



## FoodFit 2018 Programs Report

### FoodFit by the numbers

From January to December 2018, FoodFit programs were delivered at 19 sites. The 5 sites marked with a \* are sites that have sustained programs or started programs with funding (from Manulife and Medavie) outside of the 5 year Public Health Agency of Canada FoodFit Project.

#### From January:

The Local CFC, Stratford, ON\*  
The Table CFC, Perth, ON\*  
Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Vancouver, BC  
Interfaith Food Bank, Lethbridge, AB  
Mission Services, Hamilton, ON  
Partageons l'espoir/Share the Warmth, Montreal, PQ  
The Alex CFC, Calgary, AB\*  
Dartmouth North Community Food Centre, Dartmouth, NS\*  
Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre, Saskatoon, SA\*  
Ateliers Je Suis Capable, Sorel-Tracy, QC  
Sherbourne Health Centre, Toronto, ON  
Cowichan Green Community Foundation, Duncan, BC  
"Ogwakwi:yo" Six Nations Health Services, Oshweken, ON

#### New partners in April:

Scadding Court Community Centre, Toronto, ON  
Grandview Woodland Food Connection, Vancouver, ON  
The Seed, Guelph, ON  
South Georgian Bay Community Health Centre, Wasaga Beach, ON  
The Ville-Cooperative, Fredericton, NB  
Community Connections Society of Southeast British Columbia, Cranbrook, BC



FoodFit Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre

549 adults and 39 youth participated in 58 FoodFit programs and 3 FoodFit Youth programs. In adult programs (n=426), 76.1% of participants identified as female, 23.2% as male, and 0.7% identified as non-binary. The average age of adult participants was 53.9 years old (ranging from 18 to 90 years). 57.5% (n=400) of 2018 FoodFit participants reported difficulties affording healthier foods.

426 adults completed at least 9 weeks of the program (representing a program completion rate of 77.6%) 62 FoodFit Alumni sessions were offered at 12 partner sites for returning FoodFit graduates.

Volunteers logged 2958.6 hours for our partners in the FoodFit program last year.

9827 healthy meals were shared and sent home in FoodFit programs across Canada in 2018.

## FoodFit Participant Outcomes

### Eating healthier

With easy to understand nutrition resources and lots of hands-on learning in the kitchen, FoodFit participants gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to prepare healthier meals and snacks. 91.0% (n=301) of participants reported improvements in their food preparation and safety skills, and 95.3% (n=299) learned something new about preparing/cooking healthier meals. From a check-list of 11 food skills, participants improved at least 5 different skills on average. The 3 most common skills were planning a quick, healthy, balanced meal using fresh and whole ingredients (62.4%, n=274), baking something from scratch (61.3%), and adjusting a recipe to make it healthier (56.9%).

74.6% (n=193) of participants increased their daily fruit and vegetable consumption. Only 48.6% (n=245) of participants were eating 5 or more servings of fruit and veg at the beginning of program, this increased to 67.2% (n=229) by the end of the programs. 61.6% (n=292) of participants have increased the amount of whole grains in their diet. 50% (n=10) of participants in Ojwaki:yo at Six Nations Health Services increased the number of days per week they are eating traditional Haudenosaunee food. At the beginning of the program, only 17.3% (n=283) of FoodFit participants knew about the Healthy Plate model – by the end of the program, 54.3% (n=267) could complete a healthy plate model successfully.

The recipes shared and sent home in the program contained the right ingredients for success for FoodFit participants: 97.8% (n=321) found the recipes easy to follow, 91% (n=323) found the meals and snacks shared in the program appetizing and tasty, and 91.6% (n=320) tried a new food or an old food prepared in a different way in the program.



