

Cardiac Rehabilitation and Secondary Prevention Program

Lifestyle Change and Self-Management Workbook



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Renowned for compassionate care, St. Joseph's is one of the best academic health care organizations in Canada dedicated to helping people live to their fullest by minimizing the effects of injury, disease and disability through excellence in care, teaching and research.



sjhc.london.on.ca



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Exercise is Medicine

RISK FACTOR

THE DIFFERENCE EXERCISE MAKES



Cholesterol

Increases **good cholesterol** (HDL)

Decreases **bad cholesterol** (LDL) that forms fatty deposits in your arteries

Decreases **triglycerides**, which is a type of fat in your blood that your body stores for energy



Diabetes

Lowers your **blood sugar** for up to 72 hours with regular exercise

Helps your muscles use **insulin** (increases insulin sensitivity)



Smoking

Decreases **cravings** to smoke immediately after exercise

Stabilizes mood



Obesity

Helps your body use **energy** stores efficiently (carbohydrates, proteins, fat)

Helps burn calories



Stress

Reduces stress and anxiety

Increases **mood-elevating proteins** and endorphins



Blood Pressure

Helps lower **blood pressure** by improving the health of the inner layer of your arteries (endothelium)



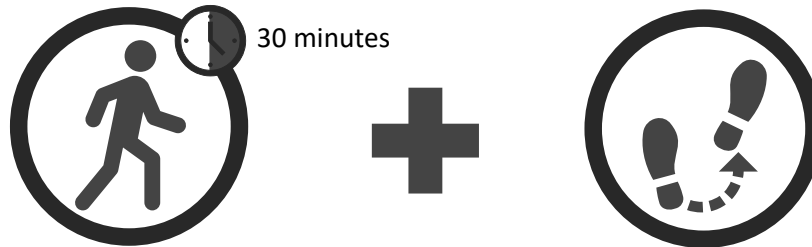
Artery Walls

Increases the **production of nitric oxide** which protects the inner layer of your artery (endothelium) from the buildup of fatty deposits and blood clots



The Importance of Physical Activity: Move More and Sit Less

Planned aerobic exercise is not the whole story when it comes to improving our health. Many people exercise for 30 minutes per day and sit for the rest of the day. Increased sitting (sedentary time) can increase your risk of chronic disease. It is best for your health **to include regular aerobic exercise and increase your physical activity. In other words, move more and sit less.**



An easy way to track your activity each day is with a pedometer, wearable fitness tracker, or phone app. You can use a simple pedometer or smartphone that you wear on your hip or in your pocket, or consider a fancier version that you wear on your wrist.

- 1. How active are you?** Wear your step tracker for a week to count your average number of steps per day. My baseline average steps per day is: _____
- 2. Physical activity goal:** For health benefits, increase your daily steps by 2,000 from your baseline, working up to at least 7,000 steps per day (Source: ACSM, Position stand, 2011). My step count target is: _____
- 3. Goal Setting:** Here are some suggestions to increase your steps per day. Checkmark the activities you already do. Circle the activities you would like to start to do on a regular basis.



Use the stairs instead of the elevator



Park further away and walk the rest of the way



Take exercise breaks during the day



Get off one or two bus stops early and walk



Walk whenever possible (to the store, work, etc.)



Do housework (clean, mow the lawn, etc.)



When shopping, walk an extra lap around the store



Stand or walk while you talk on the phone

Remember, a minimum of 2,000 to 3,000 steps should come from moderate exercise.

For the average person, 10 minutes of brisk walking = 1,000 steps.



The F.I.T.T. Principle



Frequency

- 30 to 60 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per day **on 5 or more days of the week**
- **150 minutes of exercise** over at least 3 days, with no more than 2 consecutive days without planned exercise



Intensity

- Exercise at an **RPE of 11 (fairly light) to 14 (somewhat hard)** on the Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale
- **Always be able to talk** while exercising



Time

- **30 to 60 minutes per session**
- If you are **new to exercise or limited by pain** due to poor blood flow in your legs or joint problems, try smaller bouts of **10 to 15 minutes a couple of times each day**
- Always do a **5 minute or more warm-up** to help your **body transition from rest to exercise** and reduce your chance of injury, angina, and irregular heartbeat.
- Always do a **5 minute cool down** to help your **heart rate and blood pressure to slowly return to resting levels** and reduce your chance of dizziness, irregular heartbeat, and muscle soreness.



Type

- **Walking** - the most inexpensive and easiest form of exercise! Make sure you have good footwear and that the area where you are walking is safe
- **Bicycling on an upright or recumbent bike** - a great choice if you have back, hip, knee, or leg circulation problems that limit your walking
- **Swimming or aqua-therapy classes** – a great choice if you have arthritis or find weight-bearing exercise difficult
- **Other options** you may want to try for variety: elliptical machine, rowing machine, continuous sports like tennis

Along with your planned aerobic exercise, it is also important to include:

- **Physical activity** every day. Choose any activity that gets you moving like gardening, walking the dog, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- **Resistance training** two to three times per week. After you have completed 6 weeks of aerobic training, talk to a rehabilitation trainer about a strength training program.
- **Stretching and flexibility training** every day. Try stretching or yoga.



Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

The Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale will help you know how hard you're working. To find your rating on the scale:

1. **Think about your overall feelings** of physical stress, effort, and fatigue. Try to concentrate on your total, inner feeling of exertion not any single thing, like leg tiredness or shortness of breath.
2. **Find the best description of your level of effort** from the examples on the right side of the table, and then find the number rating that matches that description.
 - Ideally, your **RPE will be between 11 and 14**.
 - If your RPE is above 14 then the intensity is too high and will need to be adjusted.

Number Rating	Verbal Rating	Example
6		No effort at all. Sitting and doing nothing
7	Very, very light	Your effort is just noticeable
8		
9	Very light	Walking slowly at your own pace
10		Light effort
11	Fairly light	Still feels like you have enough energy to continue exercising
12		
13	Somewhat hard	
14		Strong effort needed
15	Hard	
16		Very strong effort needed
17	Very Hard	You can still go on but you really have to push yourself or The exercise feels very heavy and you're very tired
18		
19	Very, very hard	For most people, this is the most strenuous exercise they have ever done or Almost maximal effort
20		Absolute maximal effort (highest possible) or Exhaustion

BORG, G. (1970) Perceived Exertion as an indicator of somatic stress. *Scandinavian journal of Rehabilitation Medicine*, 2 (2), p. 92-98



Flexibility Training Guidelines

Flexibility is the body's freedom of movement. It allows you to move within a normal range of motion without putting extra stress on joints, connective tissue and muscles. Like with anything else – if you don't use it, you lose it!

General stretching can be done any time – in the morning to loosen up, at work to relieve stress, after sitting or standing for a long time, or when you feel stiff. To improve flexibility, the following guidelines are recommended:



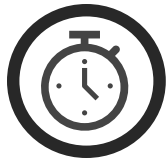
Frequency

- Stretch daily after exercise or when your muscles are warm.



Intensity

- Hold a controlled, mild stretch (mild discomfort but not painful).



Time

- Hold for 15 - 60 seconds and remember to breath throughout.
- Repeat each stretch 2 -3 times as needed.



Type

- Choose exercise that stretch all major joints and muscle groups.

There are many benefits to regular stretching. It increases the physical efficiency and performance of daily tasks, decreases the risk of injury by improving muscle balance and postural awareness, increases coordination and enhances circulation. Last but not least, it greatly helps to reduce stress and muscle tension for better relaxation.

Five Steps to a Great Stretch:

1

Warm-up your muscles with 5 minutes of light activity. Think of your muscle and connective tissue as candy taffy — when it is warm it is stretchable and when it is cold it is stiff and brittle.

2

Move slowly into the stretch and stop at the point when you feel a mild tension in the muscle you are stretching.

3

Hold the stretch position a minimum of 10-30 seconds. Repeat two to three times as necessary.

4

As you hold the stretch take at least two easy breaths.

5

Slowly release the stretch and relax the muscle.

Stretch for your Activity

Walking / Running	# 7-12
Swimming	# 1- 5
Weight training	# 1-12
Golf	# 1- 6
Curling	# 7-12

A Word of Caution:

- If you have pain other than simple stiffness or an existing medical condition (including pregnancy) it is essential to check with a health professional before attempting these stretches. If you experience pain, instability, tingling or numbness in any part of your body or if you feel dizzy during these exercises you should stop it at once to avoid the possibility of injury.
- If you are unsure about how to get started, talk to a fitness professional.

Upper & Lower Body Stretches



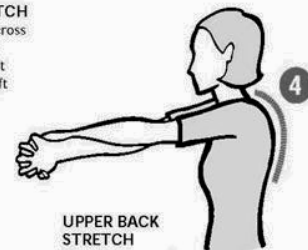
SIDE NECK STRETCH
With shoulders relaxed, gently tilt your head towards your shoulder. Assist stretch with a gentle pull on the side of the head.



TRICEPS STRETCH
Reach hand behind head as if to scratch your back. Grasp your elbow and gently push downwards.



SHOULDER STRETCH
Reach your left arm across your body and hold it straight. With the right hand grasp the left elbow and pull it across the body towards the chest.



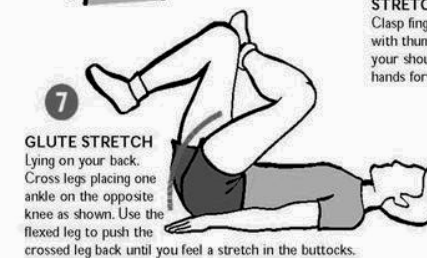
UPPER BACK STRETCH
Clasp fingers together with thumbs pointing down, round your shoulders as you reach your hands forward.



CHEST STRETCH
Place bent arm against a wall or doorway as shown. Slowly lean forward until a stretch is felt in the chest region.



