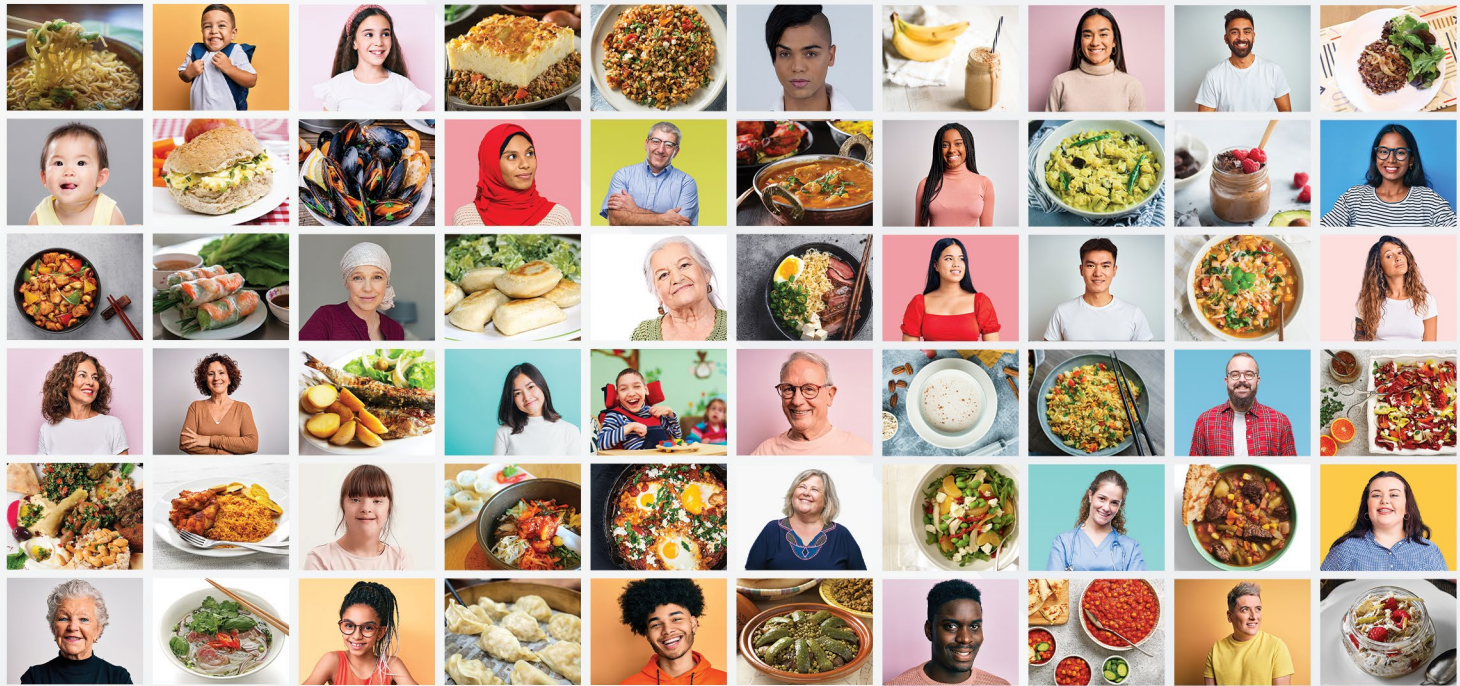




# GOOD FOR YOU.

Dietitians Help **You** Find **Your** Healthy.

NUTRITION MONTH 2021



## Nutrition Month 2021 Activity and Ideas Guide

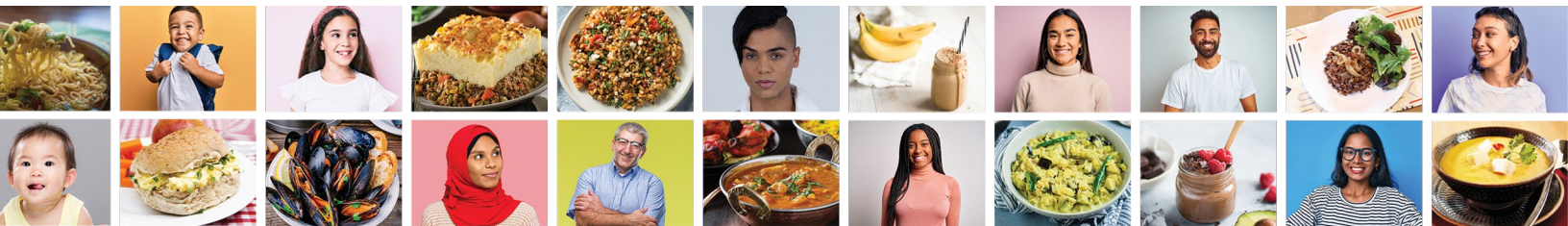
[nutritionmonth2021.ca](https://nutritionmonth2021.ca)

# About this guide

This guide provides background on the Nutrition Month 2021 campaign theme as well as ideas for activities, suggested resources and story ideas for newsletters, local media and blogs. Join dietitians across the country in celebrating Nutrition Month!

If you want to work with or feature a dietitian in your Nutrition Month activities but don't know how to get in touch, check out Dietitians of Canada's Find a Dietitian database [www.dietitians.ca/find](http://www.dietitians.ca/find).

Questions? Email [nutritionmonth@dietitians.ca](mailto:nutritionmonth@dietitians.ca)



# Acknowledgements

A big thank you to the dietitians and students who contributed to the development of the Nutrition Month 2021 campaign, including: Alex Chesney, Brandon Gruber, Carissa Bellefontaine, Carla Centola, Carrie Verishagen, Christine Francis, Francy Pillo-Blocka, Jane Skapinker, Jessica Wylychenko, Joby Quiambao, Jonathan Conti, Karolina Sekulic,

Katherine Hillier, Ken Mullock, Kristen Schott, Lauren Renlund, Oribim Kingson, Rachel Hilts, Seamus Damström, Tiffany Manstan Zarifa Salzgeber and Zeina Khawam as well as those who responded to member surveys and shared feedback on previous campaigns.

