

# **Blue Cross® Health Study shows most Canadians recognize the importance of preventative health, but nearly half are not seeking the care they need**

*National study reveals that perceived limitations and barriers are preventing 48 per cent of Canadians from seeking care.*

**TORONTO, September 18, 2024** – A new study from Blue Cross suggests that Canadians are making lifestyle changes to better their health and have a solid understanding of the importance of preventative health strategies. But there is also a catch – nearly half (48%) are not seeking the help they need from health professionals due to perceived limitations or barriers.

“Canadians understand the benefits of preventative care, namely for improving their quality of life, and acknowledge that daily habits play a critical role in supporting health,” says Tim Bishop, Managing Director, Blue Cross of Canada. “However, many Canadians are not taking advantage of the available health services to complement their healthy habits.”

According to the study, most Canadians (72%) have tried to improve their health or fitness in the past 12 months by taking their health into their own hands: eating a nutritious and balanced diet (69%) and exercising regularly (67%) were listed as the two most important preventative health measures. Younger generations are also particularly committed to improving their health: 84 per cent of Gen Z and 79 per cent of Millennials have tried to improve their health or fitness in the last 12 months, compared to only 64 per cent of Gen X and Boomers respectively.

## **Challenges in seeking care**

Outside of their own healthy habits, many Canadians also recognize the value in maintaining their health, listing regular check-ups (56%), regular screenings/early-detection (41%), and health education (34%) as key prevention tactics. Still, nearly half (48%) are not seeking care from health professionals when needed, often because of fear and anxiety (19%), lack of time (17%), and lack of transportation (10%). The study also found that fear and anxiety are more common among Gen Z (31%) and those with precarious finances (35%).

“It is concerning that many Canadians are not seeking essential health services when they need it,” says Bishop. “These perceived barriers not only impact individual wellbeing but also underscore the urgent need for accessible solutions, like health benefits plans, that empower Canadians to access the care they need and value.”

The study indicates that even those who can afford care are not seeking it. Nearly half (48%) of Canadians with stable finances did not seek care, along with 36 per cent of Canadians whose financial situation was comfortable. The study also found that women (69%) are more likely than men (57%) to postpone seeking care, highlighting a striking gender disparity in use of health services.

## **The benefits of health plans**

The study demonstrates that those with health benefits, either through personal health insurance or an employer-provided plan, are more likely to report better health and seek care when needed. Canadians

with health benefits plans are more likely to visit a health professional, regardless of their income, than those without a plan. Those with benefits are also twice as likely to visit a chiropractor, naturopath, or massage therapist.

As a result, it's no surprise that those with health benefits plans fare better when it comes to self-reported health outcomes: 69 per cent of individuals with health benefits perceive themselves to be in good health, compared to 55 per cent without. Further, those with benefits are also far more likely (77%) to have pursued health and fitness improvements in the past year.

“Health benefits play a pivotal role by promoting preventive care, managing illnesses, and offering additional protection against unforeseen medical expenses,” says Bishop. “Blue Cross is dedicated to enhancing Canadians’ wellbeing by offering a range of tailored health benefits options that meet individual needs and provide peace of mind.”

### **Rise of new health approaches, including virtual care**

Pharmacists and virtual options are changing how Canadians access care – and are providing relief to some of the key challenges Canadians experience when accessing health services. According to the study, 90 per cent of Canadians are visiting their pharmacist, and as many pharmacists can diagnose and treat minor conditions, visits have increased 12 per cent since 2022.

Further, one-third of Canadians (31%) report using a combination of virtual and in-person solutions, citing that virtual care reduces transportation limitations (52%) and makes booking appointments easier (36%) and faster (36%). Younger generations show a preference for digital-first care: Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to cite benefits of virtual care, and while family doctors are the primary source of health information for Gen X (66%) and Boomers (79%), 60 per cent of Gen Z and 56 per cent of Millennials defer to digital sources (social media, fitness apps, online sources) first.

“There is no single or best way to access care – it depends on the person and their specific needs. From walk-in clinics to tele-health and virtual care platforms, Canadians are enjoying the variety of benefits each format provides,” states Bishop. “As a partner in Canadians’ health journeys, Blue Cross is proud to help Canadians access preventative services when and how they need them.”

To learn more about the study, please visit [www.bluecross.ca/healthstudy](http://www.bluecross.ca/healthstudy).

### **About the Blue Cross Health Study**

To create the 2024 Blue Cross Health Study, Research + Knowledge = Insight, an independent research company, conducted an online survey from April to July 2024. The comprehensive sample for this survey includes 2,133 adult Canadians, including 12 key demographic measures. The study has a margin of error of plus or minus 2%, 19 times out of 20.

### **About Blue Cross**

The Canadian Association of Blue Cross Plans (Blue Cross of Canada) represents the independent Blue Cross Member Plans and Licensees operating in all regions nationally. These include Alberta Blue Cross, Canassurance Blue Cross (Québec Blue Cross and Ontario Blue Cross), Manitoba Blue Cross, Medavie Blue Cross, Pacific Blue Cross, Saskatchewan Blue Cross and Blue Cross Life. For more information, please visit [www.bluecross.ca](http://www.bluecross.ca).

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