

# Women's health potentially at risk

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According to Health Canada's Evidence Review for Dietary Guidance, a significant number of women:

- 48% of women 31-50 years of age
- 69% of females older than 70 years of age

consume less than two-servings of meat and alternatives a day as recommended in Canada's Food Guide. That's virtually half our Canadian women!

Perhaps not surprisingly, the same report noted some Canadians – especially women and older adults – have inadequate intakes of iron, zinc, and vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. Iron and zinc are available in red meat in the form that the body can most easily absorb and vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is found only in foods of animal origin.

These nutrients are essential. Consequences of inadequate intakes include low energy levels, reduced work capacity, lower resistance to infections and fatigue. Women need proper and adequate nutrition as they juggle the demands of working and raising a family. Proper nourishment goes a long way in helping manage these tasks.

It is important to also note, that the analysis for the *Evidence Review for Dietary Guidance* was based on the 2004 *Canadian Community Health Survey* (CCHS) data; not the more recent 2015 iteration. Statistics Canada reports women, on average, ate 11 grams less of fresh red meat and processed red meat combined a day during the 11 year period between surveys: 55 grams in 2004 vs. 44 grams in 2015. Put in Food Guide terms, that is just over ½ a food guide serving of meat and alternatives. From the teen years on, Health Canada recommends women have 2 servings a day from this food group.

Given the amount of shading in this table from Health Canada's *Evidence Review for Dietary Guidance* one could speculate that situation would be even more alarming using 2015 CCHS data. The EAR is the daily intake value of a nutrient that is estimated to meet the nutrient requirement of half the healthy individuals in a life stage and gender group.

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**Proportion of the Canadian population with usual intakes below the Estimates Average Requirement (EAR) for certain nutrients' from food sources, by age-sex group, CCHS 2004**

SEX	AGE (YRS)	NUTRIENTS % <EAR								
		Folate	Iron	Magnesium	Phosphorus	Vitamin A	Vitamin B <sub>6</sub>	Vitamin B <sub>12</sub>	Vitamin C	Zinc
Both	1-3	2.9 <sup>E</sup>	1.4 <sup>E</sup>	<3	<3	<3	<3	<3	<3	<3
	4-8	<3	0.6 <sup>E</sup>	<3	2.5 <sup>E</sup>	<3	<3	<3	<3	<3
Male	9-13	<3	<3	4.7 <sup>E</sup>	8.9 <sup>E</sup>	11.6 <sup>E</sup>	<3	<3	<3	<3
	14-18	5.2 <sup>E</sup>	<3	41.5	4.9 <sup>E</sup>	38.3	<3	1.7 <sup>E</sup>	7.1 <sup>E</sup>	5.6 <sup>E</sup>
	19-30	<3	<3	34.8	<3	47.4	F	F	13.7 <sup>E</sup>	F
	31-50	F	<3	45.7	<3	42.7	F	F	24.4	13.3 <sup>E</sup>
	51-70	11.5	<3	53.6	<3	42.5	10.9 <sup>E</sup>	F	24.0	24.6
	>70	23.1	1.9 <sup>E</sup>	65.3	F	49.0	23.1 <sup>E</sup>	F	31.5	41.0
	19+	6.8	0.4 <sup>E</sup>	-	0.4 <sup>E</sup>	44.3	-	2.7 <sup>E</sup>	22.5	16.8
Female	9-13	F	<3	18.3	30.2	23.1	F	F	<3	14.6 <sup>E</sup>
	14-18	20.1	11.9	66.3	35.1	42.2	11.1	15.8 <sup>E</sup>	6.0	19.6
	19-30	18.8	16.8	36.6	<3	43.4	<9.6 <sup>E</sup>	F	10.8 <sup>E</sup>	14.7 <sup>E</sup>
	31-50	19.6	18.3	36.4	1.8	34.1	15.9	13.7 <sup>E</sup>	19.9	14.2
	51-70	25.0	<3	37.5	1.8 <sup>E</sup>	33.8	19.4 <sup>E</sup>	F	14.2	F
	>70	47.0	2.0 <sup>E</sup>	51.1	3.3 <sup>E</sup>	40.2	32.5	15.3 <sup>E</sup>	20.8	25.2
	19+	24.6	-	-	1.9	35.8	-	11.1 <sup>E</sup>	16.7	14.0

EAR: Estimated Average Requirement

DfE: Dietary folate equivalent

Shaded area: Issue of concern - proportion of the group with usual intakes below the EAR is greater than 10%

E: Data with a coefficient of variation (CV) from 16.6% to 33.3% - interpret with caution.

<3: Data with a coefficient of variation (CV) greater than 33.3% with a 95% confidence interval entirely between 0 and 3% - interpret with caution.

F: Data with a coefficient of variation (CV) greater than 33.3% with a 95% confidence interval not entirely between 0 and 3% - suppressed due to extreme sampling variability.

-: Data not available

\* vitamin D and calcium intakes are reported in Part 4, Section 1.

Note: Thiamin was marginally inadequate for females >70 years of age (11%) (date not shown).

Women's health is important.

Considering the number of essential nutrients found in red meat, women's health is at stake if Health Canada follows through with their proposed advice that Canadians eat less red meat.

Source: Evidence Review for Dietary Guidance Technical Report, 2015, Health Canada

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