Thank you to Geoffrey Svenkeson, Michelle Jaelin, Emily Bell, Piraveena Piremathasan, Christine Francis, Jackie Silver, Irena Forbes and Karen Giesbrecht contributing their voices and stories in this Activity and Ideas Guide and a special thank you to Whitney Hussain for writing and editing this guide.



*Dietitians of Canada acknowledges the support of Nutrition Month Official Sponsor Dairy Farmers of Canada who help bring Nutrition Month 2021 to Canadians.*



The content, planning and execution of Nutrition Month is protected by Dietitians of Canada's [Guidelines and Principles for Private Sector Relationships](#). The [Nutrition Month Sponsor Prospectus](#) is available on the Dietitians of Canada website

# Table of Contents

Culture and Food Traditions	6
Health Conditions	12
Personal Circumstances	17

Activity and Ideas	21
Suggested Resources	23
Story Ideas	24



## **MEDIA EMBARGO**

Hold until February 24, 2021

Nutrition Month materials are made available in advance to help members of Dietitians of Canada and others prepare activities in their communities. If you are planning to submit a story to your local newspaper or media outlet, we request that the publication date is not before February 24, 2021.

**Questions? Email [nutritionmonth@dietitians.ca](mailto:nutritionmonth@dietitians.ca)**

Your cooperation helps us ensure the maximum reach and impact of stories featuring dietitians!

# GOOD FOR YOU.

Dietitians Help **You** Find **Your** Healthy.



In our busy, fast paced world, myths and misinformation on the internet, social media and other sources make nutrition and healthy eating confusing. Not to mention what is “good for you” is not the same for everyone. There is no one-size-fits all approach to healthy eating. Dietitians understand the science of nutrition and the unique needs of each person based on their health, their preferences and their culture and food traditions.

Nutrition Month 2021 will centre on the idea that healthy eating looks different for everyone. Dietitians will push back against simplified notions of ‘a healthy meal’ and ‘rules’ and share examples of how culture, food traditions, health conditions and personal circumstances influence what healthy eating can look like. The theme was developed through a series of conversations with members of Dietitians of Canada.

## Why this Theme?

The focus this year is to highlight how dietitians stand alongside our patients, clients and communities, providing nutrition support and guidance. As dietitians, we recognize that each client has their own culture

and traditions, preferences and nutritional needs. We are uniquely positioned to consider all of these factors when providing advice and guidance. Nutrition Month 2021 is an opportunity to share timely examples of how your work takes these factors into consideration, whether you work with clients, communities or the population at large! Topics you will notice in this guide include how dietitians nourish patients in long term care, support cultural safety, advocate for social justice and address restrictive food ‘rules’, myths and misinformation.

I had the privilege of connecting with a variety of dietitians working in many areas of dietetic practice with different personal and cultural viewpoints when preparing this guide. We aim to highlight their roles and ability to guide Canadians to provide personalized advice and trustworthy information. We hope the glimpses into these dietitians’ perspectives will help shape your advocacy efforts and activities this year for Nutrition Month.

**Whitney Hussain, RD**




### Key Dates for the 2021 Nutrition Month Campaign

- February 24:** Public Relations Campaign launch
- March 1:** First Day of Nutrition Month
- March 17:** Dietitians Day Celebrations -  
virtual community event!  
12pm - 3pm ET

**New!** To bring the DC community together on Dietitians Day, there will be a bilingual webcast. This learning and networking event will be free for DC members - save the date!

Find all the resources to support your Nutrition Month activities at [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://NutritionMonth2021.ca)



# Culture and Food Traditions

Culture and food traditions shape how we and our clients eat. Whether it is using a bowl, eating a mixed meal rather than following a perfect “healthy plate” model of eating or being curious and learning from the communities we support, these traditions have impacts on our nutrition care.

“Food is an essential and central part of life within all cultural groups in Canada, and dietetic practice reflects this rich diversity and complexity. Understanding and appreciating these many facets is central to our practice so that we, as dietitians, can assist all Canadians in accessing culturally safe and appropriate food and nutrition advice, care and support” - The Integrated Competencies for Dietetic Education and Practice - Version 3 (2020)

**We hope you are able to gather new perspectives on culture and food traditions through our chats with the following dietitians:**

- Geoffrey Svenkeson, a dietitian with First Nations communities in Saskatchewan
- Michelle Jaelin, a TV and media communications dietitian, sharing nutrition, food tips and cultural cuisine content for Asians
- Emily Bell, a dietitian with Health Canada



**Geoffrey Svenkeson, RD** is a dietitian who works in Community Dietetics with First Nations communities in Saskatchewan.

## **Why does this Nutrition Month theme resonate with you?**

The theme of finding your healthy resonates with my personal and professional views on wellness. It's important to recognize that health does not mean the same thing to all people, nor is it possible for everyone to achieve it to the same degree.

## **How do culture and food traditions influence conversations you have with clients or communities?**

I work with individuals who share culture and lived experiences that differ from my own. I believe the cultural, social, and emotional elements of food are just as important as the physical nourishment it provides our bodies. This lens facilitates conversations with clients and communities to build on the wealth of traditional knowledge and uphold cultural practices within evolving food and social systems.

The limited amount that I was taught throughout university about Indigenous Peoples was based on generalizations. There is such variety among Indigenous Peoples in family units, local communities, and across territories. Our formal education focuses on particular points in history rather than the dynamics of peoples and communities with evolving values, beliefs and practices. As a dietitian, I am always learning with each unique client.

### **How can resources and tools be adapted to meet the needs of First Nations communities?**

Ask First Nations communities! My nutrition knowledge and experience in developing programs does not equate to knowing what is best for a community of which I am not a member. It is important to recognize that no singular resource is going to resonate with all individuals. In my practice, I may not even discuss food the first time I meet with a new client. I need to get to know the individual before reflecting on how I can best offer support for their health goals and select relevant resources. As a dietitian, I am always learning with each unique client. I am fortunate to be part of an exceptional group of dietitians, who work in Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan, that have vast experience in developing tools and resources. A recognized limitation of this group, at present, is that it consists only of settlers as Indigenous Peoples are underrepresented in the field of dietetics.

