

TEN YEARS

HIGHLIGHTS
2014-2024





MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dr. Wendy Levinson

Dear Choosing Wisely Canada community,

As we celebrate a decade of progress, it's a time to reflect on our collective journey. Ten years ago, we set out to reshape health care conversations by encouraging discussions among clinicians and patients about the risks and harms of unnecessary tests and treatments. We took a unique approach, calling on clinicians to lead this movement by identifying overused tests and treatments in their specialties that do not add value to patient care.

Since our inception in 2014 with nine societies and 40 recommendations, we've grown remarkably. Over the past decade, we've collaborated with over 80 societies, generating more than 560 recommendations representing 90% of the health care workforce.

The impact of Choosing Wisely Canada now extends beyond our recommendations. Grassroots initiatives have spurred national quality improvement programs, like Using Blood Wisely and Using Labs Wisely, mobilizing organizational change to reduce overuse. We have created special campaigns, including those on antibiotics and opioids, to deepen conversations on major overuse issues. We have worked with national partners to measure overuse and evaluate improvements in Canadian health systems.

Yet, as we celebrate this milestone, there's still much more to accomplish. Pressing issues such as backlogs, wait times, workforce burnout, and the climate crisis emphasize the finite nature of health care resources. To make a lasting impact, Choosing Wisely Canada will continue to engage with the wider community to eliminate unnecessary tests and treatments. We will expand our reach to advocate for systemic and policy changes to support clinicians. Our regional hubs will be strengthened to tackle local and national overuse issues, and we will collaborate with patients, the health care system, and researchers to mitigate the disproportionate impact of overuse on diverse populations.

Our success owes much to collaborating with you, our community of clinicians, researchers, health system partners, and patients. I invite you to explore this report highlighting our collective achievements—a reflection of your unwavering commitment to improving the quality and safety of care in Canada.

Here's to the next ten years,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wendy Levinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wendy" and last name "Levinson" clearly legible.

Dr. Wendy Levinson
Chair, Choosing Wisely Canada

CONTENTS

- 4 THE LISTS
- 5 STARS
- 6 REPORTS ON OVERUSE
- 7 NATIONAL EVENTS
- 8 HOSPITAL PROGRAMS
- 9 TOOLS FOR PRIMARY CARE
- 10 LONG-TERM CARE CAMPAIGNS
- 11 REGIONAL HUBS
- 12 SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS
- 13 THE NEXT DECADE

ABOUT US

The national voice for reducing unnecessary tests and treatments.

Choosing Wisely Canada launched on April 2, 2014, in collaboration with the Canadian Medical Association. We started with an ambitious goal to foster conversations between clinicians and patients about the overuse of unnecessary tests and treatments in health care. Ten years later, Choosing Wisely Canada has evolved to offer quality improvement programs, tools, and educational offerings that mobilize change at the frontline and system levels.

Over the past ten years, we’ve become known for our lists of “tests and treatments to question,” which have been instrumental in identifying overuse within different specialties. In the spirit of these lists, we have put together a report that highlights **ten things** we’ve accomplished in the past decade of Choosing Wisely Canada.

01

The Lists

Clinician societies, representing physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professions, have played active roles in generating lists of Choosing Wisely Canada recommendations for their respective specialties. These recommendations identify commonly overused tests and treatments where strong evidence demonstrates they are not helpful or may unnecessarily expose patients to harm.

The lists have become instrumental in engaging the clinician community and adopting best practices into daily routines. They serve as the basis of all of our work, inspiring quality improvement programs, special campaigns, and tools and resources.

Highlights

560+ RECOMMENDATIONS

identifying unnecessary medication use, tests, and procedures.

90% OF THE WORKFORCE

represented spanning physicians, nurses, pharmacists, lab technologists, and more.

80+ SOCIETIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

with published lists or actively working on developing new recommendations.

