

TOMORROW'S NEWS

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



ALBERTA'S
TOMORROW
PROJECT

Inspiring research for
a healthier tomorrow

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This issue: a closer look at our Diet & Physical Activity data collection

In late 2025, we launched **HEAL**: the largest nutrition and physical activity data collection in Canadian history. This ATP newsletter issue explains what to expect and why this research matters:



HEAL^{thy}
Eating & Supportive
Environments

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The Survey Experience

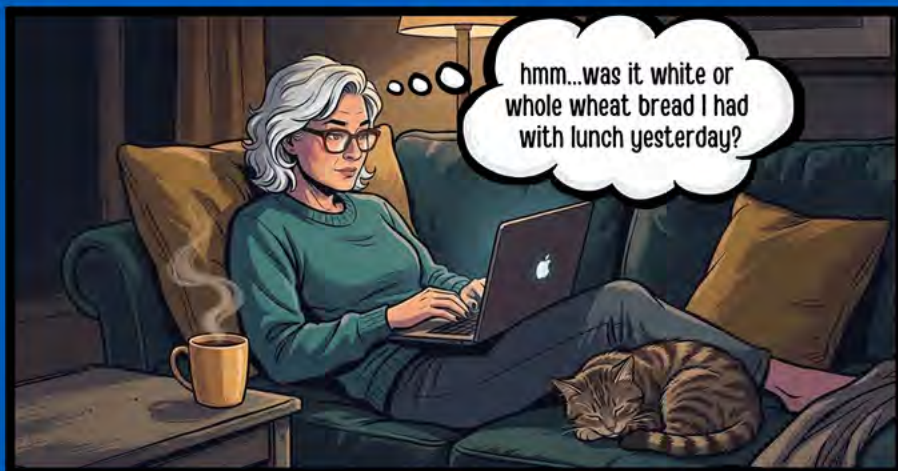
Over one year, you will be invited to complete four short online surveys (“recalls”) about what you eat and how you spend your day.



It's survey time again!



This one deserves a proper time slot...



Reporting your food and activities for one day is only a snapshot. Completing on four days gives us a fuller story. These are spread out over the year to better reflect your usual habits across months and seasons.

**Imagery generated with AI assistance.*

Q&A with a HEAL Investigator

HEAL aims to collect dietary and activity data through multiple surveys (or recalls). You may be thinking: why are there so many surveys and why do they ask for so much detail? We asked the HEAL study lead investigator Dr. Rachel Murphy to share more information on this and other common questions we get.



Dr. Rachel Murphy
HEAL Lead

Why do the food recalls ask for such a high level of detail?

“What we eat is complex. It’s not just what you ate, but when, how much, how was it made (e.g., baked, fried, purchased), and what was in it – ‘mixed’ foods like salads have lots of different ingredients. Those details are important to estimate dietary intake as accurately as possible, which is important to understand links between foods, nutrients and health.”

Why are participants asked to complete multiple surveys over the course of a year?

“What you eat changes day-to-day, over seasons, and over the course of the year. Detailed recalls over multiple days that are spread out help to provide a more realistic estimate of people’s typical diet.”

It can be difficult to remember what I ate and did the day before. Why are participants not given advanced notice of when they will receive these recalls?

“Studies have shown that people change their behaviour, including what they ate, if they know they will be asked to report it. Unannounced recalls are more likely to reflect what people typically eat. The dietary tool – ASA24 - includes prompts to help remember foods, like snacks, drinks or cream in coffee. Do your best, it’s ok if you can’t remember everything.”

What kind of research questions related to cancer and chronic disease will this data help you answer in your research?

“In the short term this data will be used to understand how dietary intake is shaped by the environments where we live and work. But because participants agree to be followed over time, we will be able to study how dietary intake helps people live longer, healthier lives. With the detail we are collecting, we can study this question with precision – understanding the ‘what, when, how, and specific ingredients and nutrients’ that are beneficial.”

Why the HEAL Study Matters for Albertans

Food insecurity is rising in Alberta. Food insecurity happens when people have difficulty acquiring enough food, both quantity and quality, often due to financial constraints. Food bank usage in Alberta has increased 135% in the last six years, and older adults are increasingly affected [1]. A recent Calgary Food Bank report found that 64% of older adults accessing the food bank had not experienced food insecurity until after retirement, something that may feel close to home for many ATP participants [2]. The average age of our participants is 70, and close to half are retired. Increasing medical costs, social isolation, and a higher cost of living, with a sharp increase in grocery prices, all make it harder to afford and access healthy foods after retirement [3]. Understanding how food access and nutrition quality shape long-term health, including the risk of cancer, is exactly why the detailed picture our participants provide through HEAL matters so much.



For many Albertans, food choices aren't a matter of preference, but rather of what's available and what's affordable. When budgets are tight and time is limited, packaged foods, convenience foods, and ready-to-eat meals are often the most affordable and accessible option. These foods now make up nearly half of the average Canadian's diet, and there is growing interest in determining how this affects long-term health [4]. Food choices don't happen in a vacuum... they're shaped by the environments and circumstances we live in, and changing that requires understanding the full picture.

Your participation in HEAL is helping build something the province has never had before—a detailed, large-scale picture of what Albertans are eating and doing day to day.

Even though we are still collecting this information, it is already driving nutrition science forward. In fact, a newly funded research team associated with HEAL has received a large grant to investigate how ultra-processed foods may contribute to colorectal cancer, one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in Canada, and HEAL data is at the foundation of that work.

For some, participation is personal, a way of contributing what they know about their own health to a bigger body of knowledge. As one participant in her late 60s shared, *"I'm still cancer free and I welcome any way I can share my information on my lifestyle, food intake, exercise and more that might be keeping me healthy. I trust ATP to securely collect and share my information with researchers qualified to create research-based strategies for cancer prevention"*.

Beyond nutrition alone, HEAL also captures information about food access and affordability. This will give researchers and communities a clearer picture of the barriers different Albertans may be facing. We can't capture everything, but it's a start. Better information leads to better evidence and decisions. The information you are providing plays a part in identifying resources and supports that different people and places need most. We are truly grateful for the time and thought you put into each survey: it matters more than you know.

Have a question or comment?

We'd love to hear from you. Email tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca and tell us why you continue to participate, what you'd like to see in future newsletters, or topics you'd like to see us explore. Together, we're building a healthier tomorrow.

FAQs



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 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 invited 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 can still receive updated health information for you 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 still expect 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 supports research into 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?

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 us an email at:
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 “Address Update” menu on left

CONTACT US

Email: tomorrow@cancercarealberta.ca

Toll-free telephone: 1.877.919.9292

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

Mail: Alberta's Tomorrow Project
Cancer Care Alberta

Arthur J.E. Child Comprehensive Cancer Centre
3395 Hospital Dr NW
Calgary, AB T2N 5G2
Canada

For more information visit: myATP.ca



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.

In Partnership With