## **RESOURCES**

The Dietitians of Canada [Aboriginal Nutrition Network](#) is a community of dietitians working towards reducing health inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well as helping dietitians become confident in providing culturally appropriate care.

### **Related sessions available on DC's Learning on Demand:**

- [Truth, Reconciliation and Food from Kelly Gordon, Fiona Devereaux, Rhona Hanning and Sandra Juutilainen. \(Free for DC members\)](#)

Nutritional considerations for northern First Nations adolescents from Melissa Hardy

- [Part 1 Focus on nutrient deficiency and chronic disease](#)
- [Part 2 Food sovereignty and mental health](#)

### **Here are some additional resources recommended by Geoffrey:**

- [Cultural Safety and Humility - First Nations Health Authority](#)
- [Indigenous Ally Toolkit - Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network](#)
- [Indigenous Canada Course - University of Alberta](#)
- [Plate Visual - Dietitians Working with First Nations Saskatchewan](#)
- [Gifts from Our Relations - National Indigenous Diabetes Association](#)



**Michelle Jaelin, RD** is a dietitian who works on TV and media communications, sharing nutrition, food tips and cultural cuisine content for Asian Canadians

### **What are some common misconceptions about “healthy eating?”**

I love this question, because there are many in the nutrition world. In the social media space, the images of healthy eating often only have one look: Raw, plant-based or vegan – with lots of fresh produce and green salads on pristine white countertops, which is often associated with being clean or virtuous. Another misconception is perfectly prepared meals in glass containers to be consumed throughout the week. While all these examples may be healthy eating for some, the reality is it's highly individual and unique to each person. Healthy eating is different for everyone and depends on culture, dietary restrictions, religious beliefs, food preferences, cooking skills, nutritional needs, environment and so many other factors.

I've always been fascinated with how different people around the world eat. It's the reason why I went into nutrition! Coming from a Chinese background, the way I ate growing up was different from mainstream nutrition advice, and I spent many years learning to accept that. It's now something I celebrate, and I encourage other dietitians and students to celebrate their own unique food culture and remain authentic to themselves and their heritage.

### **How can dietitians help parents talk to their kids**

### **about racism and food?**

I think it's important for dietitians to emphasize the importance of parents exposing their children to many different food cultures at an early age. Introducing new and different foods early on raises good eaters. Parents should also work on being positive role models around foods, including unfamiliar ones. New foods should always be approached with an open mind and a positive attitude. If you don't like a particular food or cuisine, it's disrespectful to say “gross” or “that's unhealthy” or to turn your nose at it. While it's ok to not like a certain food or cuisine, showing respect for other food cultures is a must.

### **What does the expression “Don't Yuck my Yum” mean?**

Food is so tied to people's identities so viewing another culture's food as “yucky” is parallel to racism and othering. This phrase in particular is a response to Asian food (and people) being seen as “exotic” or “different,” centering whiteness as the norm or superior. The history of xenophobia towards Asian Canadians includes anti-immigration laws and stereotypes of migrant workers, perpetual foreigners and cheap restaurateurs is expressed in how the food (and people) are seen as “yucky” or “foreign.”

### **If you could tell Canadians one thing about healthy eating this Nutrition Month, what would it be?**

Forget about all the trendy diets and find your own healthy. It may be incorporating a family ancestral way of cooking and eating from your own culture. I encourage you to dig deep to find out what that is!

### **What does anti-racist nutrition advice look like?**



The role of dietitians is to assess the diets of their clients and recommend changes to help them reach their health goals. Dietitians need to practice cultural competence and cultural safety. This means:

- Learning about what and how different populations eat.
- Understanding how these foods may not be what “science” traditionally deems as healthy.
- Learning about clients’ dietary patterns with compassion, without judgment and recommending changes that the client can do, based on their cultural needs.
- Having conversations around exposing children to many different food cultures at an early age.
- Advocating for the client or population to ensure access to foods they eat.
- When creating recipes and using one from a culture other than your own, avoid saying your recipe is “better” or “healthier.”
- Recognize how power imbalances are present when working with racialized communities or clients. Providing a safe space for learning and dialogue to build trust can help empower clients to reach their health goals.

Anti-racist nutrition is constantly challenging your own and others’ stereotypes of how and what other cultures eat. Don’t be afraid to educate, advocate and be a part of positive change!

## RESOURCES

Don’t miss the webcast on Dietitians Day (March 17th) for more on providing culturally safe and appropriate nutrition care.

**Here are some additional resources recommended by Michelle:**

- [The racism in healthy food: Why we need to stop telling others what to eat - The McGill Daily](#)
- [Don’t Yuck My Yum: Delicious Kids Books That Dismantle Anti-Asian Racism](#)
- [“Hearing the Voices”: African American Nutrition Educators Speak about Racism in Dietetics](#)
- [Japan as Other: Orientalism and Cultural Conflict -Intercultural Communication](#)
- [The Western Fetishism with Orientalism - Worth the Salt](#)



**Emily Bell, MSc, RD** is a dietitian who works at Health Canada's Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion.

### How does Canada's food guide address the idea that 'Healthy eating looks different for everyone'?

This year's nutrition month theme goes hand in hand with Canada's food guide, which is designed to be flexible and relevant to all living in Canada. The food guide promotes health and overall nutritional well-being, and does so by recognizing the diverse contexts within which we live, learn, work and play.

The food guide recommends a variety of healthy foods and acknowledges that there are many different ways to make healthy choices. It encourages everyone to enjoy their food and make choices that reflect their personal preferences, culture and traditions, budget, life stage and lifestyle. Furthermore, it recommends cooking more often, allowing people to make foods and choose ingredients that they like and that work for them and their families.