FoodFit Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre

*"I now eat in a new way, and have introduced new foods/recipes to step children, foster children and extended family. We have fun preparing them at home and now enjoy meal times a lot more."* FoodFit Participant, Dartmouth NS

*"I continue to develop my knowledge and motivation in choosing healthy food and cooking. Meeting new friends made me more active in my community and I always share what I learned from the FoodFit program."* FoodFit Participant, Vancouver BC (Kitsilano Neighbourhood House)

*"The most positive change that FoodFit has made in my life is the ability to choose healthy ingredients without it being complicated."* FoodFit Participant, Hamilton, ON

### **Participants are making healthier choices they can live with!**

69.7% (n=238) of participants shared healthier substitutions they are using: replacing applesauce for sugar, spices and herbs to replace salt, olive oil instead of butter/margarine, yogurt or avocado instead of mayonnaise, homemade instead of store-bought salad dressings and soups, baking “sweet treats” with vegetables (chocolate beet cake, avocado pudding) and applesauce or bananas to cut back on sugar and fats, water and herbal tea instead of sugar sweetened beverages, beans instead of meat in burgers, squash and zucchini noodles for spaghetti, whole grain pasta, putting beans in smoothies for protein, using more fish, tofu, tempeh, lentils, beans and chickpeas to replace meat, frozen bananas to make ice cream, having fruit instead of less healthy sweets like candy and chocolates, veggie sticks, plain popcorn and baked pita chips in place of potato chips, nuts and seeds in salads instead of croutons, hummus and salsa as tasty vegetable dips, quinoa/brown rice/millet instead of white rice/potatoes, fresh and frozen fruit to flavor plain yogurt instead of sweetened yogurt, and whole wheat and whole grain flours instead of white flour. Some participants also mentioned using leftovers in more creative ways to minimize food waste.

75.5% (n=298) of participants were cooking more with plant-based proteins (instead of meat). 55.2% (n=230) of participants were able to completely cut out one or more unhealthy food choices from their diet by the end of the program. Many participants told us they cut back on (or completely cut out) added sugar, potato chips, candy/chocolate, pop and diet pop, chocolate milk, salt, red meat, saturated fats and oils, white bread, fried food, fast food, ice cream, iced cappuccinos, white bread, white flour, store-bought baked goods, lunch meat, coffee sweetener, frozen dinners, processed foods, eating at night and big portions.

52.5% (n=257) of participants who regularly drank at least 1 sugar sweetened beverage daily, decreased the number of sugar-sweetened beverages they consumed during the FoodFit program. 55.6% (n=252) had cut back on their overall sugar-sweetened beverage consumption. 76.4% (n=250) were reaching for water to drink more frequently.

48.6% (n=292) participants were making home-made meals from scratch more days every week by the end of the program. 77.6% (n=250) were eating more home-cooked meals and snacks because of what they learned in FoodFit.

51% (n=300) participants reported an increase in their confidence in making healthy food choices.



FoodFit Volunteers at The Alex Community Food Centre



### Moving more

FoodFit encourages participants to increase their daily physical activity – we don't set targets because everyone is starting from a different starting line. We just ask them to try better! Participants share a group 30 minute walk every week in the program and are introduced to a number of at-home strength and flexibility exercises of varying levels of difficulty that help daily activities like sitting down/getting back up, pushing open doors, bending over to tie shoes, and picking things up from the floor easier. 69.3% (n=306) of participants reporting learning something new about physical activity in the program and 28.9% (n=254) increased their overall physical activity level since starting the program. 65.5% (n=194) of participants increased their daily average steps over the course of the program. At the beginning program 65.3% (n=268) were taking more than 5000 daily steps (walking for exercise for at least 30 minutes), and by the end of the program 74.1% (n=224) were taking more than 5000 daily steps on average. 28.1% (n=294) of FoodFit participants reported an increase in their confidence to take action to improve their overall health.



FoodFit The Seed

FoodFit Sherbourne Health Centre



*"I do way more moving and walking."* FoodFit participant, Calgary AB

*"Je peut plus facilement me concentrer et je dors beaucoup mieux la nuit, j'ai d'avantage d'énergie." <It's easier to concentrate and I sleep much better at night, I have more energy.>* FoodFit participant, Montreal PQ

*"I have noticed change when I feel lonely, I take a walk or some exercise and feel better."* FoodFit participant, Toronto ON (Sherbourne)

*"Increased my recipe repertoire for feeding my family in a healthy, fun way. Encouraged me to exercise more and find it fun while doing it with my boys (5 and 15)."* FoodFit participant, Cranbrook BC

### Making new friends

Group support and social connection are key ingredients to participant success in FoodFit. 81.9% (n=310) of participants reported making a social connection with someone they felt they could count on for support. Reducing social isolation can positively impact long term health – 92 (or 23.4% of) FoodFit participants are from solitary households.