LOW BACK STRETCH - Lie on your back with knees bent. Slowly pull knees up to the chest until you feel a gentle stretch in the lower back.



GLUTE STRETCH
Lying on your back. Cross legs placing one ankle on the opposite knee as shown. Use the flexed leg to push the crossed leg back until you feel a stretch in the buttocks.



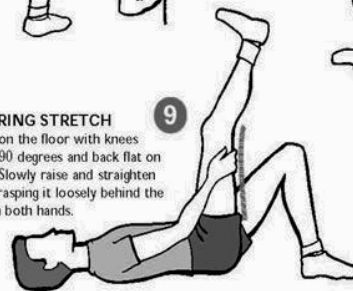
BUTTERFLY STRETCH
Sit tall with the soles of your feet together. Allow your knees to ease down towards the floor until you feel a stretch along the groin region.



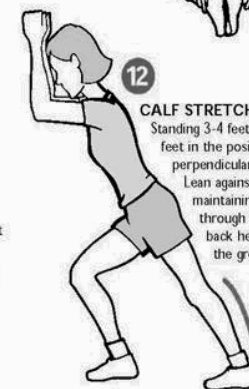
STANDING QUADRICEPS STRETCH
Stand with one hand on wall for balance. Bring foot up to hand and grasp the ankle, gently pull up until stretch is felt. Keep knees side by side.



HIP FLEXOR STRETCH
Kneel on floor with front knee bent at and back leg extended as shown. Keeping back straight slowly bend the lead leg until a stretch is felt. Do not lean forward or bend the lead leg more than 90 degrees.



HAMSTRING STRETCH
Lying flat on the floor with knees flexed to 90 degrees and back flat on the floor. Slowly raise and straighten one leg, grasping it loosely behind the thigh with both hands.



CALF STRETCH
Standing 3-4 feet from wall with feet in the position shown and perpendicular to the wall. Lean against forearms, maintaining a straight line through the spine and back heel pressed to the ground.



Resistance Training Guidelines

Resistance training is a type of exercise that increases the strength and endurance of your muscles. Resistance training is done by lifting weights, using your body weight, or using resistance bands.

Resistance training can help reduce how much muscle you lose as you get older, make your bones and joints stronger, and make everyday activities (e.g., getting up from a chair, carrying groceries, etc.) easier.



Frequency

- 2 to 3 days per week with 24 – 48 hours between working a specific muscles group (e.g. weight train Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday) to help your muscles recover



Intensity

- A Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) of 11 to 14
- Increase loads by 5% once 12 to 15 repetitions can be lifted comfortably



Time

- 1 to 3 sets of 10 to 15 repetitions (“reps”) that are slow and controlled (try to take 3 seconds to lift, and 3 seconds to lower)



Type

- Choose 6 to 8 exercises that use the major muscle groups

During your resistance exercise, it is also important to:

- Exercise large muscle groups before small muscle groups
- Raise weights with slow, controlled movements (try to take 3 seconds to lift, and 3 seconds to lower)
- Avoid straining
- Avoid overhead lifting unless using light weight and increased repetitions
- Exhale (blow out) during the exertion phase of the lift (e.g., exhale when pushing a weight stack overhead and inhale when lowering it)
- Do not hold your breath
- Avoid sustained, tight gripping; this may cause an excessive increase in blood pressure
- Rest as needed; do not rush the “circuit”



Considerations for Safe Exercise

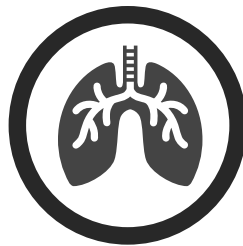
1. **Take all of your medications** as directed.
2. Ensure you **eat something 1-2 hours before** exercise and avoid a heavy meal before exercise.
3. **Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine** (patch, inhaler and cigarettes) before and after exercise.
4. **Avoid marijuana at least 2 hours before** exercise.
5. **Drink water before and during exercise** to ensure you are well hydrated for your exercise session. **Drink water after exercise** to replace the water you have lost through sweat and breathing.
6. **Wear appropriate clothing and footwear**
 - Closed toe, supportive footwear
 - Comfortable, light and breathable clothing
7. **Discuss with pharmacist or physician prior to using saunas, hot tubs, or hot showers after exercise.**
8. **Avoid exercise during illness or infection.**
9. **Avoid exercise in extreme temperatures.**
10. **Ensure you notify the rehab trainers if you:**
 - **Have had any medical issue that may affect your ability to exercise safely.**
 - **Notice anything abnormal during your exercise session** i.e. abnormal heart rate response and/or any concerning symptoms.

Discomfort should **not** result from moderate exercise.