Eating according to the food guide can help Canadians reduce their risk of developing certain chronic diseases. Health Canada recommends that individuals with specific dietary requirements should seek additional guidance or specialized dietary advice from a registered dietitian.

### How can the Canada's food guide plate be applied to different styles of eating?

We recognize that there are many different ways to eat healthily. It's important to understand that the Canada's food guide plate is a visual tool to help support a healthy pattern of eating.

The foods shown on the plate are only examples of healthy food choices. These foods were chosen based on a number of considerations, such as cost, variety, cultural relevance and availability as fresh, frozen, canned or dried. There are many healthy food choices beyond those depicted on the plate. Choosing a variety of different foods within each food grouping can help meet nutrient needs while at the same time aligning with a preferred eating style.

In addition, the size and amount of each food shown on the plate is not meant to show how much to eat at one time. Rather, the plate demonstrates the proportions of food groupings in relation to one another as a visual cue or reminder to follow when building healthy meals and snacks. It helps to communicate our recommendation that vegetables and fruits should make up the largest proportion of foods throughout the day.

This concept of proportionality can be used whether meals or snacks are served on a plate, in a bowl, on a shared platter, buffet-style or others. It applies to snacks, breakfasts, mixed dishes and family meals – and even to smaller portions for younger children, who may require less food.





### Why did Health Canada choose to recognize culture and food traditions in the new food guide?

Canada is a country that prides itself on its diversity, and so the inclusion of culture and food traditions in the new food guide is important. Culture and food traditions can influence how, what and when people eat, as well as the ways we learn and share food skills. Celebrating and sharing cultural food practices across generations and with friends and neighbours keeps food traditions alive, while fostering a sense of community and contributing towards the development of food skills and knowledge.

Canada is large and geographically diverse with many different food options available throughout its regions. Including culture and food traditions in Canada's food guide encourages people to choose foods they enjoy and that are available to them, recognizing that healthy food choices and eating habits can vary widely.

The food guide also acknowledges that in Canada, there are a variety of cultural backgrounds and languages spoken. To help make the food guide more accessible to our diverse population, the food guide snapshot is currently available in 31 languages, including 9 Indigenous languages. All snapshots were reviewed by dietitians who speak the respective language.

### RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources recommended by Emily:

- [Canada's food guide recipes](#)
- [Translated Food guide snapshot](#)
- [Adjust recipes to meet your needs](#)
- [Cultures, food traditions and healthy eating](#)

# Health Conditions

Dietitians support individuals with an array of health conditions using their evidence-based knowledge and expertise. We collaborate with fellow health professionals to tailor the nutrition focus for both the client's health needs but also for their own informed decision desires.

## The following the dietitians provide their perspective on supporting individuals with a patient-centered focus:

- Piraveena Piremathasan, a dietitian who works in a Cardiometabolic Risk Program
- Christine Francis, a dietitian who works in a long-term care facility
- Whitney Hussain, a dietitian who supports surgical and home tube feed clients in the community



**Piraveena Piremathasan, P.Dt, CDE, CBE** is a dietitian who works in the Cardiometabolic Risk Program and General Services at a multicultural community health centre within the CIUSSS West-Central Montreal.

## What are some common misconceptions that you hear about healthy eating in your practice?

The one thing I hear most frequently is how you have to forego the pleasures of enjoying food when one lives with diabetes or people living with diabetes can't eat sugar or carbohydrates. As a result, the misinformation pushes people to cut out foods that have always been part of their diet. The question I ask these clients is "are you satisfied with the way you're eating?" I believe we need to focus on balance and accepting all foods in our diets, without imposing labels on certain foods or eating patterns. All food is healthy as long as you are conscious of the choices you make in relation to your health motivators and values. As a dietitian, I emphasize on how eating can be both nourishing and a satisfying experience.

### What challenges do you face while helping your clients find their healthy?

Assumptions of our role as a dietitian can be a challenge and that it is more than just providing basic nutritional advice. Having a good line of communication with our colleagues to discuss nutrition interventions in a collaborative way is important.

I often get referrals for restrictive diets to support my clients. If the interventions suggested by health professionals differs from my assessment, it's imperative to have open conversations to understand the views of the referring physician, provide my professional thoughts and build a care plan tailored to the client.

When I work with a new client, my assessment includes their medical history, medications, social supports, financial circumstances and food accessibility before deciding with them what the best approach is for their nutrition plan. I work with clients to personalize eating patterns that fit their cultural and food preferences, financial situation and time constraints. It has always been a gratifying experience helping my clients 'find their healthy' based on their values, unique needs and readiness.

### RESOURCES

The [Diabetes, Obesity and Cardiovascular Network](#) is one of DC's largest networks providing leadership and support to dietitians, providing innovative services, sharing knowledge and resources and facilitating collaborations.

For client resources and the latest in evidence-based practice, visit [pennutrition.com](http://pennutrition.com). There are many culturally adapted handouts available, including on diabetes.

Find healthy eating resources on topics like diabetes at [www.unlockfood.ca](http://www.unlockfood.ca)

#### Here are some additional resources recommended by Piraveena:

- [Diabetes Canada](#)
- [Diabetes Quebec](#)
- [Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists](#)
- [Diabetes Educators Calgary](#)
- [Weight Neutral for Diabetes Care](#)





**Christine Francis, RD, DDEPT**  
is a dietitian who works in a long-term care facility managed by Extendicare Inc.

### **What does “healthy eating” mean in the context of a long-term care setting?**

In long-term care facilities, the focus shifts from treating acute illnesses and managing chronic diseases, to promoting quality of life. Each resident's care plan and goals are much different than the others, where one may require supplements to support their weight and oral intake, and others may require additional interventions to maintain adequate hydration and normalize their electrolytes. Whether it is maintaining their current level of functioning, ensuring they are still able to safely chew and swallow, or providing comforting foods, the wishes and rights of the residents are always respected and considered. Because of the nature of living within a long-term care facility, and usually requiring assistance with the activities of daily living, residents often look forward to their mealtimes where they are able to dine together and enjoy a meal in a communal setting. Having a choice between menu options and entrees creates a sense of belonging and autonomy for the residents, while allowing them to still feel involved in their care and decision making.

