

# TOMORROW'S NEWS

UPDATE ON ALBERTA'S TOMORROW PROJECT  
ESTABLISHED IN 2000 TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CANCER AND CHRONIC DISEASE



VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 2 | FALL 2025

## ATP Directors' Letter: Happy 25 Years

It's an exciting time for Alberta's Tomorrow Project – **it has been 25 years since the first participant signed up!** ATP has certainly changed over this time – check out our **25 Findings and Facts** story (p.6) in this newsletter. None of this would have been possible without you – thank you! We are pleased to feature Tracy Matts in our **Participant Feature** (p.3), a long-standing ATP participant who exemplifies the hope we all see in ATP.



ATP's Directors Celebrating our 25th Birthday!

Thank you for completing the Lung Cancer Risk Factors survey, and the Cancer and Caregiving Experience survey (for those it was applicable to). Almost 18,000 of you completed the Lung Cancer Risk Factors survey, and 5,000 signed up to do radon testing in your home. Thank you to everyone who signed up. Some of you reported that you have already done radon testing before! For those who were not invited and/or want to learn more, please check out our study website.

We heard your feedback about challenges with the job coding section of the Lung Cancer Risk Factors survey (yes, we do read the comments you provide at the end of our surveys!). For example, sometimes the website wasn't working, or you couldn't find a matching job. We apologize this didn't go smoothly and thank you for your patience as we implement your feedback. Thank you to those who kept trying, and to those who selected 'don't know' and continued with the survey. If you wrote down your job title but didn't find a job code, that's okay - researchers can categorize it as needed. Now that we have this updated information, we won't ask again for a long while!

Lastly, we are starting our Diet and Physical Activity data collection project. Many of you are interested in how diet and movement influence health. We want to capture this information well, so that researchers can conduct better research. For example, previous studies using dietary data collected by you showed the cancer risk of eating red meat was lessened if lots of vegetables and fruit were also eaten. This is important, because often we hear about cancer risk of this or that food or beverage, but, we don't eat foods in isolation, we eat them together and differently over time.

## Directors' Letter (continued)



ATP staff celebrating 25 years at the Arthur Child J.E Comprehensive Cancer Centre

To better understand diet and movement, we need to ask you about these a few different times and in different ways. You won't be alone – the other research studies like ATP across Canada that are part of CanPath are doing this as well, and we are hoping that over 100,000 Canadians participate. We encourage you to be authentic about your diet and physical activity. Your data will be pooled with many other participants, and more accurate information means better findings. And we know it can also be hard to remember things sometimes – just do your best.

It sounds like a lot – and it is. But it will also be the largest and most comprehensive diet and activity data ever collected in Canada! It will be an immensely valuable resource for researchers for decades. What a great way to celebrate our 25th anniversary and what a legacy! To learn more – visit our [study website](#) or attend **CanPath's November 17th Town Hall** (p.5).

Wishing you best in health,

**DR. JENNIFER VENA**

Scientific Director

**SHANDRA HARMAN**

Strategic Director

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alberta's Tomorrow Project acknowledges that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaty 6, Treaty 7 & Treaty 8, as well as the homeland of the Métis Nation within Alberta and 8 Métis Settlements. We recognize the enduring presence and stewardship of Indigenous peoples on this land, which we all share, celebrate, and care for. By making this acknowledgement, we hope to illustrate our commitment to reconciliation.

## Participant Feature: Tracy Matts

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When Alberta's Tomorrow Project (ATP) launched its first survey in 2001, Tracy was among the earliest participants to step forward. From his home in Stettler, which he affectionately boasts is the "Heart of Alberta" this retired hardware store owner had a simple but powerful vision:

**"if we get enough of us together then we can pull information and track it, and maybe it can put some dots on some i's and some crosses on some t's" to help tackle cancer.**



Tracy Matts and Family

Twenty-four years later, Tracy's commitment to the project hasn't wavered. He's completed a total of 26 surveys (nearly every one released by ATP) since he joined, driven by a deep and personal understanding of why this research matters.

