



# Top 10 Trends

## DIETITIANS CAN LEVERAGE IN 2024

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**Carol Harrison, RD PHEc**  
Communications Dietitian



**Shannon Crocker, RD PHEc**  
Communications Dietitian

INTRODUCTION

# Don't just keep up, stay ahead of the game!

Gear up for 2024! To save time and kick overwhelm to the curb, we've put together a list of emerging and enduring food and nutrition trends, so you can share relevant advice with your clients and communities.

At Spark Nutrition Communications, we attend trade shows, watch social media trends, read industry news, and review trend reports (and much more!) to identify key topics and issues for nutrition professionals.



We've curated 10 top trends we believe are highly relevant for nutrition professionals. And because we like to take it one step further, we've included opportunities to leverage those trends, along with useful resources.

*-Shannon & Carol*

# 5 health trends for 2024

Post-pandemic, Canadians are more aware than ever about health and wellness, and many want to improve their own physical and mental well-being.

This macro trend spells opportunity for nutrition professionals. These five health trends are intrinsically linked with nutrition, and they're great topics to cover when you interact with your clients and communities.

## 1) Brain health

## 2) Gut health

## 3) Food as medicine

## 4) Women's health

## 5) Active healthy aging



# 1) Brain health

The brain health revolution is no fad—it's the powerhouse trend that's here to stay. Why the frenzy? A few things have contributed to this, including the post-pandemic interest in managing our brain and mental health, a recent surge in research on nutrition and brain health, and a massive cohort of older adults looking to stay sharp for longer. Plus, mood and anxiety disorders are now the third most prevalent chronic disease in Canada (ahead of diabetes, even).

We're seeing an increase in food products, beverages and supplements that claim to help with memory, mood, brain fog and, of course, stress (calming teas, etc.).

## Opportunity

This trend is relevant for all nutrition practice areas—and it's about much more than preventing dementia. Nutrition is a key pillar for brain health across the lifespan. Also, the impact of metabolic and brain health is bidirectional—patients with metabolic issues are also dealing with mental health issues, and vice versa. This opens up more opportunities for a teams-based approach to care. We also expect this research area to grow significantly, offering dietitians an opportunity to take part in practice-based research and knowledge translation.



## Resources

Boost your knowledge of nutrition basics for brain and mental health. Check out our Brain Health Webinar replays (Parts 1 and 2) and get access to two awesome resources ([GET THEM HERE!](#) Available only until Feb 29, 2024 11:59 p.m. ET):

- Feed Your Brain, Nourish Your Mind Recipe E-book (you can brand it and share it, but please do not monetize it)
- Feed Your Brain, Nourish Your Mind Dietitian Toolkit

## 2) Gut health

When it comes to wellness trends, prioritizing gut health is undeniably one of the biggest! Canadians are becoming more aware of the connection between managing digestive issues and improving overall health and wellbeing.

We're seeing more probiotic and prebiotic products on store shelves—products like kombucha salad dressing, prebiotic soda, fermented condiments and Chinese broth kits with gut-calming ingredients. And fibre is being added to everything!

### Opportunity

This is a great opportunity for personalized nutrition. You can help clients/communities cut through the clutter by providing client-centric advice about products and supplements, along with your dietary strategies and recipes. To get ready to discuss gut health products, consider brushing up on basics like the difference between fermented and probiotic foods, and probiotic strains in various supplements.



### Resources

Staying on top of the science in this area can be a challenge. We recommend checking out the [Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products Available in Canada](#), an evidence-based list of probiotic foods and supplements.

## 3) Food as medicine

This can be a hot-potato topic (food pun intended!) for our profession. Here's where we stand: Obviously, food does not replace antibiotics, but it can be a tool to improve health outcomes. The 'food as medicine' trend is coming up fast and furious, especially because the U.S. government announced in 2022 a commitment toward diet-related research and programmatic efforts to increase access to 'food as medicine' initiatives. We're seeing all sorts of initiatives popping up.

One interesting example is the collaboration between [Google Health](#) and the [Food as Medicine Institute at Tufts University](#), which are exploring tech solutions to help improve the quality of nutrition information. And how about all the webinars, conference sessions and articles on this topic?