### **What challenges arise when loved ones state that the residents should be on an overly restrictive diet in order to be “healthy”?**

This appears to be more common than not, both when communicating with the residents' loved ones, along with the circle of care. The notion that overly restrictive diets to manage and treat health conditions is a collective understanding, whereas recent research has demonstrated the importance of liberalizing diets and oral intake in long term care (for example, discontinuation of a “diabetic diet” and focusing on diabetic interventions instead). In turn, this creates an opportunity for the dietitian to provide education and awareness in regards to the impacts that restrictive diets may cause, along with outlining the importance of adequate nutrition and hydration. Therapeutic diets are available, ordered as clinically required and assessed by the facility's dietitian in collaboration with the interprofessional team with the resident's care top of mind.

## RESOURCES

The Dietitians of Canada [Gerontology Network](#) is one of the largest DC networks. Whether you work in a hospital, long term care, or the community, this network will support your practice and skills to manage seniors' health conditions and quality of life through nutrition.

### Related sessions available on DC's Learning on Demand:

- [Best practices for nutrition, food services and dining in LTC with Dale Mayerson](#)
- [Improving intake with self-directed dining for residents in LTC with Stefanie Finch RD, Cathy Mesner RD and Suzanne Quiring RD](#)
- [Making the Most of Mealtimes \(M3\): Improving food intake in long term care with Natalie Carrier PhD, RD, Heather Keller PhD, RD and Christina Lengyel PhD, RD](#)
- [Diabetes management for older adults with Jodi Crawford RD and Anar Dossa RPh, CDE](#)

### Here are some additional resources recommended by Christine

- [Meal planning In Long Term Care And Canada's Food Guide - Dietitians of Canada](#)
- [A Guide to Healthy Eating for Older Adults Overall recommendations and guidelines to support healthy eating in older adults - UnlockFood.ca](#)
- [Nutrition guidelines for seniors that are 65 years and older - Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Summary of effects of following restrictive diets in older adults - PEN: Practice-Based Evidence in Nutrition](#)



**Whitney Hussain, RD** is a dietitian who supports surgical and home tube feed clients in the community.

### How is the Nutrition Month theme applicable to your practice?

When most of us think of the eating process, we think of consuming food through our mouths. I have the privilege to work with individuals requiring tube feeding where meals look a little different. I have worked with many individuals in hospital but now privately in the community where they are experiencing a huge transition from eating by mouth to primarily via tube. It's overwhelming and scary, but my role is to bring normalcy to their new feeding routine! It's not having "feeds" but rather "meals" or "snacks." It's taking flushes of water throughout the day like how we would sip on fluids. It's giving the client the choice of when they want to eat rather than structured three meals a day. It's providing all the options available to them for their administration of meals, via pump, gravity, syringe or a mix of them all. And it's giving the client the choice of conventional formulas or blended meals because they should have control over what nourishes their bodies.

### What does "healthy eating" mean in the context of a tube feeding?

My goals of a "healthy" tube feed is ensuring they meet their nutritional needs. But that's the easy part. The biggest challenge is the transition to adjusting to feeding via tube when they are back home. As part of research I am involved with looking at the experiences of tube feed users in the community and the anecdotal experience from clients, common themes are trying to understand and navigate a confusing health care system and knowing who to refer to for advice. They are experiencing a medical diagnosis related to their reasons for tube feeding (like cancer, an accident, stroke) alongside learning a new method for feeding that involves medical equipment, new terminology and a new tube connected to them. That's a lot to cope with all at once. They sometimes feel isolated since they feel they no longer can have meals with their loved ones like before, impacting their social connections. It brings me



so much fulfilment being able to see my clients become confident in their new way of eating, being independent, and working together to make their meals integrated in their lifestyle so it doesn't impact their quality of life. This involves meeting and working with their loved ones to be part of the process so they too can better understand the user's meals so it's no longer an "uncomfortable" meal time experience and that this is just a different way to eat. And that the possibility of blending family meals is totally an option! Every time I work with a new client, they teach ME new tips and tricks and provide such immense insight on ways I can become a better healthcare provider.

## RESOURCES

[The Dietitians of Canada Home Care Network](#) is a group of passionate members promoting the critical role of dietitians within the interdisciplinary home care teams across Canada. Not only can home care dietitians optimize nutrition intake of individual clients living at home, they can also help clients: maintain independence, reduce health care spending, and lower risks associated with malnutrition, tube feeds and falls.

### Here are some additional resources recommended by Whitney:

- [My Patient Refuses Commercial Tube Feed Formula, Now What? - DC Learning on Demand](#)
- [Blenderized Feeding Options: The Sky's the Limit - Practical Gastroenterology](#)
- [Home Tube Feeding with Blenderized Foods - The Oley Foundation](#)
- [Best Practices for Nutrition, Food Service and Dining in Long Term Care Homes - PEN: Practice-Based Evidence in Nutrition](#)

# Personal Circumstances

Personal circumstances can also shape the nutritional needs of the Canadians who dietitians support and ensuring equity is critical. Advocating for social justice and considering factors that impact a client's ability to implement nutrition recommendations all play an important part of nutrition care.

## The following the dietitians provide their perspective:

- Jackie Silver, person of disability advocating for people with physical and intellectual disabilities
- Irena Forbes and Karen Giesbrecht are dietitians working in community food and HFI advocacy in Metro Vancouver & the Fraser Valley, BC



**Jackie Silver, RD**, is a dietitian who advocates for people with physical and intellectual disabilities

## Why does this Nutrition Month theme resonate with you?

The Nutrition Month theme resonates with me because people with physical (such as spinal cord injury or cerebral palsy) or intellectual disabilities (such as autism or Down's Syndrome) have unique nutritional needs that often differ from the general population and thus it is crucial to tailor nutrition advice to each individual. Further, one in five Canadians over the age of 15 (about 6.2 million people) has one or more kinds of disabilities --

which means there are many opportunities for dietitians to work with this population.

