

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR,  
A FRESH START AT WORK

# medisys

## PREVENTIVE HEALTH

Health. Lifestyle. Business.

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5 THINGS TO LOOK FOR  
WHEN COMPARING VIRTUAL  
CARE PLATFORMS

HOW TO STAY ENERGIZED  
AT WORK, ALL DAY, EVERY DAY

5 TIPS FOR PREVENTING  
THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA  
IN THE WORKPLACE

HOW TO FEED YOUR  
BRAIN FOR SUCCESS

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THINGS  
TO LOOK  
FOR WHEN  
**COMPARING  
VIRTUAL CARE  
PLATFORMS**





In recent years, advances in technology have made virtual healthcare tools affordable and accessible to Canadians nationwide. In today's instant gratification culture, consumers are becoming increasingly impatient. Demand for convenient, time-saving, on-the-go services spans nearly every demographic and industry - healthcare is no exception. Canadians, particularly millennials, with health concerns want immediate answers and are becoming less and less willing to spend hours waiting in a clinic lobby for a five minute consult with a physician.

Video-chat apps like Facetime and Skype have become commonplace for personal and business interactions. Not surprisingly, similar technology services are beginning to transform how Canadians receive healthcare. Need a prescription, lab requisition, or specialist referral? What previously may have involved a 45 minute drive to a doctor's office and a one hour wait in line can now be replaced by a two minute text interaction or video chat, from the convenience of ones home or office.

As demand for virtual healthcare increases, particularly among young professionals and working parents, more and more Canadian employers are adding virtual healthcare services like Medisys On-Demand to their health benefit plans. "I couldn't be happier with the Medisys On-Demand service" says Connor Scharfe, VP at Marsh Canada. "I thought I may have had a blood clot in my leg and was contemplating going to the ER. But after a 5 minute video consult with a doc from my desk, I was reassured that my leg pain was due to muscle cramping and not a DVT, I was grateful I didn't spend the whole day at the ER to find that out."

**Considering adding virtual care to your employee benefits program? Buyers beware: not all virtual care apps are created equal.**

Here is a guide that outlines what to look for when shopping around for virtual care platforms in order to make sure you make the best decision for your company.

## 1: ASSESS THE QUALITY OF MEDICAL SUPPORT RECEIVED

There are a number of considerations when assessing and comparing the quality of virtual care support. Here are some things to look for:

- **Is the service 24 hours?** While some virtual care platforms offer 24 hour service, others restrict the service to certain parts of the day (eg. from 8am - 12am and 8am - 4pm on weekends). Consider your employee demographic - if many of your employees travel across time zones for business, have young children, or have chronic health issues, 24 hour support may be especially important.

- **Is the service on-demand?** Some virtual healthcare apps provide instant, on-demand consults whereas others require users to pre-schedule virtual consults at specific times of the day. As daily schedules are often fluid and hectic, many employees prefer the convenience of being able to squeeze in a quick consult between meetings or on their lunch break vs. having to schedule such consults in advance.

- **Is the interaction human or AI based?** Some virtual care apps use artificial intelligence to facilitate initial patient intake and triage whereas others provide an entirely human experience from intake and diagnosis to treatment and follow up. Consider the user experience that best suits your employee demographic.

- **Is the service fully bilingual?** Does your organization do business in Quebec or have French speaking employees? If so, it's important to consider the level of bilingualism of the service offered.

## 2: ASSESS THE PROVIDER'S LEVEL OF MEDICAL EXPERTISE

As with any hot new technological innovation, everyone wants to jump on the proverbial bandwagon. With dozens of virtual care apps popping up in Canada, it's hard to know which ones will go the distance. When considering a virtual care platform, look for a provider with a good reputation and a history of delivering quality healthcare in Canada. Companies like Medisys Health Group, a member of TELUS Health, which offers the virtual care service Medisys On-Demand have been providing healthcare in Canada for over 30 years. Medisys On-Demand is trusted by dozens of Canada's top employers.