### Opportunity

As food and nutrition professionals, we're well-positioned to dial up our efforts and show how to put our advice into practice in the kitchen. We need to work on best practices, yes, but we only learn that by doing. So, we say: start sharing recipes, and don't let the fact that you haven't gone to culinary school hold you back. People don't need a chef—they need simple everyday ideas to improve from where they're at right now. And if you're already sharing recipes and cooking tips, consider levelling up by launching a small-scale teaching kitchen program.



### Resources

To learn more about how dietitians can be leaders in culinary nutrition (part of the 'food as medicine' movement), check out this journal article: [Preparing Registered Dietitian Nutritionists for Leadership in Culinary Medicine: Opportunities, Barriers, and Alternatives in Registered Dietitian Nutritionist Education and Training](#).

## 4) Women's health

Finally, women's health is starting to get some love—still not enough, but at least things are moving in the right direction. One example of progress: the focus is shifting from weight loss to addressing women's health needs across the life cycle, especially menopause.

We're seeing brands start to talk about menopause and showcase how their products can help with energy, mood, sleep and hot flashes. Overall, women's health is getting more buzz: health magazine articles, self-help books, specially formulated supplements and, of course, social media posts.

### Opportunity

By 2025, an estimated one billion women will be menopausal worldwide, and with that we can expect lots of bogus products and claims to flood the market. Help your clients and communities by busting misinformation and offering practical advice that works. Consider getting involved in practice-based research or carving out a niche here.



### Resources

Want to dig into women's health issues? Read this jam-packed [journal article](#). It discusses how nutrition policy for women is falling short and provides expert recommendations for improvement. And for all things menopause, [The North American Menopause Society](#) is a valuable resource.

## 5) Active healthy aging

Gen Xers—people in their mid-40s to late 50s—are driving this trend, as they look to not only increase their health span but also thrive. They want to ward off chronic diseases as long as possible and optimize their health. Nutrition plays a role in many of their concerns: cardiovascular health, joint health, brain health and stress / mental health (especially as a sandwich generation), and getting a good night's sleep. According to [Mintel's 2024 Global Food and Drink Trends report](#), 78% of Gen Xers say they struggle with sleep.

Gen Xers also have broader aspirational goals where nutrition can play a role, like feeling good, strong, energized and connected with others. Is food not the ultimate connector?

### Opportunity

As nutrition pros, we can share tips and meal ideas featuring nourishing foods with nutrients for optimal aging. You could talk or write about ways that nutrition can support middle-aged Canadians beyond preventing and managing chronic disease, such as better sleep and boosted energy. And we know that maintaining strong social ties is vital for good health, so we can also promote the experience of eating together in social settings.



### Resources

See the [Institute of Aging](#), part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, for information that can help you improve the health and quality of life of Gen Xers and older Canadians.



# 5 food and nutrition trends for 2024

Here are five food and nutrition trends related to our top five health trends.

- 1) Plant-based foods with less processing**
- 2) Functional foods for optimal health**
- 3) Better-for-you beverages**
- 4) Supplements for health enhancement**
- 5) Budget-wise bites**



# 1) Plant-based foods with less processing

Canadians are increasingly interested in minimally processed plant-based foods. Indeed, the sales of highly processed, meat-analogue veggie burger patties, for example, appear to be cooling off. People want, and can benefit from, more whole and minimally processed plant-based foods on their plate, and they're not willing to give up taste or convenience.

We expect to see even more convenient legume- and veggie-based snacks, and more legumes, veggies and nuts in packaged foods like veggie burger patties, rather than highly processed plant-based products.

## Opportunity

As nutrition professionals, we can help meet the demand for less-processed plant-based foods by creating and sharing simple recipes with convenient, better-for-you ingredients like canned beans or nut and seed butters. Think: lentil patties, black bean nourish bowls or make-ahead grab-and-go snacks (e.g., nut butter energy bites) that are more budget-friendly than prepared and packaged goods.



## Check this out

Have you tried plant-based seafood? From carrot “smoked salmon” and celery-root-based “smoked white fish” to enoki mushroom “snow crab,” this category is growing quickly. Watch our Instagram Reel on taste-testing [plant-based seafood](#).