### When Cancer Hits Home

Ten years ago, Tracy battled and survived prostate cancer, the same disease that claimed his father's life after being caught too late. The contrast between these outcomes and the painful loss of his father has driven Tracy's commitment to advocating the importance of regular cancer screening and early detection.

"Any time I can talk to people and tell them, 'make sure you go see your doctor and get your physical every year', I know it makes a difference because that's how I found mine", Tracy explains. He believes that the excellent care he received from his family doctor and other doctors is a big reason why his cancer outcome was as successful as it was.

### A Family Tradition of Caring

This commitment to helping others extends far beyond ATP surveys. Tracy and his wife, both retirees, spend much of their time as caregivers for his sister-in-law who is battling cancer, a role he is committed to thanks to his family-first upbringing. Even grandchildren, his biggest joys, have joined the cause! His granddaughter has run in the Terry Fox Run "for grandpa" since she was little, and this year his grandson will join her.

"This thing, this thing just has to go", Tracy says simply about cancer.

### The Power of Partnership

As someone who describes himself as a "numbers guy", Tracy appreciates that ATP is built on patterns and trends. He sees his participation as part of a collaborative effort with health researchers across Alberta: "I think everybody is pulling in the same direction whether it's research, input to the research, or getting the story out".

Even when ATP transitioned from paper to online surveys, Tracy adapted, acknowledging that while he may not be "the most computer literate", the platform is user-friendly enough to navigate. He also thinks a phone survey option, which ATP is piloting, could help keep long time participants involved.

## Participant Feature (continued)

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To anyone considering whether to continue their ATP participation, Tracy's message is clear: "Your time is worthwhile putting on the table so that it can help save lives... and help the human race chug along. I think [our] information is going to be the only thing that's going to beat cancer".

ATP turned 25 this year and Tracy remains optimistic about our future, seeing it as a worthwhile project. In fact, he shared his hope that "someday you'll get to shut it down, because we know everything we need to know about cancer".

Until that day comes, Tracy will keep contributing his time and story, one survey at a time.

## CanPath Updates

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### Making Strides Toward a Healthier Tomorrow, Together



As we celebrate 25 years, we're proud to share that ATP is the oldest regional cohort of CanPath, Canada's largest population health study. With most ATP participants being a part of CanPath, Alberta has helped CanPath grow to over 330,000 participants across the country. Together, we are making discoveries that are shaping a healthier future for everyone:

- 15 years of CanPath: Last year, CanPath celebrated [15 years of groundbreaking research](#). Thanks to participants like you, researchers are tackling big questions about chronic disease and cancer to improve the health of Canadians.
- Linking health services data: Through a partnership with the [Canadian Institute for Health Information \(CIHI\)](#), CanPath is safely connecting health services data, like hospital visits and long-term care, with your health and lifestyle information. This will give researchers a more complete view of Canadians' health.
- Advancing breast cancer screening: The Government of Canada invested [\\$295,000 in CanPath](#) to support research on breast cancer screening guidelines. This work will help fill evidence gaps and improve early detection for Canadian women.
- Environmental health insights: CanPath and [CANUE](#) added 17 new environmental datasets to be used by researchers. This includes measures of air quality, green spaces, and neighbourhood features. These resources are helping researchers study how our surroundings affect health.
- Regional leadership in action: [Healthy Future Sask](#), CanPath's Saskatchewan cohort, teamed up with the Saskatoon Fire Department to better understand cancer risks faced by firefighters. It's one example of how regional studies, like ATP, lead important local research that feeds into CanPath's national effort.

# Participant Town Hall - November 17th

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Join us for the CanPath Participant Town Hall - November 17, 2025

As a valued Alberta's Tomorrow Project (ATP) participant, you're part of something very special. Together with participants from six other regional research studies across Canada, most of you contribute to the Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow's Health (CanPath) – the largest population health study in the country, with 330,000 Canadians dedicated to advancing research on chronic diseases and cancer.

