

FACT SHEET
THE ROLE OF PUBLIC HEALTH IN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION
CANADIAN COALITION FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE ISSUE

Chronic diseases – such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular and lung disease – are the leading causes of death and disability in Canada. These diseases account for 6 of every 10 deaths each year. The prolonged course of illness and disability often associated with chronic diseases results in extended pain and suffering, as well as a decreased quality of life and major limitations in daily activity.

But chronic diseases and their costly complications can be prevented or delayed. A comprehensive public health system must include an integrated plan of action for chronic disease prevention with a particular emphasis on primary prevention – preventing Canadians from getting these diseases in the first place by eliminating or reducing public exposure to their causes.

THE FACTS

Each year about 163,000 Canadians die due to cardiovascular disease, cancer, lung disease, and diabetes, accounting for over two-thirds of the total annual death toll. Cardiovascular disease was responsible for 34% of lives lost in 2001 or 74,824 Canadian deaths. Cancer is second and claimed the lives of 63,774 Canadians in the same year. Cancer costs the Canadian economy \$14.2 billion every year, diabetes and its complications costs \$13.2 billion, cardiovascular disease imposes \$18.5 billion in costs annually, and lung disease costs \$8.5 billion every year.

Although the solutions for chronic and infectious diseases are not often considered together, they are linked. The

recent SARS outbreak revealed how individuals whose health is already compromised by a chronic condition are the most vulnerable to infectious diseases – whether influenza, West Nile or SARS. Canadians with chronic lung diseases are more susceptible to infectious airborne diseases. Recent research indicated that SARS patients who had a chronic disease were much less likely to survive than those who were otherwise healthy.

WHAT IS THE COALITION

The Coalition is a partnership of national non-governmental, professional, health and research organizations with a shared commitment to advocate for a public health system that is able to protect and promote health and prevent disease and injury.

Principles:

1. Public health is a national responsibility requiring a pan-Canadian approach with shared leadership across sectors, other systems and provincial/territorial jurisdictions.
2. Public health, with its focus on populations and communities, is an integral component of the health system.
3. Public health approaches that effectively address infectious and non-infectious disease and injury must be considered for a healthy population.
4. Public health activities can reduce pressures on the health care system.
5. Immediate and sustained action and investment in public health is required in order to protect, promote and preserve health.
6. Funding for public health is an essential and strategic investment for Canadians and the economy.

**Canadian Coalition for Public Health in the 21st Century
Membership (May 6, 2004)**

Association of Canadian Academic HealthCare Organizations	Canadian Society for International Health
Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health	Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science
Canadian Association for School Health	Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
Canadian Cancer Society	Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada
Canadian Dental Association	Community & Hospital Infection Control Association Canada
Canadian College of Health Service Executives	Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
Canadian Dental Hygienists Association	Institute of Population Health - University of Ottawa
Canadian Diabetes Association	National Specialty Society for Community Medicine
Canadian Healthcare Association	Canadian Animal Health Coalition
Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Institute of Population and Public Health	Ontario Public Health Association
Canadian Medical Association	Safe Kids Canada
Canadian Nurses Association	The Lung Association
Canadian Paediatric Society	University of Toronto, Department of Public Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine
Canadian Pharmacists Association	Susan McBroom, Claire Betker, Regional representatives of public health concerns
Canadian Psychological Association	Special Advisors: Maureen Law, Larry Chambers and Jack Lee
Canadian Public Health Association	

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