## What assumptions do healthcare providers make when counselling patients with a disability?

From personal experience and conversations with others, weight stigma is prevalent among many clinicians who assume that people with disabilities don't or can't exercise and may unfairly blame someone's mobility level and health status on their weight. Clinicians should be aware how difficult it is for people with disabilities to maintain their weight when they spend much of their time sitting (despite being physically active). Instead, providers can ask questions like "what kinds of physical activity do you do?" or "what are you able to do in the kitchen in terms of cooking and food prep?" to obtain non judgemental insight. This is why I take a non-weight-centric approach with clients and would rather see them making sustainable behaviour changes which improve quality of life.

## What can a dietitian do to meet accessibility needs of their clients?

Before meeting with clients, you can check to ensure your workplace is physically accessible (ramp and elevator; spaces are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, accessible parking available). Inform the client in advance if the space has accessibility constraints and ask if there is anything you can do to improve the experience. With COVID-19, most counselling has gone "virtual" which is much more convenient for the disability population.

During the counselling session, come up with creative ways to problem solve. For instance, a client who is quadriplegic and has poor hand motor function may have a hard time cooking but may love selecting recipes each week, which helps them get involved in their meal prep. A client experiencing chronic pain and fatigue may often not have the energy to prepare meals. Recommend simple, energy efficient ways to eat healthy by choosing nutritious frozen options or take-out from restaurants. It's also important to keep in mind that individuals with disabilities may be struggling financially, so focus on making budget-friendly recommendations.

### TIPS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF NUTRITION ADVICE ONLINE

These steps will make people with disabilities feel seen and included in your content:

- Add an image description for those with visual impairments
- Include captions on videos for people who are deaf
- Include images of people with varying disabilities to be more inclusive

### RESOURCES

Here are some additional resources recommended by Jackie:

- [Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Nutrition Services for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs](#)
- [Nutritional Health Considerations for Persons with Spinal Cord Injury](#)
- [How to make social media more accessible](#)
- [Inclusive Design for Social Media: Tips for Creating Accessible Channels](#)



**Irena Forbes, RD and Karen Giesbrecht, RD** are dietitians working in community food and HFI advocacy in Metro Vancouver & the Fraser Valley, BC.

### Why does this Nutrition Month theme - find your healthy - resonate with you?

There are some universal recommendations for nutrition, such as eating more fruits and vegetables, yet what is healthy and manageable for us can change in the different seasons of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts how we all cope. In addition, some people care for multiple generations in their family. Some do not have access to a kitchen, or compromise the quantity and quality of food they consume because they cannot make ends meet.

The latter is known as Household Food Insecurity (HFI), or the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints. This limits how people “find their healthy.” Everyone has the right to adequate and personally acceptable food, but that is not the case for many in Canada, and beyond our borders.

### How can I understand the experiences of HFI when providing nutrition counselling?

People experiencing HFI can be defensive about their life and rightly so. Our vulnerable neighbours may overindulge in shame and grief as they struggle to cope. Everyone has their unique strengths and faces their own barriers. Start with being curious. As dietitians, we know nutrition, but not our clients’ life experiences. Storytelling and story-listening can be transformative.

- Language matters. Asking “where do you buy food?” assumes financial means. Instead, try “how do you access food?”
- Ask about assets and constraints. Is there space for food prep and storage? Or access to transportation?
- Hydration is a good starting place for assessment. However, clean water may not be readily accessible, especially for individuals without a home, or who live in remote communities.
- Do not assume people have strong literacy skills and access to technology, or that a lack of income means there is a lack of education, budgeting skills, or food literacy.
- Address systemic inequalities including colonialism and racism that disproportionately impact individuals and communities experiencing HFI.
- Advocate with clients for adequate income and systemic changes, such as policies that provide jobs with livable wages and benefits. This is the only way to address the root cause of HFI.

Abundant food and adequate income is a privilege. In response, we honour the resilience of those who live with the stress of poverty and its ripple effects. We may have good advice to give, but it will only help when our clients have a secure home and the income to stock their kitchen cupboards.

## RESOURCES

[The Household Food Insecurity Network \(HFIN\)](#) provides support to Dietitians of Canada members who are involved in household food insecurity (HFI) and poverty reduction work by facilitating access to practice tools and resources, professional education and networking opportunities. The Network also supports DC advocacy work, as HFI is identified as a priority issue.

### Related sessions available on DC’s Learning on Demand:

- [Household food insecurity: How should dietitians respond? with Delone Abercrombie MPH, RD and Donald Barker MA, RD](#)
- [Applying research and advocacy to household food insecurity with Joy Hutchinson MSc, RD, Mary Ellen Prange MHS, RD and Valerie Tarasuk PhD](#)

### Here are some additional resources recommended by Irena and Karen

- [Addressing Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Position Statement and recommendations - Dietitians of Canada](#)
- [Proof Canada](#)
- [Food Secure Canada](#)





**Isabelle Neiderer, RD**  
is a dietitian with  
Dairy Farmers of Canada

### Why does the Nutrition Month 2021 theme resonate with you?

I have no doubt that the 2021 Nutrition Month campaign will be very relevant to many people. Given the various cultures, food traditions, personal circumstances, preferences, preoccupations and nutritional needs, everybody is unique and so is their diet. Canadians also need the help of dietitians to cut through all the nutrition misinformation and confusion out there in order to best support their health. They need practical tips and advice too on how to eat a healthy diet as they juggle the many pressures of daily life. So this year's campaign is sure to hit the mark and help guide Canadians toward healthy eating decisions for themselves and their family.