## 2) Functional foods for optimal health

Health-conscious consumers are seeking added benefits from food, over and above the nutrients they need to meet dietary requirements. We're seeing more snack foods and beverages that contain prebiotics, probiotics, medicinal mushrooms, fibre and even caffeine.

These products are marketed for a wide variety of health outcomes, from better brain health and gut health to healthy aging and improved women's health. We're also seeing more fermented beverages and condiments (e.g., mango pickles) marketed as health-boosting, functional foods.

### Opportunity

Expect consumers to ask more questions about if and how they should incorporate functional ingredients like mushrooms and kefir into their diet. Our passion is putting nutrition into practice in the kitchen, so we think it's time for dietitians to embrace their foodie side and become the go-to source for culinary tips on functional ingredients.



### Check this out

Medicinal mushrooms are (still) having a moment and are found in all sorts of food products. Check out our [IG post on mushrooms](#) to see where they're popping up.

## 3) Better-for-you beverages

This category is really taking off! We're talking single-serve, non-alcoholic fizzy and non-fizzy drinks, coffees, teas and broths. Companies seem to be working on delivering great taste with minimal, if any, added sugar, and they're offering features such as local ingredients; clean ingredients; upcycled fruits and veggies; new flavour combos like mango-hibiscus; functional ingredients like herbal teas, probiotics and dried mushrooms; energy-boosting ingredients like caffeine; and calming ingredients like herbs.

### Opportunity

Provide guidance to your clients and communities on functional beverages: What's the evidence? Who can benefit? What is the cost vs. benefit? What should you look for, and how should you choose? Also, consider sharing budget-friendly beverage recipes that offer health-boosting nutrients.



### Check this out

This fall, we tried an award-winning frozen tea cube at the Canadian Health Food Association conference. Watch our [Instagram Reel](#) where we “spill the tea.”

## 4) Supplements for health enhancement

A stroll down the supplements aisle of the grocery store can leave you completely overwhelmed—gummies, botanicals and mushrooms, oh my! Driven by a desire for optimal health (e.g., healthy aging, fitness, and brain and mental health), consumers are increasingly turning to supplements.

Previously, dietitians might have recommended a specific supplement for disease prevention (e.g., calcium for osteoporosis), but now supplements are also being promoted as a way to gain a health edge. As dietitians, we were taught that food gives us everything we need. At the same time, we know that supplements are recommended for certain life stages (e.g., vitamin D for babies and adults over 50, folic acid for pregnancy), so clearly they have a role to play.

### Opportunity

If you want to stay relevant to your clients and communities, then it's time to brush up on your knowledge of supplements. We can still be "food first" and embrace supplement use that is evidence-based and client-centric.



### Check this out

We love how our colleague Doug Cook, MHSc RD, shares on-trend supplement content on his Instagram account, like this post on [magnesium](#).

## 5) Budget-wise bites

Canadians are looking for wallet-friendly ways to eat healthy. According to the Canadian Centre for Food Information's [2023 Public Trust Research Report](#), half of respondents are concerned about the affordability of food, and 60% are interested in learning how to spend less money on food.

A [conservative estimate for the cost of groceries](#) for a family of four (two adults, two kids) for one year is \$16,288.41. To save money, [Canadians are changing their habits](#) in several ways, such as reducing food waste, cooking more meals at home, buying less food and buying more frozen food.

### Opportunity

In these financially challenging times, dietitians can share ways to save money and still get good nutritional value. You could offer meal-planning tips that highlight healthy, budget-friendly food swaps, such as how to prepare frozen vegetables so they're super-delicious.

And let's remember, [food insecurity is a money problem, not a food skills problem](#). As dietitians, we can raise awareness of this social injustice and advocate for governments to address inadequate incomes to reduce food insecurity.



### Check this out

We compared the prices of common foods in a discount store and a grocery store, and the differences were astounding! See details in our [Instagram post](#), and check out our [IG Live](#) on how to adapt recipes to reduce food waste and save money. PLUS, we created our [Eat Well, Spend Less Toolkit](#) for nutrition professionals - it's filled with facts, stats, and practical strategies you can share.