

## Lifestyle Changes for Chronic Health Conditions: Care Instructions

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### Your Care Instructions

If you have diabetes, heart disease, or blood pressure or cholesterol problems, making healthy lifestyle changes can help. Changing your diet, getting more exercise and getting rid of harmful habits can reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems. Even small changes can help, so start with steps that you can take right away. Think about things such as time limits, stress and temptations that might get in the way and find a way you can avoid or overcome them.

Work with your doctor to plan lifestyle changes to help your health problem.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### How can you care for yourself at home?

- Fit in more exercise if your doctor recommends it. Walking is a great option. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk every day. Try for walk at least 2½ hours a week. You also may want to swim, bike or do other activities.
- Eat a healthy diet.
  - Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and low-fat dairy foods.
  - Limit fat, especially saturated fat. Saturated fat is solid at room temperature. You can also check food labels for fat content.
  - Try to limit how much sodium you eat to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. A loss of just 4.5 kilograms can help. The best way to lose weight and keep it off is to exercise on most days, choose healthy foods and keep portion sizes under control. Aim to lose no more than 0.5 kilogram a week.
- Do not smoke. Smoking can make most chronic health problems worse. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.
- Limit alcohol to three drinks a day for men and two drinks a day for women. Too much alcohol can cause health problems.
- Take your medicines on time and in the right amounts. Use a pillbox to organize them, and use schedules, alarms or other tools to help you stay on track. For medicines to work properly, you must take them as directed. Call your doctor or nurse call line if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

- Get your blood pressure checked often. Get a cholesterol test when your doctor tells you to, and keep track of your blood sugar if you have diabetes.
- If you have talked about it with your doctor, take a low-dose aspirin every day. Aspirin can help certain people lower their risk of a heart attack or stroke. However, taking aspirin isn't right for everyone because it can cause serious bleeding. Do not start taking daily aspirin unless your doctor knows about it.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

**Where can you learn more?**

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patientEd>

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