### Do you have any suggestions for dietitians as they plan their Nutrition Month activities?

Get involved any way you can because Canadians need your trusted words of advice! To support the education efforts of dietitians across the country, Dairy Farmers Canada (DFC) is pleased to offer an impactful, educational poster again this year. In addition, we produced a series of digital versions featuring a diversity of individuals and meals that showcase how the many factors that influence food decisions can be synonymous with healthful diets. The poster can be ordered in French and English, free of charge, on the DFC website at [DairyNutrition.ca/2021](https://DairyNutrition.ca/2021). We also offer a number of wholesome recipes on Cookspiration and in the Nutrition Month Recipe e-Book ([available at www.NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://www.NutritionMonth2021.ca)) to help people put nutrition advice into practice. People can also visit our website at [DairyFarmersOfCanada.ca](https://DairyFarmersOfCanada.ca) for more tasty and nutritious recipes. Furthermore, I invite everyone to visit our special website [WhatYouEat.ca](https://WhatYouEat.ca) (French [MonAlimentation.ca](https://MonAlimentation.ca)) for more exciting tools and information. We hope dietitians will find these resources useful.

### What nutritional challenge facing Canadians today would you like to highlight?

There is no doubt that there are many barriers to healthy eating. While some people over consume nutrients that are important to limit, Canadian diets are also often low in several essential nutrients crucial for health. Calcium, which is essential for optimal bone health throughout life, is particularly important in this regard. Calcium intake from food sources has significantly declined over an 11-year period between CCHS 2004 and 2015 resulting in widespread calcium inadequacy across the Canadian population. Dietary calcium inadequacy affects an alarming 82%-86% of girls 9-18y, 66%-73% of boys 9-18y, 73-94% of women 19-70y, 44%-64% of men 19-70y and more than 90% of men and women 71+y. This decrease in dietary calcium intake between 2004 and 2015 in the population is associated with a decrease in the intake of milk products over that period. As we encourage Canadians to eat healthful diets rich in fruit, vegetables and other plant-based foods, let's not forget the importance of meeting essential nutrient needs for overall health and wellbeing. To find out more about this important topic and obtain other relevant information, visit [dairynutrition.ca](https://dairynutrition.ca) and the resources offered by DFC in the [DC digital exhibit hall](#) (Starting February 2021).

### How long has DFC been supporting Nutrition Month?

DFC is proud to have supported the Nutrition Month program for over 30 years. Encouraging Canadians to eat well and live a healthy lifestyle is important to DFC and its team of registered dietitians. Research indicates that the Nutrition Month campaign motivates the majority of Canadians to improve their eating habits which makes this an important initiative to support. There is also a natural fit with milk products given their high nutritional value. I would like to wish every dietitian a very successful Nutrition Month!



# Activity and Ideas

## Make this the year you take part in the campaign!

This year may feel a little different as we advocate for our profession during the time of a pandemic. There are many ways to share Nutrition Month content to engage those around you, to promote dietitians, the value you bring in your workplace and your community... but virtually! Plan a Nutrition Month activity using the resources available at [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://www.nutritionmonth2021.ca) and included in this guide.

### 1. Get social!

Adapt the posts in the Nutrition Month 2021 Social Media Toolkit, or create new content using the story ideas in this guide for social media or for your newsletters and websites. Don't forget to include #NutritionMonth in your tweets and direct your followers to [www.nutritionmonth2021.ca](https://www.nutritionmonth2021.ca)

- Find graphics sized for use on websites, email signatures and social media banners in the Nutrition Month resource on [Dietitians.ca](https://www.dietitians.ca)
- Follow @DietitiansCAN and @UnlockFoodCA to see a digital campaign that promotes dietitians, starting in March!

**Share photos with the DC community by tagging @DietitiansCAN and using #NutritionMonth**

### 2. Share the free Recipe e-book!

Share the free, downloadable e-book containing 15 nourishing recipes, hand-picked by dietitians to celebrate Nutrition Month 2021. Available from [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://www.nutritionmonth2021.ca)

- Consider printing colour copies of the recipe e-book and mailing to your social media followers as a giveaway prize!
- Share a link to the resource in your workplace's newsletter

### 3. Try a new recipe!

In addition to the recipe e-book, there are new recipes for Nutrition Month in Cookspiration that are perfect for sharing! Cookspiration is a free, bilingual app and website from Dietitians of Canada.

[Cookspiration.com](https://www.cookspiration.com)

- Organize a virtual cooking class featuring one of the recipes
- Work with your cafeteria to feature and promote a recipe weekly
- Make recipes at home and post the results on your social media channels using the #NutritionMonth hashtag
- Download and promote the Cookspiration app with your patients and clients

#### 4. Give a (virtual) presentation!

Our presence has pivoted to being virtual during this time so consider ways to engage the public in an online setting:

- Virtual presentations to organizations or your workplace
- Virtual cooking classes using recipes from the Nutrition Month recipe e-book, [Cookspiration.ca](#)
- Provide brief nutrition tid-bits through Instagram or Facebook lives, or develop an educational video for TikTok
- Share your personal dietitian story and how you help your communities find their healthy through a YouTube video or Instagram post

#### 5. Write about it!

Get inspired by the Dietitian interviews and story ideas featured in this guide to write articles for your workplace newsletter, website, blog or social media accounts. Ask your Human Resources or Communications department to share it on your work's intranet site or communications bulletin. You can also submit an article to a community newspaper to share the message on a wider scale!

#### 6. Share at your workplace!

Use content from the Suggested Resources and the Social Media Toolkit as inspiration to write tips to share in the elevators, lunchroom, stairwells, water-cooler area, cafeteria, common room, staff bulletin board or your work's intranet site. Or organize a virtual wellness activity with your colleagues to share the Nutrition Month theme. Direct people to [NutritionMonth2021.ca](#) for more information!

#### 7. Share via email!

You can promote Nutrition Month with every email you send! Add a graphic found in the Social Media Toolkit to your email signature and you'll be sharing Nutrition Month messages every time you press "send."