### 3: REVIEW THE PLATFORM'S SECURITY FEATURES

Fears surrounding the confidentiality and security of personal health information are at the top of the list of barriers to adoption among those weary of using virtual healthcare apps. All virtual healthcare apps on the market offer some level of security, but not all security features are created equal. Here is a handy checklist of questions to ask when comparing platforms:

- **IT and Cybersecurity:** what measures are in place to ensure the system and data are protected against software damage, accidental or malicious misuse, and data theft?
- **Health Information Privacy:** how rigorously is employee personal health information guarded against unauthorized disclosure, use, or tampering?
- **Staff Expertise:** is the provider knowledgeable and experienced in the Canadian rules and regulations surrounding the privacy of health information?
- **User Verification:** are safeguards in place to verify that the individual accessing the care virtually is the registered owner of the account (eg. photo ID, unique activation link etc.)?

### 4: CONSIDER EMPLOYEE ROLLOUT SUPPORT

Taking the "if we build it, they will come" approach is typically met with limited success when it comes to the rollout of new

technology in the workplace. Change management can be challenging, especially when it comes to embracing new technology. If you are investing in a new service for your employees you don't want an onerous onboarding process to delay adoption. Some virtual care providers make onboarding easy, providing employee communication posters, videos, email templates, handouts and other marketing resources - others leave you on your own. Be sure to ask prospective virtual care providers what support and resources they offer when it comes to employee communication and onboarding.

### 5: CONSIDER HEALTHCARE INNOVATION CAPABILITY

Virtual health is the future of healthcare, and technological innovation will continue to drive rapid change in how Canadians access and receive healthcare. As chronic disease rates continue to rise, virtual patient monitoring will become even more critical to improving health outcomes and lessening the burden on our healthcare system. As the next wave of innovations in virtual care platforms emerge - such as integrated fitness trackers, electronic medical records, and home health monitors - look for a virtual care partner that will be at the forefront of healthcare technology innovation.

To learn more about Medisys On-Demand virtual health for your employees, [click here](#).

Resources:

<https://klasresearch.com/resources/blogs/2018/07/05/virtual-care-which-vendors-are-offering-enough>  
<https://akirahealth.ca/about.html>  
<https://mhealthintelligence.com/features/picking-the-right-telehealth-platform-for-a-small-or-solo-practice>



## 2 in 3 Canadians

would use virtual care if it were provided in their employee benefit plan.

**Click here** to download the FREE 2019 Virtual healthcare Industry Report and learn more about the ROI of virtual care for employers, the barriers and benefits to virtual care adoption and more.







# **HOW TO STAY ENERGIZED AT WORK, ALL DAY, EVERYDAY**

By Andrea Stokes, Registered Dietitian, Medisys Health Group



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After weeks of sunny days having fun outdoors and relaxing with friends and family, the summer holidays are finally coming to a close and you are getting back to your old routine. Even though you may feel sufficiently rejuvenated after the summer holidays, today's fast-paced, busy lifestyles make fatigue and low energy levels a common complaint when work life starts to ramp up in the fall. Many factors can contribute to low daytime energy levels including a poor diet, lack of exercise, inadequate sleep, and stress. Disruptions to the body's natural internal clock (circadian rhythm), such as those caused by irregular shift-work, changing sleeping schedules, and frequent travel, can also interfere with long-term sleep quality and prompt fatigue.

Fatigue makes everyday activities more difficult, reduces productivity and concentration, and negatively impacts your health. When your daytime energy levels are chronically low, you are less likely to exercise regularly, prepare healthy meals or engage in other health-promoting activities. In fact, when people are tired, they typically fall into poorer and poorer health habits that continue make fatigue worse, leading to a cycle that is tough to break. For example, when you are tired you may eat more junk food, sit on the couch instead of exercising, and/or increase alcohol consumption which contribute to and exacerbate low energy levels.