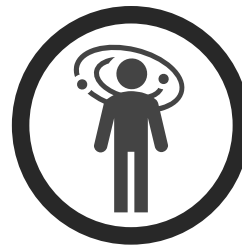
Stop exercising if you experience any of the following:



Angina (See Below)



Shortness of Breath



Dizziness



Excessive Fatigue



Sick to Your Stomach



Irregular Heartbeats



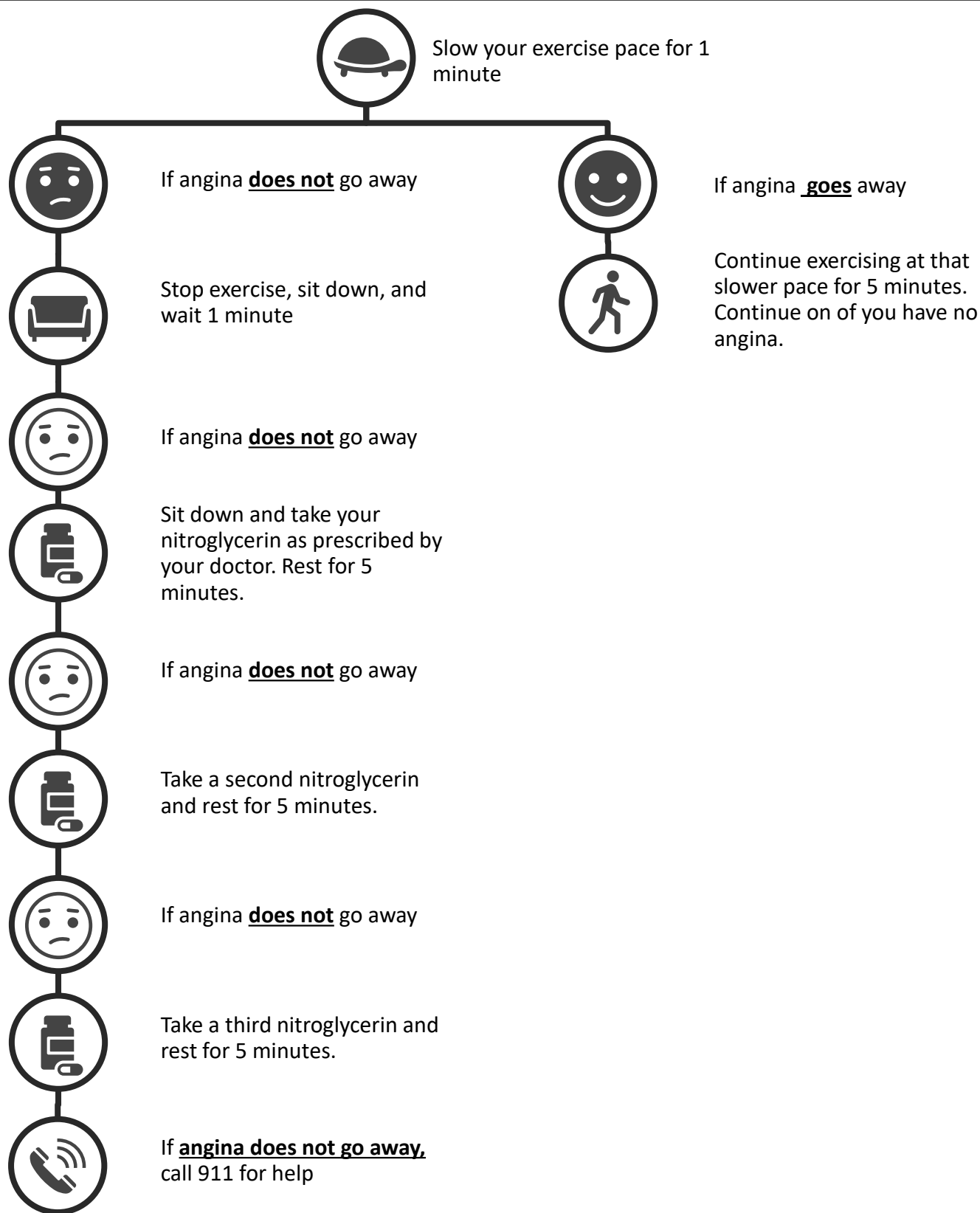
Lightheadedness



Leg Cramps



How to Manage Angina During Exercise





Exercise Diary

Using an exercise diary can help you and your rehabilitation trainer track your progress to ensure that you continue to improve your fitness.

	Date	Location Indoor or outdoor	Time of Day	Resting HR	Type of Exercise Walking/ Equipment / Speed / Distance/ Incline / Level / Number of Steps	Exercise Time (minutes)	RPE	Heart Rate
Day 1	June 1	Outdoor	9:00am	60 bpm	Walking	32	13	90 bpm
					Total steps- 7500			
Day 2	June 2	Indoor	9:00am	60 bpm	Treadmill / 2.5 km/h / 1.0% incline	30	13	90 bpm
					Total steps - 7500			



Nutrition: Food Record Instructions

Instructions

1. **Choose three typical days and record everything you eat and drink.** Days do not have to be consecutive. Be sure to include one weekend day.
2. Print clearly using black or blue ink.
3. **Record each meal or snack immediately after it is eaten.**
4. In the first column of the food record, use ‘**H**’ for meals eaten at home, and ‘**A**’ for meals eaten away from home.
5. When eating out, **include the name of the restaurant or food vendor.**
6. **Include brand names** wherever possible.
7. **Include condiments and any other “at the table” additions.**
8. **Include all ingredients for combination foods** such as pizza, sandwiches, casseroles, omelets, salads, etc.
9. **Use the most convenient method to record portions** such as number, size, weight, or volume.
10. **Include food preparation method**, such as breaded, fried, baked, boiled, sautéed, etc.
11. **Leave 3 Or 4 blank lines between meals.**
12. Start each **new day on a new page.**

Tips for Measuring Portions The following pointers will help you give more accurate measurements and descriptions of the foods and beverages that you eat and drink.