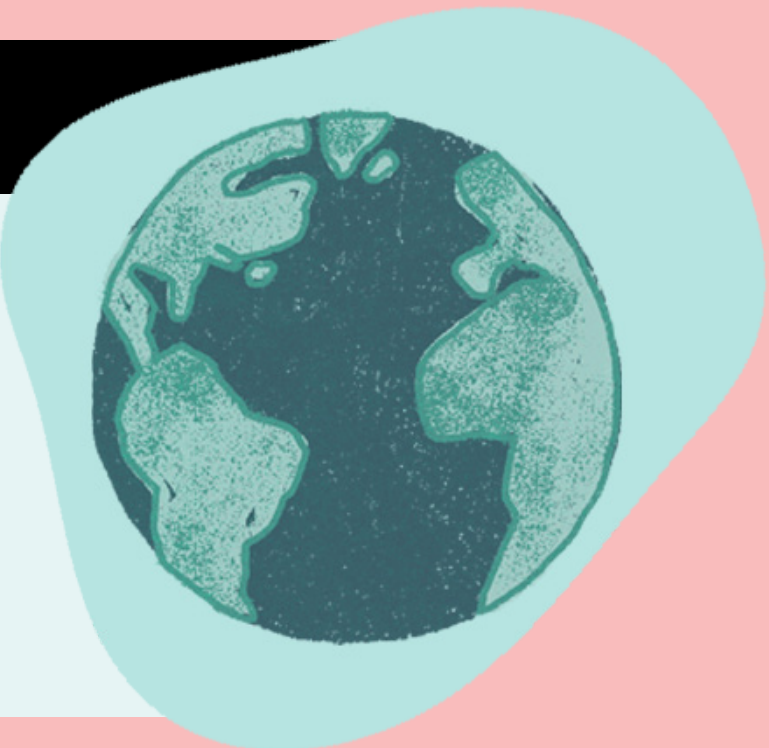
40+ CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

developed by societies and association partners to help protect patients and the planet.

CLIMATE-CONSCIOUS RECOMMENDATION

Don't use desflurane when other anesthetic drugs and techniques are equally effective and less harmful to the environment.

- Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society



02

STARS Program

In 2015, three medical students at the time—Dr. William Silverstein, Dr. Elliot Lass, and Dr. Anand Lakhani—noticed a gap in resource stewardship education within medical school curricula. They proposed a student-led program, leading to the launch of Students and Trainees Advocating for Resource Stewardship (STARS).

In the nine years since its inception, STARS has emerged as an incredible success. Student-led campaigns are now active in all medical schools in Canada, with similar programs emerging internationally. STARS has empowered students to learn about the impact of overuse, lead innovative projects, and fosters future resource stewardship leaders.

Highlights

9 COHORTS

of student leaders engaged in the STARS program.

280+ STUDENTS

enrolled in the program over the past nine years.

17 STUDENT CAMPAIGNS

representing all medical schools in Canada.



