

HEALTHY LIVING

Many factors other than access to medical professionals and hospitals affect the health of Manitobans. These include things like family history and gender, as well as other determinants of health such as culture, education, employment, income, the environment, our personal health practices and social support networks.

Healthy living is about creating conditions and adopting behaviors that promote good health. By making healthier choices and working together to create environments that support health, individuals can reduce their risk of illness and injury. Healthier choices include personal decisions to eat healthy foods, be physically active and to avoid harmful substances or activities. Healthy living also includes living in supportive environments such as safe, healthy homes; having meaningful employment and healthy working conditions; smoke-free public spaces; and access to nutritious and safe foods. Manitoba's Healthy Living website promotes and provides information about wellness, health education, and disease and injury prevention. For more information, visit: www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/index.html or www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/index.fr.html.

How healthy do we think we are?

National survey data provides a look at how Canadians and Manitobans rate their own health. A "self-reported health" question, included in the Canadian Community Health Survey, asks respondents how healthy they think they are. It provides particularly valuable information, as it captures information that is otherwise difficult to obtain about an individual's psychological reserves and resilience. Self-reported health status is also known to correlate strongly with actual health as measured by other means.

SELF-REPORTED HEALTH STATUS

As part of the Canadian Community Health Survey, respondents were asked to rate their health as "excellent," "very good," "good," "fair" or "poor." As Figure 1 shows, slightly (though significantly) fewer Manitobans than Canadians rated their health as "good" (28 and 30 per cent respectively) in 2003, but more of the Manitobans surveyed rated their health as "very good" or "excellent." This value was slightly (and significantly) higher than the comparable value for Canada (62 per cent vs. 60 per cent). About 10 per cent of those Manitobans and Canadians surveyed said that their health was fair or poor.

In 2003, the Manitoba Government announced the creation of a Minister of Healthy Living in recognition of the substantial impact that modifiable factors such as smoking, diet and exercise have on health.