Your participation has been instrumental in supporting exciting scientific discoveries, and we're pleased to invite you to the 2025 Participant Town Hall: **"Preventing Cancer, Together: How your data is driving discoveries."**



## What You'll Experience

Join researchers and fellow participants from across the country to:

- Learn how your data is being used to support groundbreaking cancer research
- Discover our exciting new dietary and environmental studies: HEAL and CHARM
- Meet with CanPath scientific directors and participants who are driving research forward
- Get your questions answered by our panel of experts

## Event Details

- **When:** November 17th, 2025, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM Mountain Time
- **Where:** Online Zoom Meeting

## How to Register

[Register here](#) and submit your questions for our panel discussion. Please note that the webinar will be recorded and shared on YouTube afterward.

For more information about the Participant Town Hall, visit the [CanPath website](#).

We look forward to seeing you there!

# 25 Findings and Facts

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In celebration of our 25th anniversary we have compiled 25 findings and fun-facts!

## FINDINGS

### Cancer Research Findings

1.



**Eating fruits and vegetables mitigates the cancer-causing effects of red and processed meats.** Dr. Katerina Maximova used information collected from ATP participants over a 13-year period to examine how different aspects of our diet can impact our risk of developing cancer. The study found that the cancer risk of eating red meat was lessened if lots of vegetables and fruit were also eaten—it's all about balance!

2.

**Small organisms in your mouth might affect cancer risk.** Your mouth is home to many small organisms called microbes - they're completely normal and everyone has them. Dr. Morgan Langille used spit samples we collected from participants and found that the mix of mouth microbes someone has (their oral microbiome) might help predict their risk of developing colon cancer.

3.

**Development of a new screening test for aggressive prostate cancer.** Dr. John Lewis used survey data and biological samples from ATP and other databases in the development of the ClarityDX test. ClarityDX generates a score that predicts the risk of aggressive prostate cancer. This enhanced screening test makes it possible to avoid nearly 35% of unnecessary and invasive biopsies and helps men diagnosed with prostate cancer understand if they will benefit from certain treatments or not.

4.

**Lifestyle factors impact cancer risk.** Dr. Dylan O'Sullivan looked at the lifestyle factors of ATP participants including smoking, alcohol consumption, diet, and physical activity to see how they impact individuals' risk of developing cancer. The study found that when combined, smoking and alcohol use increased the risk of developing all cancer types while higher levels of physical activity protected against the development of cancer. This study highlights that taking a well-rounded approach to health, by addressing several factors at once, can lead to the greatest reductions in cancer risk.

5.

**Greater risk of breast cancer when exposed to outdoor LED lights at night?** Findings from research by Dr. Parveen Bhatti suggest that night-time exposure to LED light bulbs in city streetlights may increase the risk of breast cancer. The proposed explanation for this is that light at night can suppress melatonin (a hormone that signals to the brain when it is time to sleep), which has been linked with cancer risk.



## 25 Findings and Facts (page 2 of 4)

**6. Social jetlag may impact prostate cancer risk.** 'Social jetlag' refers to the difference between the time you would naturally wake up (i.e. your internal clock) and the time you actually wake up in order to get to social obligations such as work or school; it is sometimes thought of as a mild but chronic form of night shift work. Dr. Lin Yang used data from ATP participants and found that greater social jetlag was associated with an increased risk of prostate cancer in some men.

**7. Where to focus efforts for cancer prevention.** Drs. Darren Brenner and Christine Friedenreich conducted a series of studies using ATP and other data to estimate how many cancers could be prevented if certain risk factors were addressed in the population. They estimated that if these risk factors were addressed, risk of cancer could be reduced by about 45%. This information provides a bit of a roadmap for where people could focus their efforts to improve health and wellbeing. The work started here in Alberta and has expanded into the national ComPARe project.