The “Rule of Hand”



A thumb is...

1 tablespoon, 15 ml or 15 g



A thumb tip is...

1 teaspoon or 5 ml



A palm is...







1 serving of meat, fish, poultry, 50-100 g, 2-3 oz.



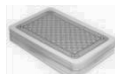







A fist is...

1 cup or 250 ml

Recording Measurements

Measurement	Type of food	
Fluid ounces (fl. oz.)	Beverages – all types, including alcoholic	
Number and size (sm., med., lg.)	Bread, rolls, crackers Raw fruits and vegetables Cookies, snack items, candy, etc.	
Weight in ounces (oz.) (specify cooked or raw weight)	Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, cheese <i>If you don't know the weight, record size: (length x width x thickness)</i>	
Serving (sv.) and size	Pie, cake (ex. Cherry pie 1/16 of an 8" pie)	
Cups (c.)	Potatoes, rice, cereals, soups, casseroles Fruits, vegetables (cooked or canned)	
Teaspoons (tsp.) or Tablespoons (Tbsp.) <i>Note: 3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon</i>	Jelly, jam, sugar, syrup, sauces, gravies, Salad dressing, butter, margarine, nuts, seeds	

Portions the size of...

	A deck of cards	is the same as...	3 ounces cooked meat, poultry or fish
	A large egg	is the same as...	1 average muffin
	A golf ball	is the same as...	2 tbsp. peanut butter
	A computer mouse	is the same as...	A small baked potato
	A 4-inch CD	is the same as...	A pancake or waffle
	A baseball	is the same as...	1 medium apple or orange
	Four (4) casino chips	is the same as...	4 small cookies (like wafers)
	Six (6) dice	is the same as...	1 ½ ounces of cheese