Here are some tips to stay on track and fight fatigue at work:

#### DRINK MORE WATER THROUGHOUT THE DAY TO KEEP WELL HYDRATED.

Even mild dehydration can lead to tiredness and poor concentration. A 1% drop in hydration can lead to as much as a 12% drop in productivity. Sip on a water bottle throughout the day and start each meal and snack with a glass of water. Avoid juice, pop, and other sugary drinks - these have extremely high levels of simple sugars, which can cause drastic dips in energy. Need a boost? [Click here](#) to join the 9 Day Hydration challenge and enjoy the many positive health benefits of improved hydration.

#### CAFFEINATE CAUTIOUSLY.

While caffeine is effective at improving alertness and wakefulness, it can also interfere with your ability to fall and stay asleep at night, especially if consumed later in the day. Try to only consume caffeine in the morning and then switch to water or decaffeinated herbal teas (such as mint tea) later in the day. If you need a caffeine fix in the afternoon, try to have your last cup at least 6 hours before going to bed.

#### EAT AT REGULAR INTERVALS THROUGHOUT THE DAY TO KEEP YOUR BLOOD SUGAR AND ENERGY LEVELS STABLE.

Start with a healthy, protein and fibre rich, low-sugar breakfast soon after waking, and then eat at least every 4-5 hours. At each meal, include a combination of complex carbohydrates, colourful vegetables, and lean protein. If your meals are spaced far apart, include a few healthy snacks to keep hunger and fatigue at bay. [Click here](#) for tips on building healthier snacks.

#### OPT FOR COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES INSTEAD OF SIMPLE SUGARS.

Complex carbs take longer to digest, thereby providing a more sustained and long-lasting energy source. When choosing a carbohydrate source, look for whole grains, legumes and vegetables. If you are looking for something sweet choose whole fruit instead of candy bars or other baked goods. Want to kick your sugar habit? [Click here](#) to try our free 30-day no-sugar challenge.

#### ENJOY TWO ENERGY BREAKS AT WORK EACH DAY FOR 5-10 MINUTES EACH

Take a brisk walk, stretch, engage in deep breathing, run up the office stairs, or opt for a quick whole-body workout. Squeeze in one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon energy break to refuel and revitalize your mind. Breaking up your day with activity will stimulate circulation and keep energizing nutrients flowing through your body.

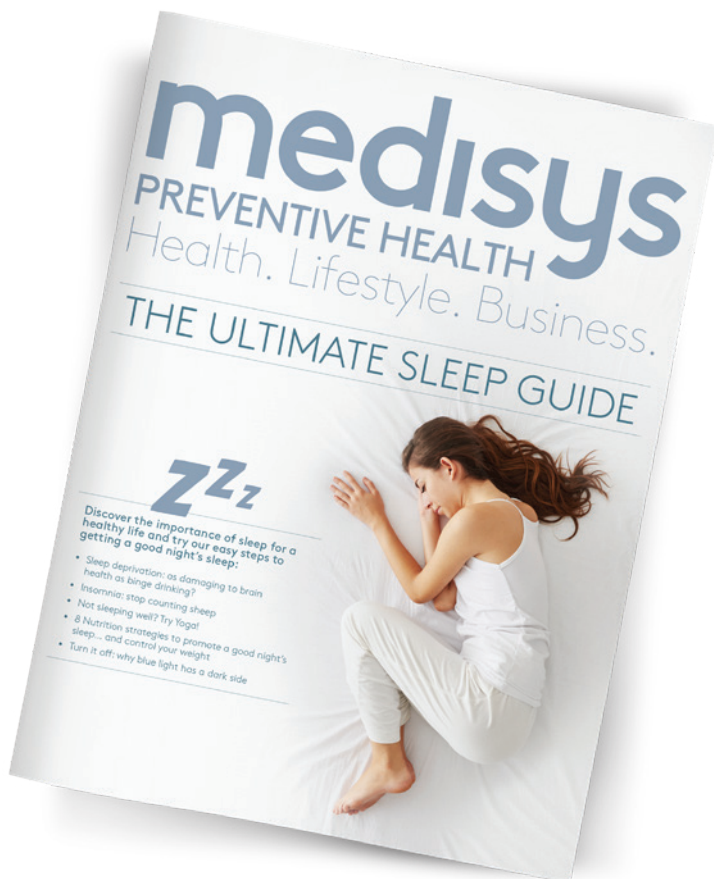
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## MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY.

