

## Pulse

### Older and wiser?

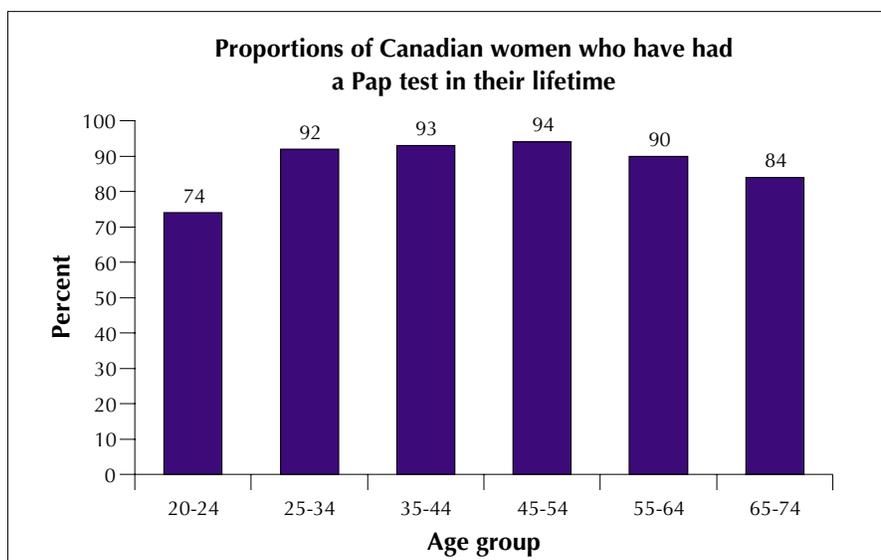
Data from Statistics Canada's National Population Health Surveys (1994/95 and 1996/97) reveal that the likelihood of women practising certain health behaviours varies over the life cycle.

Younger women are less likely than older women to try to reduce the amount of fat in their diet, with 64% of women aged 20–24 and 65% of those aged 25–34 reporting having taken ac-

tion, compared with 77% and 80% in the 45–54 and 55–64 age groups. Older women are also somewhat more concerned about increasing the levels of starch and fibre in their diet: 37% of those aged 45–54 and 44% of those aged 55–64 have taken action in this regard, compared with 28% of those in the 20–24 age group and 30% of those in the 25–34 age group. These differ-

ences are perhaps not unexpected, given that the likelihood of being overweight increases with age. Only 19% and 31% of women in the 20–24 and 25–35 age groups are overweight, compared with 46% and 53% of those aged 45–54 and 55–64.

Age is also a factor in the likelihood of women ever having had a Pap test, and having had a Pap test according to the recommended schedule (every 3 years). Women aged 75+ and 20–24 are the least likely to ever have had a Pap test (67% and 74%), while 90% or more of those aged 25–34 through 55–64 have had the test at some point in their life. However, among women who have had the test, younger women were more likely to have had it within the past 3 years (98% of those aged 20–24 and 94% of those aged 25–34, compared with only 74% of those aged 55–64). — *Shelley Martin*, Physician Survey Analyst, CMA



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### “If everybody lived like Canadians do, we’d need 5 more planets”

The current emphasis on global economic development is a “form of brain damage,” Canada’s best-known environmentalist says. Speaking during the Sixth Canadian Conference on International Health in November, David Suzuki said it’s impossible to separate economic interests from the environment. “The economy is based on the idea that we can have steady growth forever, and if we don’t it’s a disaster. But only 2 things believe in growth forever: the economy and

cancer cells. Both result in death.”

The environment was a mainstream concern during the 1980s, says Suzuki, but by the early 1990s the economy ruled again. Ironically, this re-emphasis came on the heels of a 1992 document signed by 1600 senior scientists warning that “there is a collision course for life on the planet.”

Suzuki says mankind is destroying the earth at an unprecedented rate, with a minimum of 35 000 species becoming extinct each year. Meanwhile,



**Suzuki: Economic interests and the environment are one**

Canadians consume more and more. In the last 40 years, the average family size decreased by 50% while the aver-