

# Staying Healthy

## How To Take Charge of Your Health



*Every day, you have a chance to make good choices about your health. This handout tells you how to make those choices.*

## Choosing a Healthy Lifestyle

**How do I begin to improve my health habits?** Being healthy is about setting yourself realistic goals that you know you can stick to. You may decide to start out exercising three times a week and then building this up to six times a week with a goal of entering a triathlon. You can also set yourself daily goals such as ‘I will trade my morning coffee and muffin for a bowl of cereal and fruit’ or ‘I will take the stairs instead of the lift at work’. Eventually these goals will become habit, the ‘feel good’ endorphins will kick in, and you will be far down the road to optimal health and wellness.

## Eating Right

Eating the right foods in moderate portions can help you live a healthier life and maximise your energy levels. Many illnesses and conditions such as obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes, can be prevented by eating the right foods. A healthy diet also provides the vitamins and minerals you need for optimal mind and body performance. Here are some tips to help you make the right food choices....

### **Eat a variety of foods, including:**

- › Grains, especially whole grains such as oat porridge and wholegrain bread. White bread should be avoided.
- › Vegetables, especially dark-green leafy and orange/yellow/red varieties, Garlic and onions are great choices too!
- › Fruits, such as berries, and citrus fruits, either fresh or canned.
- › For protein and essential fatty acids- poultry, eggs, fish, beans ( for example, baked, kidney, green ). Choose lower fat options such as skinless chicken.
- › For calcium – dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, especially low-fat or fat-free dairy products. There are a number of dairy free alternatives such as canned fish, cauli-



## Eating Right continued...

### Limit sugar and saturated fat:

Energy dense foods (those high in sugar and saturated fats ) cause weight gain and increase your cholesterol levels. Avoid these foods by limiting:

- › High-fat dairy products such as ice cream, butter, cheese, cream, and whole milk.
- › Meats high in fat especially processed meats and bacon.
- › Palm and coconut oils.
- › Foods containing trans fat, vegetable fat, vegetable shortening or lard on the ingredients list.

Unsaturated fats do not raise cholesterol levels. Foods with unsaturated fat include extra virgin olive oil, fish, avocados, and many nuts are great choices.

### Watch your portion size:

More is not necessarily better. Try avoiding "super" or other oversized portions, and going back for seconds.

## Keeping Active

### Regular exercise can help you prevent:

- › Heart disease.
- › Obesity.
- › High blood pressure.
- › Type 2 diabetes.
- › Osteoporosis (thinning bones ).
- › Mental health problems such as depression.



*The endorphins released during exercise help you feel better overall*

### What to Do

All kinds of exercises will help you stay healthy and boost your energy levels. Try aiming for at least moderate activity, such as gardening, brisk walking, tennis, house cleaning, or playing with the kids. 30 minutes most days of the week is a good amount to aim for – the more active you are, the healthier you will become. Vigorous exercise such as running or swimming are even better.

### How to Get Started and Keep at It

If you have not been recently active, start off slowly.

Choose something that fits into your daily life.

- › Choose an activity you like, or try a new one.
- › Ask a friend to exercise with you, or join a group. Exercising with others makes it more fun.
- › Make time in your day for physical activity. Exercise in the morning or evening to suit your schedule.
- › If the weather is bad try the gym, indoor swimming pool, or joining an indoor sporting team competition such as indoor soccer or netball.