



Taking Care of Your Health

Taking good care of your health helps keep you in good shape both physically and mentally.

In addition to getting regular physical and dental check-ups there are a number of other things you can do to take care of your health.

- **Sleep well**
- **Eat well and exercise regularly**
- **Reduce your use of drugs and alcohol**

The following tips do not cover all of the possible information about each of these topics. Please talk with your health professional if you are having significant problems in any of these areas.

Sleep Well

Sleeping well every night will help you feel better during the day and make it easier to deal with stress.

Here are some tips on how to improve your sleep.

- **Set a schedule.** Follow a regular time to go to bed and wake up seven days a week.
- **Avoid caffeine after dinner.** This includes coffee, cola, and tea.
- **Avoid alcohol and nicotine before bedtime.** These substances can cause restless sleep.
- **Do something to unwind before going to bed.** You could do a relaxation exercise, read a book, or take a hot bath. Do not play computer games or view over-stimulating videos on the Internet.
- **Associate the bed with sleep.** Avoid using the bed as a place for reading, watching TV, eating, or working.



Understanding

- **Don't stay in bed when wide awake.** If sleep does not occur after thirty minutes, get out of bed and engage in a quiet activity such as reading until you are sleepy. Do not watch TV or play computer games.
- **Avoid taking naps during the day.** Some people can take short naps in the middle of the day without a problem. However, for most people naps during the day interfere with sleep at night.
- **Pay attention to the comfort of your bedroom.** Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and at a comfortable temperature. Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- **Avoid heavy exercise after dinner.** Gentle exercise after dinner, such as a leisurely stroll, may help with sleep. Avoid heavy exercise after dinner, as this may delay sleep. Vigorous exercise, when performed earlier in the day, *can* help with sleep at night.
- **Do not use sleeping pills on a regular basis.** Sleeping pills are only helpful for short-term treatment of sleep problems. Longer-term use can lead to problems with dependence and further sleep problems when the medication is stopped.

Eat Well and Exercise Regularly

People with psychosis may gain weight because they decrease their activity level. Weight gain is also a side effect of some antipsychotic medication. **Eating well and getting regular exercise will help you stay in good physical shape and maintain a healthy weight.** It will also give you more energy and allow you to deal with stress more effectively.

Here are some hints on how to eat well.

- **Don't go on a strict diet to lose weight.** Almost all people who follow strict diets gain the weight back (and sometimes gain even more weight after dieting). It's best to watch what you eat and make sure you're making good food choices on an ongoing basis.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Diets that emphasize eating a lot of just one type of food are not healthy. You need to have a mix of grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, and protein every day.
- **Keep your home stocked with healthy foods.** Shop for healthy food choices that are easy to prepare.
- **Choose snacks wisely.** If you need a snack, then reach for a piece of fruit or some cut-up veggies instead of a bag of potato chips or a chocolate bar.



Understanding

Here are some hints on how to get regular exercise.

- **Choose activities you enjoy for exercise.** Choosing an enjoyable activity helps ensure that you will keep doing it. You may enjoy playing sports, going to the gym, or taking up a new activity such as swimming, cycling, or hiking.
- **Exercise with a friend.** This makes exercise more fun and can help motivate you on those days you don't feel like exercising.
- **Be more active during the day.** Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk the long way to the store.
- **Listen to music.** Music can make you feel like moving. If you listen to music while you exercise, you may exercise for a longer time and enjoy it more.
- **Start slowly.** You won't become a marathon runner overnight. Start with just five minutes a day and increase the duration slowly over time.

There is a lot of inaccurate and even harmful information about eating and exercise on the Internet and in many magazines. It is best to get any further information on these topics from your health professional.

Use the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section on page 41 to help you reach your goals to eat well and exercise regularly.

Reduce Your Use of Drugs and Alcohol

The use of recreational drugs and the excessive use of alcohol are risky for a person with psychosis. These substances slow recovery and increase the risk of psychosis coming back.

People who use drugs and alcohol usually do so because they experience pleasure or other positive effects. Some of the positive effects people report from using drugs and alcohol are:

- Feeling “high”
- Feelings of relaxation
- Avoiding boredom
- Experiencing a “thrill”
- Escaping from negative feelings such as stress or depression
- Feeling less shy or awkward around others.





Understanding

But most people also experience negative effects, such as:

- Unpredictable effects that can lead to panic, paranoia or depression
- Risks to physical and mental health
- Arguing with family and other loved ones
- Dependency or addiction
- Problems concentrating
- Problems at work or school

The decision to reduce or quit using drugs and alcohol is yours. Nobody can force you to quit. It is best if your decision to quit or continue is an informed decision.

Your Turn!

List the positive and negative effects of your own drug or alcohol use.



Your Turn!

POSITIVE EFFECTS	NEGATIVE EFFECTS
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Write Down

Take a look at your list. Do you see any advantages to reducing your drug and alcohol use?



Understanding

Reducing Drug or Alcohol Use

If you decide that there are advantages to reducing your use, then you are going to need skills to be able to accomplish your goal. **Reducing drug use requires good goal-setting and problem-solving skills.** These skills are covered in the *Solving Problems* and *Setting Goals* and *Moving Forward* sections in this toolkit.

A **trigger** is a situation or event that can be a factor that contributes to misusing drugs or alcohol. You can find out more about triggers beginning on page 67 in the *1. Controlling Triggers For Psychosis* section.

As you start to reduce your use, you should be prepared to deal with triggers that may come up.

Here is a sample list of triggers and ideas on how to handle them.

TRIGGER	HOW I'LL HANDLE IT
I'm with friends or at a party. Everyone is drinking alcohol or taking drugs.	Rehearse this situation beforehand. Practice saying "no thanks" in a confident voice.
I feel bored.	Have other activities I can engage in when I recognize that I am bored.
I feel stressed.	Try some relaxation techniques.





Your Turn!

Your Turn!

- Anticipate what triggers make you want to increase your drug or alcohol use.
- How will you handle the situation when you notice the triggers?

TRIGGER	WAYS I'LL HANDLE IT
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Write Down

After you have successfully quit or reduced your use, you may “slip” and start to increase your use again. These types of slips are common. The important thing is to not give up and go back to using regularly. Review what happened and plan ways to manage similar situations in the future.

If you are ready to reduce your use of drugs or alcohol, the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section on page 41 will help you reach your goals.