, the United States and Asia, these new types of insurance programs provide immediate and long-term rewards and incentives for individual healthy behaviours, such as going for a run, making a healthier food choice or getting an annual cancer screening. For each healthy choice and each goal met, program participants can earn rewards or discounts on things such as fitness programs, groceries, travel, shopping and entertainment, and eventually gain the potential to earn reduced premiums over time.

These new insurance programs break down long-term health goals into smaller, achievable steps – and provide immediate reinforcement in the form of rewards. With frequent rewards for small, everyday accomplishments, participants can become more actively engaged in the progress of their overall health and wellness. Online applications and tools (often integrated with the latest wearable fitness technology) allow personalized health goals to be easily logged and monitored. Participants not only get the most out of their life insurance protection but also receive encouragement to make lifestyle choices that could lead to lasting health benefits.

Life insurance is changing to help Canadians stay motivated on the road to a long-term healthy lifestyle. Contact your advisor today to learn more about what kinds of programs are available and whether they are right for you. ■

³ www.who.int/nmh/countries/can_en.pdf?ua=1 ⁴ www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PHO-ICES_SevenMoreYears_Report_web.pdf ⁵ www.heartandstroke.com/atf/cf/%7B99452D8B-E7F1-4BD6-A57D-B136CE6C95BF%7D/Report-on-Cnd-Health--D17.pdf ⁶ www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PHO-ICES_SevenMoreYears_Report_web.pdf ⁷ <http://www.heartandstroke.com/atf/cf/%7B99452D8B-E7F1-4BD6-A57D-B136CE6C95BF%7D/Report-on-Cnd-Health--D17.pdf> ⁸ <http://www.heartandstroke.com/atf/cf/%7B99452D8B-E7F1-4BD6-A57D-B136CE6C95BF%7D/Report-on-Cnd-Health--D17.pdf>