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Editor's Note

The ancient Greek physician Hippocrates once described health as the greatest of all human blessings. Some two millennia later and half a world away, the Canadian health care system is helping all Canadians realize that blessing. Regarded as one of the world's most accessible, comprehensive and progressive, the Canadian model combines compassion with the latest medical advances to provide an unprecedented standard of health care for every citizen.

Once defined in terms of the absence of disease, health today refers to a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Healthiness is thus envisaged as a part of everyday living, an essential dimension of one's "quality of life."

Today, Canadians are participating in a health and fitness "revolution" that sees health promotion as an accepted fact of everyday life. And with average expected life spans of 80 years for women and 73 years for men, Canadians now rank among the top 10 healthiest nations in the world.

The hub of Canada's health care system is a nation-wide, publicly funded and administered health insurance program that ensures that every Canadian — regardless of financial circumstances — receives medical care. In addition to this is a solid research and technology infrastructure which has allowed Canadian scientists to remain at the forefront of medical developments. From breaking new ground in areas

such as laser technology and diagnostic imaging, to a deeper understanding of how one's genetic make-up controls the body and senses, Canadian researchers have provided vital impetus to the advancement of medical science.

A look into Canada's health and medical care system provides an intimate glimpse into the lives of Canadians — their beliefs, their lifestyles, their expectations. The pages that follow are an attempt to provide such a glimpse.



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