03

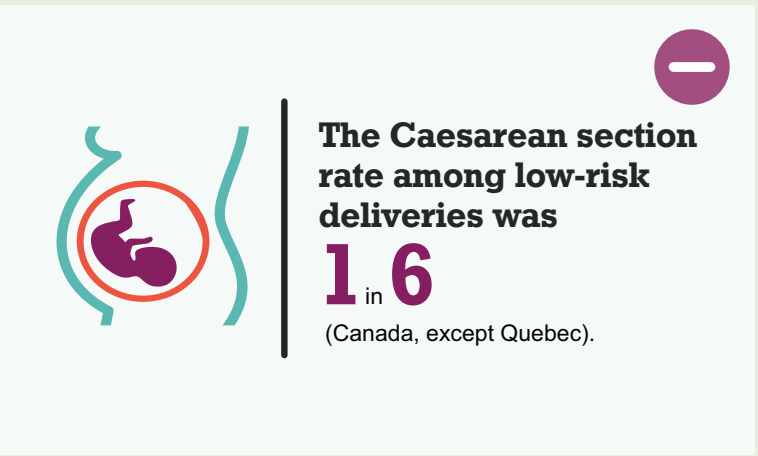
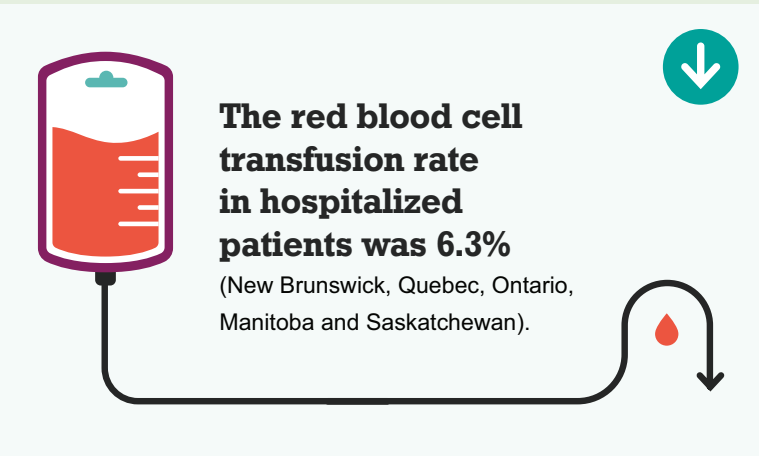
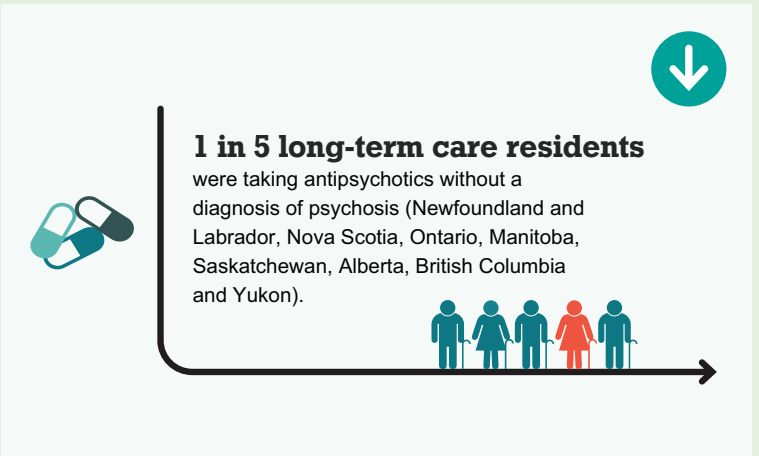
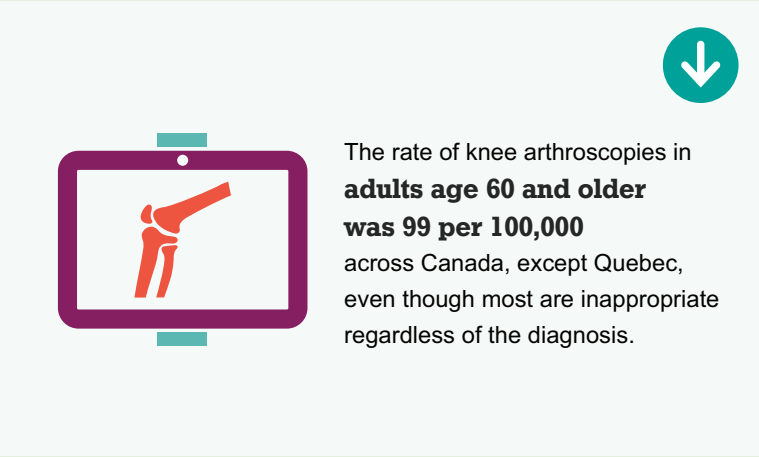
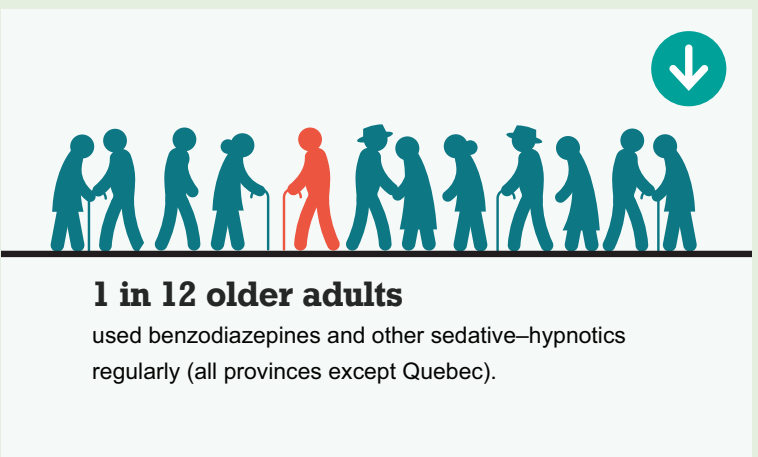
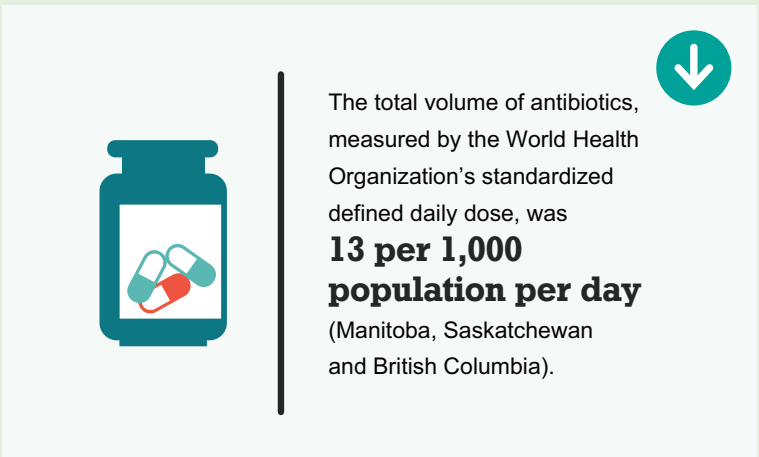
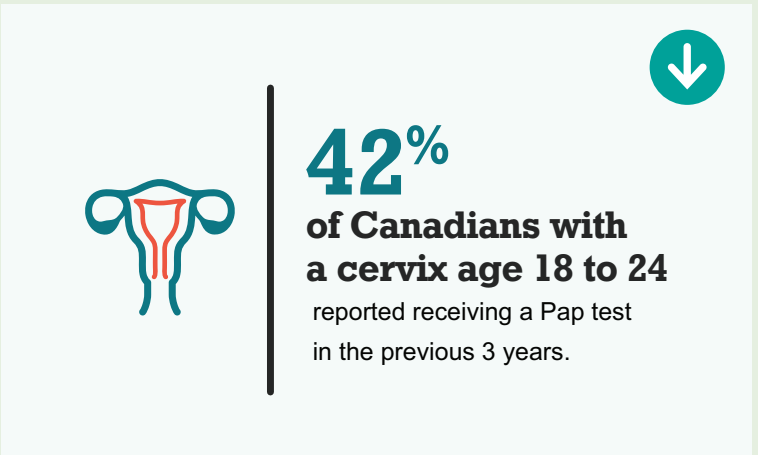
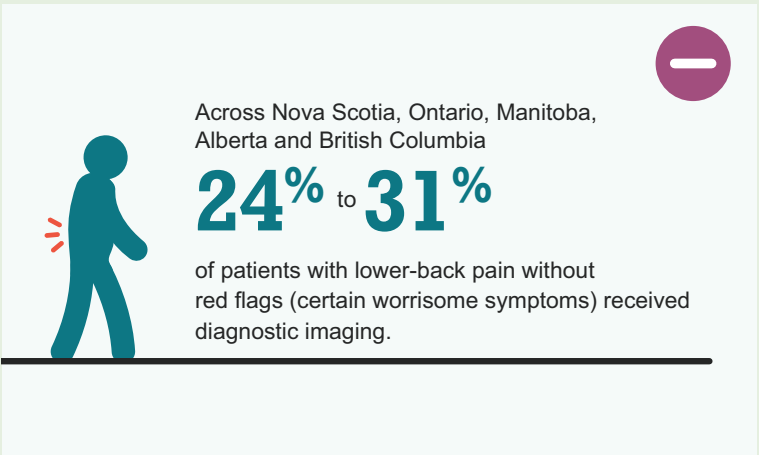
Measuring Overuse

Over the past ten years, researchers and campaign partners have developed overuse indicators and published studies describing baseline rates in various peer-reviewed journals.

Most significantly, Choosing Wisely Canada partnered with the Canadian Institute of Health Information (CIHI) to measure overuse in the landmark 2017 report *Unnecessary Care in Canada*. This report established that up to 30% of tests, treatments and procedures were potentially unnecessary, and sparked a national conversation about overuse in Canada.

In 2022, CIHI and Choosing Wisely Canada released a second report, *Overuse of Tests and Treatments in Canada*. The report examined the overuse of 12 selected tests and treatments by looking at trends and variation in use across the country. While some areas show reductions, variation among provinces and territories shows there's still room for improvement.

2022 Report Findings



04

National Events

Since 2016, Choosing Wisely Canada has brought together the broad community of clinicians, researchers, patients and public members, and health system partners in an energized exchange of ideas on overuse. Through both virtual and in-person offerings, Choosing Wisely Canada addresses critical Canadian health system challenges and offers solutions to some of the most pressing issues in practice.

Highlights

9 NATIONAL MEETINGS

held in Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and online.

100+ WEBINARS

focused on health system sustainability topics.

1000+ PARTICIPANTS

joining offerings from across Canada and beyond.



05

Hospital Programs

Choosing Wisely Canada has developed large-scale quality improvement programs to help mobilize and energize change in hospital settings.

Using Blood Wisely, launched in 2020 in partnership with Canadian Blood Services, challenges hospitals to measure their hospital transfusion practices against national appropriateness benchmarks. Using Labs Wisely, launched in May 2022, is a national consortium that helps hospitals identify areas to make improvements, share data, and learn with others to change the lab utilization landscape in Canada.

By participating in these initiatives and pursuing self-directed quality improvement projects, hospitals can work towards becoming a Choosing Wisely Canada Hospital, which recognizes outstanding leadership in reducing overuse and improving patient care.

Highlights

150+ HOSPITALS

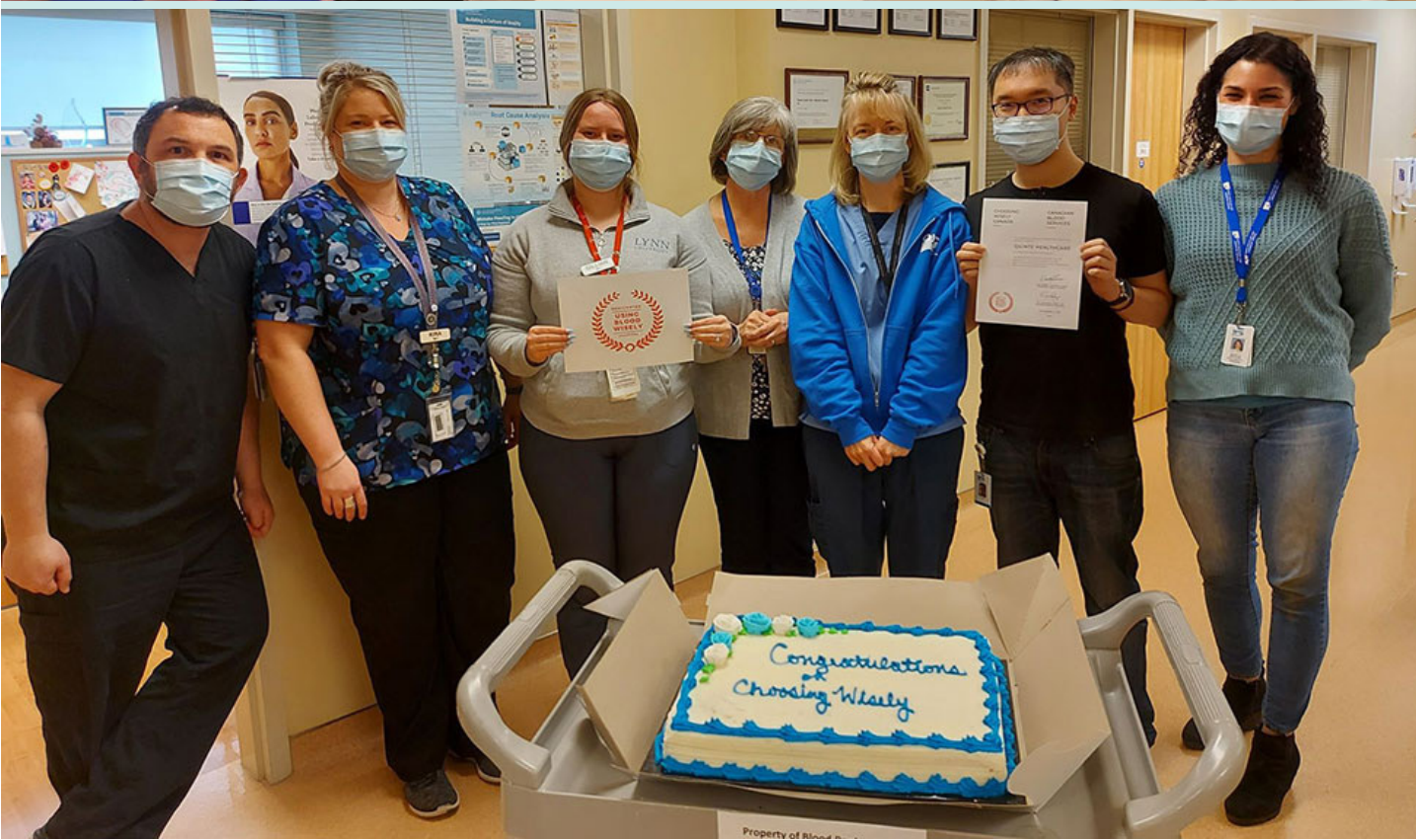
participating in the Using Labs Wisely consortium.