Canada is among the most sleep deprived countries in the world with about 1 in 3 of us being chronically sleep deprived. There are a wide variety of resources, tools, and strategies out there for individuals who have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. [\*\*Click here\*\*](#) to download your free sleep guide.



Here are a few tips:

- Try eating a small snack before going bed containing complex carbohydrates and a small amount of protein. Examples include Greek yogurt, cottage cheese and fruit, or whole grain toast with peanut butter.
- Consider exercising before work instead of after work. Exercising too close to bedtime can cause an increase in hormones that can interfere with your ability to fall asleep. Squeezing in a workout before heading to work will help boost a more natural, energizing daily hormone profile. Plus, you can take advantage of this post-workout energy rush to get your day started off on the right foot!
- Limit alcohol consumption, especially close to bedtime - [\*\*click here\*\*](#) for more info. You may find that alcohol helps you to fall asleep initially, but alcohol actually can interfere with the recuperative quality of sleep, leading to difficulty staying asleep and poorer quality sleep overall.
- Your bedroom should be a place of relaxation. Try to limit clutter in the bedroom and control for light and noise. Avoid watching TV and using your Smartphone close to bedtime, answering work emails in bed, or staring at other screens (computers, tablets etc.), as the blue light emitted from such screens can interfere with your sleep cycle. If you need to look at a screen soon before bed, try using it at the dimmest setting possible or wear blue-light filtering glasses.

Everybody goes through occasional episodes of fatigue, but when fatigue comes with other symptoms like dizziness, or lasts longer than a week or two, you may consider talking to a doctor. Connect instantly with a healthcare professional from the comfort of your home with Medisys On-Demand. [\*\*Click here\*\*](#) to learn more about our virtual care platform.

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# ENERGIZING PEANUT BUTTER BANANA SMOOTHIE

A great mid-afternoon pick-me-up!

1/2 banana (frozen or fresh)\*

2 tbsp. oats

1/3 cup plain Greek yogurt

1 tbsp. natural peanut butter

1 tbsp. ground flaxseed

1 cup skim milk (or a milk alternative,  
such as unsweetened almond milk)

\*If you prefer a little more sweetness,  
add extra banana.

Place all ingredients in a small  
blender in order listed. Blend until  
smooth, adding more milk or water  
to achieve desired consistency.







# 5 TIPS FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA IN THE WORKPLACE

Millions of Canadians are impacted by the flu. Thousands die annually from flu complications. For most healthy people flu symptoms typically go away within a week, but many individuals report feeling weak for several days longer<sup>1</sup>. The flu represents a significant challenge for employers, with about 1.5 million workdays lost annually in Canada because of the flu, resulting in about \$1 billion in healthcare and lost productivity costs<sup>2</sup>. Infected individuals are typically contagious beginning one day before any symptoms develop and up to seven days after becoming sick. Because individuals can spread the flu

before even knowing that they are sick, the flu travels rapidly from employee to employee working in close proximity.

In a survey of more than 3,700 employees about work and illness, the majority of respondents (72%) reported going to work when sick. Fifty-five percent of respondents reported feeling guilty when calling in sick, even though fifty three percent reported that they have become ill because of sick co-worker<sup>3</sup>.



# WANT TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FLU THIS SEASON IN YOUR WORKPLACE? FOLLOW THESE HELPFUL TIPS:

## TIP 1: ENCOURAGE SEASONAL VACCINATION AND PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

- Encourage all employees to get the flu vaccine each fall.
- Keep work desks, conference rooms, washrooms, and common areas stocked with hand sanitizer and tissues.
- Provide flu information and prevention tips in employee washrooms and common areas (eg. how to recognize the first signs of the flu, the difference between the flu and the common cold, the importance of frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, avoiding close contact etc.).
- Provide information to employees with specific needs or risk factors as it relates to the flu (eg. pregnant women or employees caring for young children or elderly parents).