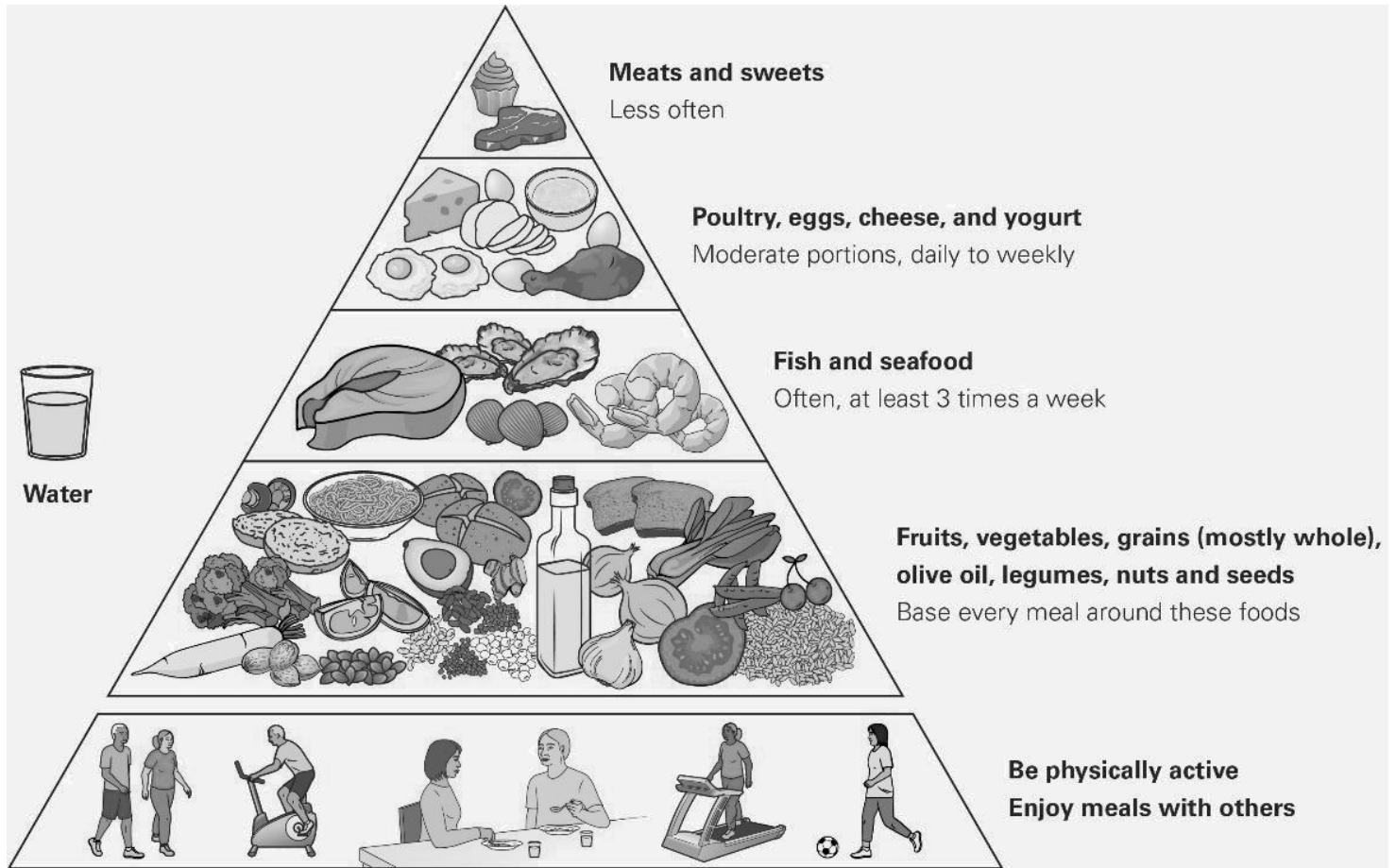
Food Intake Record – Example

Date: 05/25/2020		Day of the Week: Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri				
H (home) A (away)	Time of day	FOOD AND BEVERAGES Be as specific as possible	Amount	Cooking Method	Fat Used In Cooking	
H	7:30am	egg	2 lg.	Boil	None	
H	7:30am	Black coffee (no sugar)	4 fl. oz.			
H	12:30am	White bread Chicken breast Mustard spinach	2 med. 4 oz. 1 tsp 1 cup	Baked	Olive oil	
H	2:00pm	Chocolate chip cookie	2 med.	Baked	Butter	
H	5:00pm	Hamburger (regular ground beef) Hamburger bun, white bread Iceburg lettuce Tomato, raw Ketchup, Heinz	1 M & M Meat Shops patty (4 oz) 1 1 leaf 2 slices 2 Tbsp	BBQ'd	None	
H	9:00pm	Chocolate ice cream, Chapman's	2 cups			



Mediterranean Way Pyramid

Following a Mediterranean pattern of eating can lower your risk of dying from heart causes by 50% to 70%.





Following Canada's New Food Guide

Have plenty of
vegetables and fruits

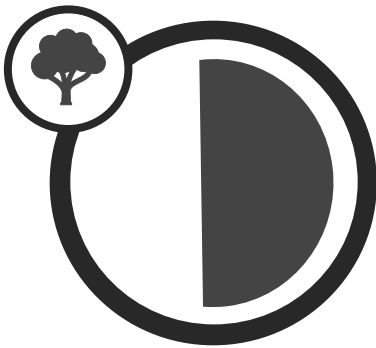
Eat protein foods

Make water
your drink
of choice

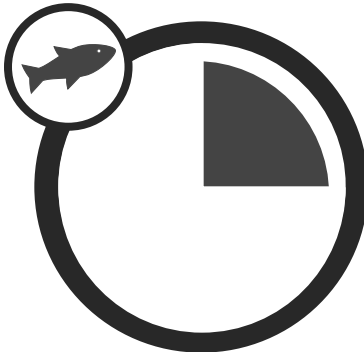


Choose
whole grain
foods

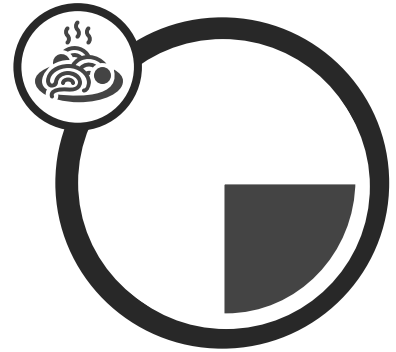
Check your meal to see if it follow the new food guide:



Is half of your plate
filled with vegetables?



Is a quarter of your plate
filled with protein?



Is a quarter of your plate
filled with carbohydrates?

If you answered no to any of these questions, think about ways to change up your plate.



Mediterranean Diet Survey

Adapted from Matinez Gonzalez et al, 2012.

Please answer the following questions by checking the box.

NAME _____ 1 3 6

1. Do you use olive oil as the main culinary fat?	Yes	No
3. How many vegetable servings do you consume per day? (one serving = 1 cup)	Greater or equal to 2 servings (greater or equal to 1 portion being raw or salad)	Less than 2 servings
5. How many servings of red meat, hamburger or meat products (ham, sausage etc.) do you consume per day? 1 serving= 3-4 oz. (size of a deck of cards).	Less than 1	Greater than 1
7. How many sweet or regular carbonated beverages do you consume per day?	Less than 1	Greater than 1
8. How many servings of kidney beans, chick peas legumes do you consume per week? 1 serv. = ½ cup	Greater or equal to 3	Less than 3
10. How many times per week do you consume commercial sweets or pastries (not homemade) such as cakes, cookies or custard?	Less than 3	Greater than 3
12. Do you preferentially consume chicken, turkey or rabbit meat instead of veal, pork, hamburger or sausage?	Yes	No



Start Your Plan: Vision

Adapted from UHN Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation Program

As you begin your journey to develop new healthy habits, it's a good idea to develop your vision and set goals. A vision is about how you want to see yourself in the future. Once you have a clear vision, you need goals. Goals will help you get to your vision. You can then create weekly action plans to help you achieve your goals.