#### 8. Organize a proclamation

Take the lead and reach out to local politicians to arrange an official proclamation for Nutrition Month and/or Dietitians Day (which is March 17, 2021) and to

discuss key issues. Share photos and proclamations on social media with the hashtag #NutritionMonth. Sample proclamation templates can be found in the Nutrition Month Resources on [Dietitians.ca](#).

#### 9. Start a celebration

Dietitians Day falls on March 17, 2021. It's the perfect time to promote the profession. Use social media to wish your dietitian colleagues a happy #DietitiansDay and to educate Canadians about our profession. Don't forget to organize a virtual video get-together with your local dietitians and to join the DC webcast!

#### 10. Start a conversation

Dietitians are important members of interprofessional teams and have a significant impact on the health of patients, clients and communities. Take action by connecting with doctors, other health care providers and community leaders to discuss the types of clients with whom you can have the most impact and the best way to refer them to you. Connect with your HR representatives and colleagues to ensure dietitian services are covered in your workplace extended health benefits!

#### ADVOCACY TOOLKIT (FREE FOR DC MEMBERS)

When someone asks what it's like to be a dietitian, how do you answer? You might tell them about a client that made great strides in improving health because of your advice, or the critical role you play in a hospital patient's recovery. Maybe your story is about working with community partners to increase access to healthy food or teaching food skills to young children.

Stories are an important part of making an emotional connection with decision-makers to advocate for policy change, while also inspiring other dietitians on their professional journey. The Advocacy Toolkit is a collaborative learning space to learn the skills to influence change. Access the Toolkit at [Dietitians.ca/advocacy](#) and share your stories in the discussion forum.



# Suggested Resources

In addition to the resources at [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://NutritionMonth2021.ca) and those suggested throughout this guide, use the resources from [UnlockFood.ca](https://UnlockFood.ca) to remind Canadians that Dietitians can help them find their healthy!

## Culture and Food Traditions

- [All about homemade baby food](#)
- [Managing family meals](#)
- [Cooking with kids](#)
- [Cooking with kids of different ages](#)

## Health Conditions

- [Eating well with Celiac disease](#)
- [10 heart healthy kitchen tools](#)
- [Diverse Foods and Flavours: Healthy Diabetes Recipe Booklets](#)
- [Healthy habits to cope with stress](#)
- [Allergies and Intolerances](#)

## Personal Circumstances

- [Nutrition tips for shift workers](#)
- [Tasty meals when cooking for one](#)
- [10 tips for planning meals on a budget](#)

## About Dietitians

- [How can I find a dietitian near me?](#)
- [What can I expect when I go and see a dietitian?](#)
- [Is there a difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist?](#)
- [Top 5 reasons to see a dietitian](#)
- [What kind of training and education does a dietitian have in Canada?](#)



# Story Ideas

## For Newsletters, Local Media, Social Media and Blogs

Every year, dietitians, students and others share hundreds of stories during Nutrition Month that are evidence-based, practical, helpful and often include recipes to illustrate a point. Writing an article for your workplace newsletter, website, blog or creating content for social media is a great way to promote healthy eating habits and to help others become familiar with the role and value of a dietitian. What will you write or post about this year?

You can refer to the resources in this guide, including the suggested resources list, to support your content! If you are planning a media segment or column for your local newspaper, contact [media@dietitians.ca](mailto:media@dietitians.ca) for suggested key messages and additional information.

### How to amplify your content

- Ask the Human Resources or Communications department at your workplace to share articles on the intranet site, social media channels or communications bulletin.
- Submit an article to your community newspaper
- Write a blog post and share it on social media and tag @DietitiansCAN
- Create a vlog, Instagram story or Facebook live
- Contribute your piece to an established blog or website

### Referencing Materials

If you use or adapt Nutrition Month materials, please add this reference note:

Adapted from the Dietitians of Canada's Nutrition Month materials. Find more information about Nutrition Month at [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://www.dietitians.ca/NutritionMonth2021)

### HERE ARE SOME TOPIC IDEAS TO SPARK YOUR CREATIVITY!

#### Culture and Food Traditions

- Why does this Nutrition Month theme resonate with you?
- How do culture and food traditions influence conversations you have with clients or communities?
- How can resources and tools be adapted to meet the needs of clients or communities?
- What assumptions do health care providers make when giving food and nutrition advice?
- How can dietitians help parents talk to their kids about racism and food?
- What does the expression "Don't Yuck my Yum" mean?
- How can Canada's food guide plate be applied to different styles of eating?

## Health Conditions

- If you could tell Canadians one thing about healthy eating this Nutrition Month, what would it be?
- What might surprise Canadians about your area of practice?
- What challenges do you face while helping your clients 'find their healthy'?
- What does patient or client centered care look like in your area of practice?
- How do you decide which dietary pattern is best for your client?
- How do you counter assumptions about dietitians in your field made by other health care providers?

## Personal Circumstances

- What are common misconceptions about "healthy eating"?
- What are assumptions healthcare providers make when counselling patients about food and nutrition how can they be avoided?
- What questions do you ask to ensure your advice meets the needs of your clients?

## About Dietitians

- How can I find a dietitian near me?
- What can I expect when I go and see a dietitian?
- Is there a difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist?
- Top 5 reasons to see a dietitian
- What kind of training and education does a dietitian have in Canada?
- Where do dietitians work and what do they do?
- Are dietitians covered by employee health benefits?



# GOOD FOR YOU.

Dietitians Help **You** Find **Your** Healthy.

Visit [NutritionMonth2021.ca](https://NutritionMonth2021.ca) for more resources and information



Dietitians of Canada / Les diététistes du Canada  
99 Yorkville Ave, Second Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1C1  
TEL : 416.596.0857  
FAX : 416.596.0603  
Email : [contactus@dietitians.ca](mailto:contactus@dietitians.ca)  
[www.dietitians.ca](https://www.dietitians.ca) | [www.dietetistes.ca](https://www.dietetistes.ca)



THANK YOU TO  
THE NUTRITION  
MONTH OFFICIAL  
SPONSOR:

