



AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA  
**ALS • STATISTICS**  
 SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCLÉROSE LATÉRALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION #1 • GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ALS & THE ALS SOCIETY OF CANADA

**“ALS is clearly the most common cause of neurological death on an annual basis.”**

– Dr Michael Strong, research scientist at the Robarts Research Institute, London, Ontario.

- ALS means amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. Sometimes it is called Lou Gehrig’s Disease – named after the famous US baseball player who died of ALS in 1941. Sometimes it is called Motor Neuron Disease.
- ALS can strike anyone. It can hit at any time, regardless of age, sex or ethnic origin. The usual age of onset is 55–65, but people under 20 have been diagnosed.
- Between 1,500 and 2,000 Canadians currently live with ALS.
- In at least ninety percent of cases, it strikes people with no family history of the disease.
- Ninety percent of people with ALS die within five years of diagnosis. Some people live much longer.
- A person with ALS will require an average of \$127,000 in equipment. Nursing care can exceed ten times that amount.
- Two or three Canadians a day die of this devastating disease.

- According to the latest Statistics Canada data, 1,110 people died of ALS in 1996. (This is a conservative number, as ALS may not always be listed as the primary cause of death.)
- According to Statistics Canada, from 1994 to 1996 deaths due to ALS were:
  - 94% higher than deaths from cystic fibrosis,
  - 70% greater than deaths from multiple sclerosis, and
  - only 15% less than deaths from AIDS.

These statistics show that twice as many people a year die of ALS than cystic fibrosis and multiple sclerosis combined.

- The cause is unknown. There is no known cure or treatment that prolongs life significantly – yet. Some drugs now available and others being developed will offer new treatment options.
- June is declared *ALS Awareness Month* by Health Canada: Every dollar donated during Awareness Month goes to research.

**STATISTICS CANADA DEATH RATE DATA**

|                    |         | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |
|--------------------|---------|------|------|------|
| ALS                | Males   | 493  | 567  | 520  |
|                    | Females | 503  | 489  | 590  |
|                    | TOTAL   | 996  | 1056 | 1110 |
| CYSTIC FIBROSIS    | Males   | 35   | 24   | 24   |
|                    | Females | 38   | 33   | 23   |
|                    | TOTAL   | 73   | 57   | 47   |
| MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS | Males   | 129  | 129  | 105  |
|                    | Females | 184  | 212  | 189  |
|                    | TOTAL   | 313  | 341  | 294  |
| AIDS               | Males   | 1489 | 1637 | 1198 |
|                    | Females | 139  | 127  | 108  |
|                    | TOTAL   | 1628 | 1764 | 1306 |

**TO PROVIDE CARE AND FIND THE CURE FOR ALS**

The ALS Society of Canada was founded in 1977 as a national non-profit, charitable organization dedicated solely to providing a variety of services to people with ALS and their families.

The ALS Society has regional units in every province in Canada. Our commitments in support of our mission:

- To provide the best possible support for people with ALS, their families, and care givers.
- To support research into a cause of and cure for ALS.
- To build public awareness of ALS and its impact.
- To advocate improved service, research, and attention to ALS as a catastrophic disease.
- To work collaboratively and with mutual respect for each other’s role in meeting the above commitments.

For more information please call the ALS Society of Canada  
 416-497-2267 • 1-800-267-4257 • [alscanada@als.ca](mailto:alscanada@als.ca)

ALS SOCIETY OF CANADA • AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF CANADA  
 SLA CANADA • SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DE LA SCLÉROSE LATÉRALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

265 Yorkland Blvd., Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M2J 1S5  
 Phone toll free: 1-800-267-4257 • Toronto local calling area: 416-497-2267 • Fax 416-497-1256  
 Email: [alscanada@als.ca](mailto:alscanada@als.ca) • Web page: <http://www.als.ca> • Charitable registration: 10670 8977 RR0002