Vision

Your vision is what you want to work toward. It can help to reflect on your own values and priorities.

Values: What really matters, to *you*?

Priorities: Answer the 4 questions below to develop your vision.

What do you see yourself doing in the future?

Examples:

- I will do all the things I need to do each day
- I will be able to play with my grandchildren
- I will be able to play sports
- I will volunteer
- I will travel
- I will have enough independence to live in my own home.

Your answer:

How will you be feeling in the future?

Examples:

- I will feel good
- I will feel healthy
- I will have more energy
- I will be happy
- I will feel closer to family and friends

Your answer:

Who are the people you are surrounded by in the future?

Examples:

- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues

Your answer:

Are you healthier in the future? And how do you know?

Examples:

- I am healthier because my blood sugar and blood pressure are lower.
- I am healthier because I feel happy and motivated.
- I am healthier because I can golf again.
- I am healthier because I have enough energy to take care of my grandkids.
- I am healthier because I have enough independence to do what matters to me.

Your answer:



Start My Plan: Goals

Adapted from UHN Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation Program

Set 1 to 3 goals that will help you achieve your vision.

Example: A vision to have more energy and travel with friends can be achieved by setting goals to work on healthy habits, such as to:

- Get more exercise on a regular basis.
- Have a restful sleep, most of the time.
- Have a heart-healthy diet.

Choose one goal to work on first. Create an action plan each week to help you reach your goal.

Your Goal 1:

Your Goal 2:

Your Goal 3:



Start My Plan: Action Plan

Adapted from UHN Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation Program

What change can you make?

Think about a healthy habit that you would like to start.

Areas you might focus on:

- Getting more physically active in my daily routine
- Getting more exercise on a regular basis
- Eating in a heart-healthy way
- Taking your medicine
- Developing social relationships
- Improving sexual intimacy
- Developing a healthy relationship with food
- Managing stress
- Managing anxiety
- Managing depression
- Managing burnout
- Sleeping better

Step 1

What healthy habit do you want to start doing this week?

Step 2

How *important* is it to you to create this healthy habit? Choose a number on the scale.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not very
important

Unsure

Very important

Step 3

How *ready* are you to work on this habit? Choose a number on the scale.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I am not
ready

I am almost ready

I am very ready

Step 4

Create your action plan for your healthy habit now. An effective action plan will be “S.M.A.R.T.” That means **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.**

This week:

What healthy habit will you do, and how?

Example: *Getting regular exercise, by walking.*

When will you do this healthy habit?

Example: *Mornings*

Where will you do this healthy habit?

Example: *At the park*

How much of this healthy habit will you do?

Example: *24 minutes*

How often will you do this healthy habit, over what time-frame?

Example: *5 times, between now and this time next week.*

Step 5

How confident are you that you can follow your action plan over the next 7 days? Choose a number on the scale.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not very
confident

Very
confident



Start My Plan: Reflect

Adapted from UHN Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation Program

Creating new healthy habits can help you manage your health, live longer, and feel better. You are more likely to succeed if you create weekly action plans to make small changes and reflect on your progress each week.

Ask yourself 2 questions to reflect on the past week.

1. What went well with you action plan? What felt good?

2. What did not go as planned with you action plan? What challenges or problems got in your way?

If you achieved your action plan - great! Now make a new plan for the coming week to keep moving toward your goal.

If your action plan did not go as planned, don't worry. This is normal. In fact, one secret of success is to avoid getting caught up in self-blame and thoughts about failure. These are just demoralizing traps. Instead, seek to learn something useful from the experience. Here are 6 steps to follow if things didn't go as planned.

Steps to Problem Solve



Describe the problem.

What stopped you?

Was your goal to ambitious or complicated?
Was it too easy?

Think about other ways to achieve your goal.


Do you need to change your goal? Make it smaller? More focused? Simpler?


Pick one idea.


Build your next action plan.


Try a new idea if the first one didn't work.


Example: Bob


 *What was the problem, Bob?* I failed! I planned to walk 5 times, an hour each time, over the past 7 days. I only walked twice: once for 15 minutes, once for 20 minutes.

 *What stopped you?* By the end of the afternoon, I didn't have enough energy.


 *Other ways to achieve your goal?* I could really push myself and tell myself not to be lazy! Or I could walk in the morning, after breakfast – or I could make my plan less ambitious.


 *Which idea would you pick?* Well, I was already telling myself not to be lazy. That just made me feel worse. So, I'm going to walk after breakfast, that's when I have the most energy.


 *Next action plan?* I'm going to walk outside, after breakfast, five times for an hour, over 7 days.