155+ HOSPITALS

designated in the Using Blood Wisely program.

24 HOSPITALS

at the Quality Improvement or Leadership Status level in the Hospital Designation Program.



06

Primary Care Tools

Over the last decade, Choosing Wisely Canada has actively promoted awareness and adoption of its recommendations within primary care settings. This has involved the creation of various tools and resources aimed at easing administrative tasks and facilitating meaningful conversations between clinicians and patients.

Primary care tools cover many major overuse issues including:

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|--|---|--|--|
| ASTHMA A campaign on avoiding unnecessary treatment and misdiagnosis that can occur without a proper breathing test. | ANTIBIOTICS A campaign featuring tools to reduce unnecessary antibiotic use for respiratory tract infections. | BRONCHIOLITIS A toolkit featuring easy-to-use tools and resources to help clinicians manage bronchiolitis appropriately. | SERIOUS ILLNESS An initiative encouraging conversations about goals and values to inform future health care choices. |
|--|---|--|--|



07

LTC Campaigns

Choosing Wisely Canada has actively involved the long-term care (LTC) sector through targeted campaigns aimed at increasing awareness on overuse issues. Our Using Antibiotics Wisely campaign has developed **nine practice change statements** and supporting tools designed to minimize unnecessary antibiotic use for asymptomatic bacteriuria, which were distributed to LTC facilities across Canada.

In 2024, Choosing Wisely Canada began efforts to curb the unnecessary use of dipsticks in older adults. Education materials and outreach activities are currently underway to raise awareness about the downstream consequences of unnecessary urine dipstick testing.

An illustration of a hand holding a urine dipstick. The dipstick has a color-coded label with various colored squares. Several test strips are shown falling out of the bottom of the dipstick, each with a different colored band. The background is a solid teal color.

Ditch the
dipstick.

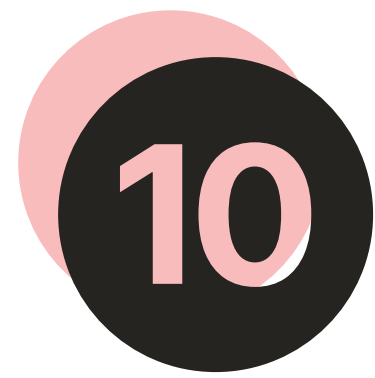
09

Special Campaigns

In 2015, Choosing Wisely Canada launched the *More is Not Always Better* campaign to encourage patients and the public to engage in conversations about unnecessary tests and treatments. The campaign aimed to convey the message that in medicine, as in life, “more is not always better.” This campaign formed the cornerstone of Choosing Wisely Canada’s awareness efforts among patients and the public.

Raising awareness about overuse issues among patients and the public remains a priority for Choosing Wisely Canada. Posters and patient materials have been developed to address major overuse issues such as antibiotics, opioids, and breathing tests for Canadians diagnosed with asthma or COPD.





The Next Decade

Over the last ten years, Choosing Wisely Canada has been committed to addressing the many drivers that contribute to unnecessary tests, treatments, and procedures. While there have been significant reductions in some areas, variation among provinces and territories shows there's still much room for improvement. At the same time, challenges such as long wait times, backlogs, workforce burnout, and the climate crisis have put significant strain on our health care system—underscoring the continued need to alleviate the impact of overuse.

Throughout the course of this ten-year journey, we've recognized there isn't just one path towards reducing overuse. It requires a collective effort of our entire health system — from clinicians and patients to administrators, policymakers, and members of the public.

Moving forward, Choosing Wisely Canada remains committed to collaborating with health care partners to address existing overuse issues and explore new areas of focus, all with a continued mission of improving care in Canada.

Highlights

Over the next decade, Choosing Wisely Canada will continue its existing commitments and broaden our focus to include:

1. THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Choosing Wisely Canada will align overuse with the pressing agenda of climate change and contribute to reductions in carbon emissions from the health care sector.

2. MEDICATION APPROPRIATENESS IN LTC

Choosing Wisely Canada will launch a new program in LTC, establishing national benchmarks for medication appropriateness and providing tools and resources to drive sector-wide improvements.

3. EQUITY AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Choosing Wisely Canada will work with patients, the health care system, and researchers to better understand and limit the disproportionate impact of overuse on diverse populations.

4. POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Choosing Wisely Canada will identify opportunities to influence public debate and advocate for policy actions on issues affecting overuse and health system sustainability.

**Choosing
Wisely
Canada**