## TIP 2: REMIND EMPLOYEES STAY HOME WHEN SICK

- Before the flu season begins, ensure employees understand the importance of staying home when sick and are aware of the company's policies surrounding employee illness and sick days.
- When an employee comes to the office with flu symptoms, remind them to go home and get well, and to stay home until symptoms have subsided.
- Encourage employees with a fever to stay home until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without the use of fever-reducing medications).

## TIP 3: PREPARE FOR A PANDEMIC FLU

- Pandemic flu is different from season flu and it is uncommon, with the last pandemic flu occurring in 2009<sup>4</sup>. However, many experts believe the next pandemic flu is inevitable.
- A pandemic flu could affect as many as 40 percent of the workforce and has a major impact on the general public, businesses, and the economy. Employees may be absent due to their own illness or to care for sick children.
- Plan for the direct business impact of a pandemic flu (eg. financial, logistical) as well as the direct impact on employees and their families.

## TIP 4: SCHEDULE AN ON-SITE VACCINATION CLINIC FOR EMPLOYEES

- Flu season typically begins in the fall, yet many will procrastinate getting the flu shot until the middle of winter, after noticing their friends and colleagues fall ill. By hosting an on-site flu vaccination clinic at your office before the end of October, you can ensure employees get the maximum benefit of vaccination and optimize flu prevention.
- The inconvenience and stress of travelling to and from a doctor's office or clinic during a busy workday prompts many to delay their annual flu shot or forgo it altogether. With an onsite flu clinic, employees don't need to travel, prompting higher employee vaccination rates.
- When considering the broader flu-related costs to employers such as absenteeism and lost productivity, on-site flu vaccination clinics save businesses money by both reducing employee time away from work to get vaccinated and reducing flu related absenteeism.
- Onsite flu clinics, like other employee health and wellness programs, help boost employee morale by making employees feel cared for.

## TIP 5: SPREAD THE WORD

- Encourage managers to get vaccinated and to lead by example. Get managers involved in promoting the company's onsite flu clinic and other flu-prevention measures, having support from senior management will help boost participation.
- Provide flu posters and pamphlets about onsite flu clinics in high-traffic areas (eg. break rooms, elevators, cafeterias etc.) and provide this information digitally (employee intranet, company emails) to maximize staff awareness and participation.
- After each flu season, solicit feedback from employees about the effectiveness of the company's flu-prevention and vaccination program and garner recommendations for future years' programs.
- Get creative - try hosting a contest where employees in different departments compete for the highest flu vaccination rates for a prize that fosters team-building.

Medisys is Canada's leading provider of corporate flu vaccination programs. Our experienced and qualified nationwide vaccination and management teams are here to assist you with every aspect of your company's immunization campaign - from promotional support to in-office vaccinations and follow-ups. [Click here](#) to learn more about our onsite vaccination clinics.

### Sources:

1. <https://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/stay-home-cold-flu>
- 2, 3. <https://www.benefitscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/influenzaatwork-2012-e1.pdf>
4. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/resource-center/freeresources/graphics/seasonal-vs-pandemic-flu-infographic.htm>





# FEED YOUR BRAIN FOR SUCCESS

By Andrea Stokes, Registered Dietitian, Medisys Health Group



Your brain is always working and burning energy. While the brain represents just 2% of a person's total body weight, it accounts for 20% of the body's energy use. Even while you are at rest, your brain is hard at work. This constant work requires a steady stream of fuel, and the foods you choose to fuel your body make a big difference in terms of optimizing brain function. Food can affect the structure and function of your brain as well as influence your mood. While research on this important topic is still ongoing, there are a number of recommendations that you can incorporate into your diet now in order to start reaping brain health benefits.