FoodFit The Alex Community Food Centre



FoodFit The Local Community Food Centre



Ogwakwi:yo Six Nations Health Services (Oshweken)

*"I was going through a lot of depression before I started and since week 1 my overall mental health has improved dramatically."* FoodFit participant, Saskatoon SK

*"FoodFit filled my life with positive people."* FoodFit participant, Calgary AB

*"Moins solitaire, m'a fait voir de Nouvelles personnes, nouveaux amis." <Less alone, helped me see new people, new friends.>* Bonne Bouffe et Bonne Forme participant, Sorel-Tracy PQ

*"Anxiety lowered, sleep better, feeling good."* FoodFit participant, Lethbridge AB

*"I feel I can concentrate better, less irritable."* Ogwakwi:yo participant, Oshweken ON

*"I am more grounded, my level of anxiety is reduced."* FoodFit participant, Vancouver BC (Grandview-Woodland)

*"I'm more hopeful and empowered – healthy choices, receiving kindness, confidence."* FoodFit participant, Stratford ON



### Feeling better

The FoodFit program introduces many ways for participants to measure their health or gauge their fitness level – helping them define ‘healthier’ in their own terms. 72.2% (n=313) of FoodFit participants reported an improvement in their physical health, and 71.7% (n=311) noted improved mental health.

Participants had the opportunity to rank symptoms related to diet and physical activity. The top 5 symptoms that were improved upon or resolved by the end of the program include: running out of energy, having difficulty getting out of bed in the morning, experience insomnia or restless sleep, running out of breath climbing stairs, and experiencing constipation.

### Changing families – the reach beyond the program

The FoodFit program reaches beyond the direct participants: we estimate an additional 547 adults and 278 children/youth could be indirectly impacted in households shared with our FoodFit participants. 85.3% (n=265) of participants reported sharing a meal, recipe or something they learned in the FoodFit program with 724 other adults and 163 children/youth.

Almost all FoodFit participants (99.1%, n=322) would recommend the program to a family member or friend.



FoodFit Grandview Woodland Food Connection



FoodFit Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

### Feeling the FoodFit difference

Of the 238 participants who reported living with preexisting chronic disease or health conditions at the beginning of the program (including: type 2 diabetes, prediabetics, hypertension, high cholesterol, arthritis, chronic pain/back pain, depression, overweight/obesity, respiratory diseases, gastrointestinal problems, liver/kidney diseases, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, low energy/fatigue, weakness, anemia, Parkinson's disease, memory loss, and other mental health conditions), 69.7% felt the FoodFit program helped them to better manage their condition.

Of those participants recording biometric health measures:

33.9% (n=227) of participants increased their level of fitness during the FoodFit program (based on age and heart rate measurements).

27.6% (n=225) of participant lowered their BP status (anywhere from stage 2, stage 1, prehypertensive, to normal).

48.1% (n=162) of participants lost 151.5 inches (384.81 cm) from their waistlines – an average of 1.9" inches (4.9, equivalent to just over one pant size).



FoodFit Dartmouth North CFC

*"I walked more and go to the gym at least 2X a week, lost weight."* FoodFit participant, Dartmouth, NS

*"I lost 8 lbs – doctor's very happy!"* Ogwakwi:yo participant, Oshweken ON

*"Lower salt, healthier meals helped lower my blood pressure."* FoodFit participant, Calgary AB

*"Ma glycémie est passé de 27.0 to 9.5 durant le programme."* <My blood sugar has dropped from 27.0 to 9.5 during the course of the program.> Bonne Bouffe et Bonne Forme participant, Sorel-Tracy PQ

*"I had a problem with diabetes, my sugar levels were high but I learnt better ways of eating healthy, I actually feel so healthier and better health wise."* FoodFit participant, Toronto ON (Sherbourne)

*"FoodFit helps you eat right, helps with my diabetes. Make me feel alive. Makes me feel like I'm not the only one going through tough times."* FoodFit Participant, Wasaga ON



## What's in the Box Food Challenge!

In the final week of the FoodFit program, participants are broken into small groups for the “What’s in the Box Challenge”. Each group is given a collection of core ingredients and a list of kitchen staples they can use to improvise and create a new healthy dish to share with their FoodFit team and special guests. Some participating sites invite “celebrity” judges or family to attend the graduation meal and share in these (mostly) edible creations.