### Other Health Findings

**8. Neighbourhoods where you don't need to zigzag might keep you more active.** How easy is it to get around your neighborhood without constantly turning and changing directions? Dr. Gavin McCormack and team studied "street integration", which refers to how straightforward it is to travel from one place to another. Looking at ATP participants who have relocated, they found moving to a neighbourhood where you can walk more directly (with fewer twists and turns needed to reach destinations) increased physical activity. This suggests that neighbourhoods designed with more direct and accessible street patterns could help people stay healthier.



**9. Breastfeeding for longer may have benefits when it comes to menopause.** In a study including nearly 20,000 female participants from ATP, Dr. Erin Brennand found that there may be benefits for women who breastfeed for longer. The research team found that women who breastfed for longer over their lifespan were less likely to experience menopause before the age of 50.

**10. Diet quality impacts healthcare utilization for depression.** As part of a MSc thesis in the School of Public Health, a study team at the University of Alberta used data from ATP surveys to assess the quality of participants' diets. These scores were then compared with the number of physician visits for depression. The study found that higher quality diets were associated with fewer physician visits for depression.

**11. Looking beyond LDL-cholesterol to detect risk of cardiovascular disease.** In Canada, Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol – often called "bad" cholesterol – is commonly used to screen for cardiovascular disease. However, people can still be at risk even when their LDL levels are within normal ranges. By using blood samples provided by ATP participants, Dr. Spencer Proctor found that another type of cholesterol (called Remnant cholesterol) may help identify cardiovascular disease risk that LDL tests might miss. Research suggests that remnant cholesterol may be an additional important measure for assessing heart health.

## 25 Findings and Facts (page 3 of 4)

**12. Street designs impact our walking behaviours.** Dr. Gavin McCormack used data from over 12,000 ATP participants to look at the impact of neighbourhood design on walking behaviour. They found that neighbourhoods with better-connected street layouts were associated with people being more likely to walk as a means of transportation (i.e. to get from place to place). The researchers suggest that urban planners should prioritize creating interconnected street networks to encourage physical activity.

**13. Promising news about antibiotics and diabetes risk.** You may have heard that people who take antibiotics frequently might be more likely to develop diabetes later. Drs. Jeff Johnson, Dean Eurich, and Ming Ye decided to take a closer look at this using linkage data and the detailed health information provided by ATP participants. After carefully comparing people who developed diabetes with those who didn't, they found that antibiotics themselves don't appear to increase diabetes risk once other health factors are accounted for. Such health factors are not usually found in healthcare record data, underscoring the important health and lifestyle information you provide as an ATP participant!



### FACTS

#### ATP History

**14. ATP launched the Participant Advisory Committee (PAC) in 2020.** The PAC brings together up to 30 ATP participants who provide invaluable guidance on everything from survey design to how we should be communicating with participants.

**15.** During the 2013 Alberta floods, ATP **evacuated over 700,000 biological samples** from Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary, where they were stored at the time. All ATP samples are now stored in our [new biobank](#) (with back-up samples at the Richmond Road Diagnostic and Treatment Centre).

#### ATP by the Numbers

**16.** To date, ATP **has helped support 40 students** in various ways. Some have used our data for their research projects (like studying cervical cancer screening patterns), while others have been practicum students helping with behind-the-scenes work.

**17.** Since launching our first survey in 2001, ATP has collected over **11 BILLION data points** from our generous participants. Each data point is a single piece of information, like an answer to a survey question or a lab test result. If each of our data points were a kilometer, you could walk around the Earth 275,000 times!



## 25 Findings and Facts (page 4 of 4)

- 18.** ATP holds **1.175 million biosamples** in our freezers! We've collected blood, urine, saliva, and stool over the years. Our lab team divides each donation into multiple smaller portions called aliquots, which protects samples by avoiding repeated freeze-thaw cycles and gives us backups if anything goes wrong.