## FOOD AND BRAIN HEALTH

Inflammation and oxidative stress can cause damage to brain cells, leading to a decline in brain function. Inflammation can be caused by a number of factors, including exposure to environmental toxins, infections, stress, and poor nutrition. Oxidative stress is caused by free radical damage. Free radicals are produced as a type of waste product when the body uses oxygen. While your body is always producing free radicals, antioxidants can help to neutralize them and prevent them from causing harm. Antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds are plentiful in a healthy and balanced diet. An unhealthy diet, on the other hand, lacks these health-promoting compounds and can even supply substances that cause further damage to your body cells, including those in your brain.

## FOR A HEALTHY BRAIN, EAT MORE...

- **DHA.** A type of omega-3 fatty acid, DHA has been shown to reduce inflammation in the body. The best source of DHA is oily fish, such as salmon, herring, mackerel, and sardines. Aim to include at least two serving (3 oz.) of oily fish per week. If you aren't able to eat fish, consider taking a fish oil supplement.
- **Antioxidants.** Antioxidants are naturally occurring chemical compounds found in plant foods, including fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, and herbs and spices. Including a wide variety of plant foods in your diet ensures you take in a wide variety of helpful antioxidants.
- **Polyphenols.** Polyphenols are a type of plant antioxidant that can exert powerful anti-inflammatory effects. Some of the best sources include berries, citrus fruits, teas, onions, and flaxseed.
- **Probiotics and prebiotics.** A healthy balance of beneficial bacteria in your gut can help to reduce inflammation in the body by regulating the immune response and producing or inhibiting various anti-inflammatory and pro-inflammatory substances. Gut bacteria also help with the production of a variety of neurotransmitters involved in brain function and overall mood, including serotonin. Low levels of serotonin have been linked to anxiety, depression, and insomnia. You can promote a healthy balance of gut bacteria by eating a balanced diet that includes prebiotics (non-digestible carbohydrates that act as "food" for gut bacteria) and probiotics (good bacteria that naturally live in our digestive tract). Food sources of prebiotics include vegetables, whole grains, and fermented dairy products, such

as yogurt and kefir. Food sources of probiotics include milk, yogurt, cheese, kefir, sauerkraut, tempeh, kimchi, and pickled vegetables.

## FOR A HEALTHY BRAIN, EAT LESS...

- **Added sugars and refined carbohydrates.** A high intake of refined sugars can cause harm to the brain by worsening your body's regulation of insulin as well as promoting inflammation and oxidative stress. High sugar intake may even have an effect on mood disorders, such as depression. Avoid sugars and refined carbohydrates by minimizing your intake of table sugar, syrups, jams, desserts, baked goods, processed foods, and white breads and pastas. Stick with healthier carbohydrates sources instead, such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and wholegrains.
- **Trans fats.** A high consumption of trans fats has been linked to increased inflammation in the body as well as impairments to memory function. Trans fats are also known to increase the risk of heart disease, so it is best to avoid this type of fat totally. Avoid any food products that list "hydrogenated oil" in the ingredient list and limit your intake of processed foods (as natural, whole foods will never contain artificial trans fats).
- **Total calories.** Achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight, and consuming only the calories you need, can help to decrease inflammation in the body as well as decrease your risk of diabetes and heart disease (both of which can further increase your risk of poor brain health). While maintaining a healthy weight can be challenging, it's important to educate yourself on your personal calorie needs (which is largely dependent on your physique and physical activity levels) and appropriate portion sizes. Also, engage in regular physical activity as often as possible.

Want to eat healthy while improving your brain function? Receive recommendations and practical advice from our registered dietitians. [Click here](#) to learn more about our nutrition services.

## 5 SIMPLE TAKE-AWAY TIPS

1. Include a half cup serving of berries every day (fresh or frozen are both great choices).
2. Sip on polyphenol-rich tea in the afternoon or evening (green, black, or oolong).
3. Eat two servings of fatty fish per week).
4. Include at least one cup of leafy greens each day (spinach, kale, broccoli, cabbage).
5. Swap out salt and sugar for herbs and spices.



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