 *What if that doesn't work?* I'll make my plan less ambitious...4 times in 7 days, 30 minutes each time.

Example: Dorothy

 *What was the problem, Dorothy?* I was bad...I feel so guilty! For the past week, I'd planned to have only 1 cookie a day, to reduce my sugar intake. But I had at least 3 a day!

 *What got in your way?* I could just imagine the cookie bag, even if I hid it. It just called out to me!

 *Other ways to achieve your goal?* I'll just tell myself to smarten up, don't be weak this is really serious! Or I could have something else like an apple. Or I could avoid temptation in the first place by not buying the cookies at the supermarket.

If You did not Accomplish your Action Plan: 6 Steps to Solving Your Problem

1. **First, describe the problem:**
2. **What stopped you? Was your goal too ambitious? Too complicated? Too easy?**
3. **Think about other ways to solve your problem. Do you need to change your goal? Make it smaller? More focused? Simpler?**
4. **Pick one idea:**



Planning and Tips for Slips and Relapse

It would be great if we could accomplish healthy lifestyle changes in one easy step. But in reality, working on a healthy lifestyle can sometimes be challenging. It's a process ... not a single event.

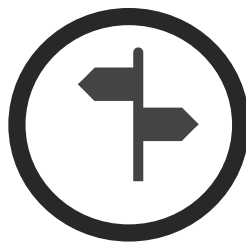
Slips and relapses seem to be part of a normal learning process of trial and error.

Most people making a change in their lifestyle have a relapse, when they slip back into old habits, at some point. This applies to many areas, such as exercise, nutrition, smoking cessation, or stress management.

Relapses often happen when you:



Travel or go on holiday



Go through life stress (e.g., a death in the family, changing jobs)



Get sick

So, it is important to be prepared for a slip (i.e. once or twice) or a relapse (i.e. more sustained) by:



Thinking about the reasons you wanted to reach this goal is key to your success.



Reminding yourself why you wanted to reach this goal each time you feel you can't do it or something gets in the way.

Getting Back on Track After a Relapse

1. Why is it important to make a change and set a goal at healthy habit do you want to start doing this week?

Think back to what motivated you to make this change and set this goal in your life. Why is it important for you to keep this goal going?

This goal is important to me because:

2. How important is this goal right now?

Rate how important this goal is for you on a scale of 1-10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not very
important

Very
important

3. How confident are you to achieve this goal?

Rate how confident you are that you can do what it talks to achieve this goal on a scale of 1-10.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not very
confident

Very
confident

If the goal you are trying to set is not important to you (you scored below a 7) and you do not feel you have the confidence to do it (you scored below a 7), then it may not be the right goal for you.



Choose something else or modify the goal so that you feel it is something you can do. **For example, if you wanted to set a goal to walk 5 days per week but you are not confident you can do that, then try 3 days per week instead.**

If you believe it is important (you scored 7 or higher) and you feel you can do it (you scored 7 or higher), then you are likely ready to get back to working on this goal and do well!



Thinking about the reasons you wanted to reach this goal is key to your success. **Each time you feel you can't do it or something gets in the way, think about why you wanted to reach this goal.**

Common Inner Reactions After a Slip or Relapse

When working on healthy lifestyle and habit changes, there are three common inner reactions people may have after they slip or relapse. The first two are traps and the third is helpful.

Trap 1: Emotional Self Abuse



For example, “I failed”, “I’m weak”, “I’m bad”, “I’m stupid”...etc.

Problem: This kind of harsh, over-generalizing self-talk may seem like you’re just being honest with yourself. But, it damages your self-respect, reduces confidence in your own ability to change, and reduces your motivation...leading to more slips or relapse! This “honesty” is actually a trap.

Trap 2: Denial



For example, “What slip?”, “I haven’t really relapsed!” or, “Once won’t hurt! (or twice)”...etc.

Problem: If you don’t admit to yourself that a slip is risky, or that you have actually relapsed, then you can’t fix it...another trap! (“emotional self-abuse” is on the other side of the same coin)

Helpful 3: Reality-based Approach



For example, “Yes, I did slip. But that makes me a human, not a failure!” “But I can get back on the wagon, I’ve done it before” ...“Why did I slip when I did...why not earlier or later...was there a trigger or stressor?...How can I problem-solve for the future”.

Solution: You admit the problem, but avoid overgeneralizing (e.g., “failure”), and remind yourself of your previous accomplishments with habit change. This approach also involves reflecting on why you slipped and how you can problem solve for the future. It faces a problem, but protects your self-respect, your confidence in your ability to change, and your motivation.

Have You Had a Slip or Relapse in One or More Healthy Lifestyle Habit?

Write down any the most important information below:

1. Any “emotional self-abuse” thinking you might have. It can be helpful to recognize your own reactions to slips or relapses.

Your Answer:

2. Any “denial” self-talk you might have.

Your Answer:

3. How can you break out of these traps, to become more reality-based? Suggestions: see sheet on Problem Solving

Your Answer:

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