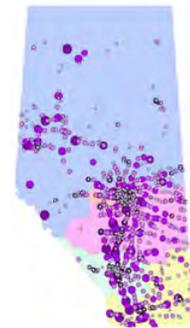
### CanPath Connections



- 19.** ATP joined the **Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow's Health (CanPath)** in **2008**, a national collaboration between ATP and six other similar research studies across the country—our "sibling studies".
- 20.** **ATP is the oldest sibling!** ATP existed for seven years before CanPath's launch in 2008.
- 21.** **The youngest sibling studies are Healthy Future Sask and the Manitoba Tomorrow Project.** Both studies are still recruiting participants. Know someone in Manitoba or Saskatchewan who might be interested? Learn more here: [Join the Study | Healthy Future Sask](#) or [Manitoba Tomorrow Project](#).

### Initial Collection

- 22.** **ATP used mobile study centres to collect blood, urine, and physical measurements.** Vans traveled to over 160 locations across the province, as far north as Fort McMurray and as far south as Raymond.
- 23.** The **first mobile study centre was in 2010** and went to Lethbridge.
- 24.** Before going on the road, the first **30,000 ATP participants were recruited using "random digit dialing" (RDD)**, where we called eligible Albertans by phone!



### Resources for You

- 25.** Longitudinal studies do more than just collect data. Another study in Alberta, [All Our Families](#), produced the **Cultivated Resilience and Flourishing Workbook** from their own research and other scientific literature. It's filled with information, tips, and activities to help cope with stress, increase resilience, and support well-being. Access it free at <https://www.connectionsfirst.ca/cultivating-resilience>. If you use this resource and have any comments, let us know!



## FAQs

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### What happens if I move outside Alberta?

You are still considered an active participant! ATP continues to follow participants even when they relocate out of the province or country. We simply ask that you contact [tomorrow@cancercaREALBERTA.ca](mailto:tomorrow@cancercaREALBERTA.ca) and provide your up-to-date contact information such as mailing address, phone number(s), and email so we can continue to reach you.

### What happens after I turn 85?

After you turn 85, you will no longer be required to complete our health and lifestyle surveys. We do this because ATP is a 50-year undertaking and since our youngest participants were 35 when we started, it makes 85 years the natural endpoint. This does not mean that you will no longer be contributing to ATP though! We will still receive updated health information for you each year through data linkage with hospital and medical records (if you consented to this when you joined the study), which will continue to support cancer and chronic disease research. After 85 you can also expect to continue to receive these annual newsletters!

### I missed the last survey. Does this affect my participation going forward?

You remain an active and valued participant in ATP, even if you miss a survey for any reason (for example, a survey only being available online). There will be plenty more opportunities to participate in future surveys, which we typically release every 1–3 years. Your continued participation is important!

### How is participation post-cancer diagnosis helpful?

Your participation remains incredibly valuable after a cancer diagnosis. While ATP studies how to prevent cancer, we're equally focused on improving the entire cancer journey—from early detection to treatment and recovery. By continuing to participate after a cancer diagnosis, you help us better understand how cancer develops, how different treatments work, and what supports recovery. For example, many of the health and lifestyle factors we study (like diet and exercise) are important both for prevention and during cancer treatment and recovery. Your ongoing participation, especially after a diagnosis, provides essential insights that help others facing similar challenges.



# Have you moved, changed your email address or phone number?

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Please let us know us know if you have new contact information—we want to stay in touch!

## HERE'S HOW TO UPDATE YOUR SECURE FILE

### Contact the ATP Call Centre:

- Send is an email at [tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca](mailto:tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca)
- Call the toll-free line 1.877.919.9292

OR

### Log In to the ATP Participant Portal:

- If already connected, go to <https://myatphub.ca>
- Log-in with your Alberta.ca account
- Once logged in, click "Manage account" menu on the top



## CONTACT US

**Email:** [tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca](mailto:tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca)

**Toll-free telephone:** 1.877.919.9292

**ATP Participant Portal:** <https://myatphub.ca>

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For more information visit: [myATP.ca](https://myATP.ca)

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