This exercise demonstrates the ability of community members to work together, some taking on leadership roles for the first time, tests their confidence and skills to create a healthy, delicious dish without the aid of a recipe or input by the facilitator – the participants are truly helping each other in this fun and popular challenge. Facilitators report very few “flops” or “disasters” and gush with pride about the creativity and determination of their FoodFit teams to “get it right and make it good.”



FoodFit Mission Services (Hamilton)



FoodFit The Alex Community Food Centre (Calgary)









FoodFit The Seed



FoodFit Alumni The Alex Community Food Centre



FoodFit Alumni The Local Community Food Centre





### Drop Out Questionnaire

Facilitators completed Drop Out Questionnaires with 43 participants who disengaged from the program after completing on average 3 weeks of the program (range 0 – registered/completed intake/orientation to 5+ weeks). Most of the participants weren't able to continue the program due to external circumstance (physical health changes, mental health struggles, conflict with school/work commitments, competing family priorities or trouble at home, moving away from the community). Very few program drop-outs reported problems with the facilities or components of the programs that could be improved on, and no drop-outs voiced any concerns about the performance of the facilitators. 6 drop-outs felt improved child-minding services could have helped them stay in the program, and 1 drop-out had difficulty accessing transport to the program – these issues appear to be more of a barrier to recruitment than a program retention issue. 94.1% (n=17) would still recommend the FoodFit program to others and 90.5% (n=21) would like to return to FoodFit in the future to finish the program. Only 30.8% (n=13) were interested in exploring other programs or services offered at our partner sites.

*"The most positive change that the FoodFit program has made in my life is inspiring me to lead a healthier lifestyle. I feel more knowledgeable and confident in the kitchen and feel that I improved my skills. I am committed to seeking out opportunities to apply the weekly lessons in my daily life and share what I have learned with family and friends."* FoodFit Participant, Guelph ON

*"Using good and healthier food every day. Drinking healthier everything. Substituting unhealthy food with healthy food."* FoodFit Participant, Fredricton, NB

*"FoodFit connected me with people who are motivated to learn about the connection between food and health, which has reinforced by choice of a career in dietetics."* FoodFit Participant, Vancouver BC (Grandview Woodland)

*"FoodFit gave me hope maybe I could change my diet and improve my health."* FoodFit Participant, Wasaga ON

*"This was a new and real possibility – a life change experience. I learned a lot from you!"* FoodFit Participant, Toronto ON (Scadding Court)

*"It was great not to have to do all of the changes all at once That gave me HOPE. I hope to be able to change. I am having the attitude now that of course I can succeed."* FoodFit participant, Saskatoon SK

*"My knowledge and the way I look at food, water, and physical exercise has change. To me, I have developed an interaction with everything I eat and now I like exercising."* FoodFit Participant, Toronto ON (Sherbourne)

## FoodFit Youth!

FoodFit Youth programs were piloted at Cowichan Green Community Foundation, Duncan, BC and The Ville-Cooperative in Fredricton, NB. The following data are from 2017 and 2018 FoodFit Youth programs, and include additional results from 1 FoodFit Youth program at The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford, ON from 2017. In FoodFit Youth programs (n=45), 62.2% participants identified as female and 37.8% identified as male. The average age of participants was 14.8 years old (ranging from 12-21).

FoodFit Youth participants share households with 91 adults and 102 children/youth. 77.4% (n=31) of participants reported sharing a meal, recipe, or something they learned from FoodFit Youth with 67 adults and 57 other children/youth. 72.2% (n=36) made a new friend in the program.

83.8% (n=37) tried a new food they never tried before. Popular responses included smoothies, different vegetables, veggie patties, and pita pizzas. 74.3% (n=35) reporting learning something new about making meals/snacks healthier in the program and 85.3% (n=34) improved at least 1 food skill in the program – on average, 4 different skill areas improved. The most common skills improved included: planning a quick, healthy, balanced meal using fresh or whole food ingredients; preparing and cooking a few dishes at the same time so I can serve them all together as a meal; adjusting a recipe to make it healthier; choosing a spice or herb that goes well with the food I am cooking; peeling, chopping, slicing fruit and vegetables; and cooking a soup or stew from scratch. 91.7% (n=25) feel more confident they can cook/prepare healthier meals because of what they learned in FoodFit.

