



Health and Wellness: Persons with Disabilities and Access to (Healthy) Food

2009

December 03 is the United Nations' annual **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**, which aims to widen awareness of disability issues. Globally, persons with disabilities face stigma and discrimination as well as denial of basic human rights including food, housing, health care, education and employment.

Independent Living Canada is marking the day by focussing on Health and Wellness. Health and wellness are not the same as the presence or absence of a disability; they are broader concepts that have a direct impact on everyone's quality of life. Persons with disabilities can be both healthy and well.

Did you know?

- Having difficulty accessing food or not having enough food is **food insecurity**
- **Food insecurity means:** worrying about being unable to buy food due to a lack of money; reducing the amount and quality of food purchases because of a lack of money; and/or going without food because of a lack of money
- Some people also experience food insecurity due to barriers acquiring food, such as inaccessible transportation, poor health or limited shopping options if transportation is not available¹
- **Persons with disabilities are more likely to experience food insecurity than persons without disabilities**
- Young men and women with disabilities (ages 15-34) are more than twice as likely to be food insecure than their nondisabled counterparts;² Middle-aged women and men with disabilities (ages 35-49) are about three times as likely to experience food insecurity than nondisabled persons of the same age³
- In 2007, 12.5% of all food bank clients in Canada have disability income support as their primary source of income;⁴ in 2008, 12.7% of food bank clients cited disability support as their main source of income⁵
- Over 50% of Canadian food bank users report having a disability or limitation⁶
- 21% of people living in food-insecure households in Canada report having 3 or more chronic conditions⁷
- Even when persons with disabilities have access to enough food, they may not have access enough *nutritious* food; this creates a higher risk of developing nutrient deficiencies and for the onset of preventable secondary conditions

Some Solutions:

- Using flyers to find sale items will help save money
- Try buying in bulk; if either your budget or your living space does not allow you to stock up and save, try shopping with friends or family so you can buy big quantities and divide them up
- Create a supper club – everyone can be responsible for bringing a few ingredients, you can cook and dine with your friends while sharing the work and the cost
- Try growing your own vegetables! With just a little work and attention you can grow small plants in your own home all year round for a fraction of the cost of buying fresh vegetables
- Check with your local community resource centre, City Hall or Independent Living Centre to find out if your community has a meals-on-wheels programme (nutritious meal delivery service). They can also help you find out where food banks and community kitchens are located near you; if these locations are not accessible ask them what they will do to accommodate your needs
- Call your local IL Centre to get tips and information about how you can use your food dollars to shop smarter and healthier – they have lots of resources and ideas!
- For information about healthy eating and good nutrition, healthy lifestyles and physical activity you can call or visit your nearest ILC or check out the National Programs section on IL Canada's website

Visit www.ILCanada.ca , call 613.563.2581 or email info@ilc-vac.ca for more information or to find your local Independent Living Centre

1. Brink, Satya. *Lack of Food Security: Focussed Literature Review and Research Framework*. HRDC Publications Centre, Hull, PQ: 2002 (Internet), p. 48
2. Canadian Council on Social Development. *Disability Information Sheet #10 (2003)*. <http://www.ccsd.ca/drip/research/dis10/index.htm> Retrieved 04 November 2009.
3. Ibid.
4. Canadian Association of Food Banks. *HungerCount 2007*. Toronto : 2007, p. 2.
5. Food Banks Canada (formerly the Canadian Association of Food Banks). *HungerCount 2008*. Toronto: 2008, p. 8.
6. United Way Toronto. *Fact Sheet: Helping People with Disabilities Live Independently*. http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/downloads/factSheets/FS_Disabilities.pdf Retrieved 05 November 2009.
7. Che, Janet and Jiajian Chen. "Food Insecurity in Canadian Households." *Health Reports*, Statistics Canada. 2001: v. 12(4), p. 18.