At the beginning of the program, youth participants were drinking an average of 3+ sugar-sweetened beverages daily. By the end of the program, 27.3% had cut back, 39.4% were contemplating cutting back but hadn't yet, while 24.2% had not changed at all, and 9.1% were drinking more than before. At the beginning of the program, participants were eating breakfast on average about 3 days each week (9 reported never eating breakfast and 4 participants reported eating breakfast every day). By the end of the program 25% were doing better and eating breakfast every day, 15.6% were trying and had increased the number of days they were eating breakfast, 6.3% were already eating breakfast every day and hadn't changed, 6.3% were contemplating eating breakfast more often but hadn't changed yet, 3.1% were eating breakfast less often, and 43.7% of FoodFit youth participants reported "they don't do breakfast".

Only 22.7% (n=44) of FoodFit Youth participants were familiar with the Healthy Plate model at the beginning of the program, and only 15.6% (n=45) knew about the ParticipACTION Sweat/Step/Sleep/Sit guidelines for youth. By the end of the program 53.8% (n=26) had learned something new about the ParticipACTION guidelines and 80% (n=30) could correctly answer how many minutes of daily vigorous physical activity are recommended for youth and 30.4% (n=23) were spending less time sitting/being sedentary since the beginning of the program.

60.9% (n=23) of FoodFit Youth participants reported an improvement in their physical health or energy level since starting FoodFit, and 45.5% (n=33) reported change in their feelings, moods, self-esteem or mental health.

97.2% (n=36) of FoodFit Youth graduates would recommend the program to a friend and 85.7% (n=28) felt the FoodFit program provided them with some knowledge and skills to live a healthier lifestyle.



**We asked youth participants what they learned and what they liked best about their FoodFit Youth program**

*"I learned to sleep far more than I already do. I wake up far easier than before."* Duncan BC

*"Making food and eating it, learning to try new food I never thought I'd try!"* Duncan BC

*I feel like I can be myself everytime I'm here.*

*"Getting over my fear of knives and cooking with my friends."* Duncan BC

*"The amount of sugar in energy drinks (disgusting) and I learned a few interesting things I would probably have not learned if I didn't come to FoodFit."* Duncan BC

*"I don't have as heavy breathing. I feel better about myself because I eat healthier."* Duncan BC

*"I learned that people should sit down 2 hours a day and not more. Healthy food, self-esteem, helped me to be more confident."* Fredricton NB

*"It's a really healthy program, you start a healthy habit for yourself."* Fredricton NB

*"Cooking gets you moving! The FoodFit program taught me that I can eat better, so soon I'll make better food."* Stratford ON

*"Chopping up stuff and the Healthy Plate."* Stratford, ON



FoodFit Youth The Local Community Food Centre

## Fabulous Facilitators! Evaluation Performance

The evaluation tools submitted by our grant partners just keep on getting better and better, both in quality and quantity. Explaining the value of evaluation and stressing the importance of FoodFit participants completing program evaluation tools as a means to monitor their own progress in many different ways has been embraced by our team of FoodFit facilitators across the country.

The numbers and percentages of pre/post (complete data sets) for the evaluation tools continued to climb in 2018. The questionnaires and heart rate/fitness level and blood pressure classification changes (only 38% of participants volunteered to share waist circumference measures) are statistically significant – this year the totals were calculated on graduate numbers rather than overall unique participants so are even more impressive. Fruit and vegetable and step counts forms continue to present a problem for representative numbers – but in 2018 were only a handful shy so we are hopeful we will have statistically relevant data to share in the final 2 years of the project.

Evaluation Form	2016	2017	2018
Fruit and Veg Tracking	50/460 – 11%	184/538 – 34%	193/426 – 45.3%
Steps Counts	31/460 – 7%	194/538 – 36%	194/426 – 45.5%
Health Measures	60/460 – 13%	244/538 – 45%	232/426 – 54.5%
Questionnaires	120/460 – 26%	317/538 – 59%	292/426 – 68.5%



FoodFit Facilitator Trainer Erin Gionet (Calgary)