



WHPA

World Health Professions Alliance WHPA

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD

2 USER GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND PUBLIC



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Table of contents

WHAT ARE NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES?	1
WHAT IS THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD?	2
HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM AT "RISK"?	3
WHAT CAN I DO TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET?	5
WHAT CAN I DO TO INCREASE MY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS?	6
HOW CAN I QUIT SMOKING?	7
WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL?	9
WHAT ARE THE BODY MEASURES THAT I SHOULD BE MONITORING ON A REGULAR BASIS?	11
HOW CAN THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD HELP ME ACHIEVE MY HEALTH GOALS?	13
USEFUL HEALTH INFORMATION	14

HOW TO USE THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND PUBLIC

The WHPA Health Improvement Card is designed to:

1. Provide information on how you can improve your health through positive behaviour and lifestyle changes.
2. Make it easier for you to work with your health professional to establish your own health goals and to track your progress over time.

This brochure is designed to provide you with useful health information and help you answer the most frequently encountered questions:

- What are noncommunicable diseases?
- What is the WHPA Health Improvement Card?
- How do I know if I am at “risk”?
- What can I do to maintain a healthy diet?
- What can I do to increase my physical activity levels?
- How can I quit smoking?
- What can I do to prevent harmful use of alcohol?
- What are the body measures that I should be monitoring on a regular basis?
- How can the WHPA Health Improvement Card help me achieve my health goals?

WHAT ARE NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES?

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are diseases that last a long time and are generally slow to progress. For example, they include cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) diseases, stroke, cancer, lung diseases and diabetes (high blood sugar). These diseases cause 60% of all deaths in the

world and also are a leading cause of disability¹. Half of the 35 million people who died from chronic disease in 2005 were under 70, and half were women².

There are other noncommunicable diseases such as oral disease, mental disorders and arthritis, which also play a significant role in general well-being.

In general, NCDs develop over many years and once established tend to be permanent and difficult to cure. However, they can either be prevented or, if identified early, treated and managed in a way that significantly reduces suffering, disability, financial and societal costs, and prolongs healthy life years.

Everyone is regularly exposed to environmental and social influences, which may lead them to adopt unhealthy behaviours leading to poor health and NCDs.

KEY FACTS³:

- Four common lifestyle risk factors are largely responsible for the illness, disability and premature deaths associated with NCDs: unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and the harmful use of alcohol.
- These are associated with four key changes in body functioning: raised blood pressure, raised fasting blood glucose, raised LDL cholesterol and overweight/obesity, which increase the risk of disability and lower life expectancy.

“SIMPLE LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS CAN HAVE A LONG- TERM EFFECT ON IMPROVING YOUR HEALTH AND PREVENTING NCDs”

WHAT IS THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD?

The WHPA Health Improvement Card is a simple, universal, educational tool for adults to assess and record their status with regard to the four most common lifestyle risk factors. It also encourages you and your health professional to take a positive, preventive approach to your

¹ World Report on Disability. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2011.

² http://www.who.int/topics/chronic_diseases/en/

³ Global status report on noncommunicable diseases in 2010. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2011.

health and to NCDs. The information gained from the WHPA Health Improvement Card can then help you and your health professional design and develop interventions on the four common modifiable lifestyle/behavioural risk factors specific to your individual needs. It will also help you monitor your progress towards achieving better health.

THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD HAS THREE MAIN COMPONENTS:

1. Assessment on four risk factors that you can change;
2. Assessment on four body measures that are used to monitor the impact of lifestyle on the body;
3. Action plan and goals targeting the risk factors that you can change.

The potential consequences (-) and the steps you can take (+) to address the risk factors are described clearly.

The use of a “traffic light” colour-coding shows you clearly what you need to achieve as a **goal**; what needs to be improved as **caution**; and what is to be avoided as **high risk**.

“AIM FOR GREENS AND AVOID REDS!”

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM AT “RISK”?

The following is the table for the four main lifestyle risk factors with recommendations for appropriate actions to achieve ideal health goals.

		 GOAL	 CAUTION	 HIGH RISK
HEALTHY DIET	—			
	+			
	An unhealthy diet increases your risk of being overweight, obese and developing oral diseases	 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day	 Less than 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day	 I do not eat fruit and vegetables
	Eat more fruit and vegetables every day and seek advice on lowering salt and saturated fats			

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	—	Lack of physical activity increases your risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and some cancers			
	+	Increase the amount of time spent on physical activities at home and at work and engage in sports	Physical activity at least 30 minutes per day	Physical activity less than 30 minutes per day	Physical activity is not a part of my daily routine
TOBACCO USE	—	Tobacco use increases your risk, and the risk of those around you, of cancer, lung diseases, heart attack and stroke			
	+	Stop smoking from today onwards	No, I never use or have stopped using tobacco		Yes, I use tobacco
USE OF ALCOHOL	—	Harmful use of alcohol increase your risk of mental illnesses, and liver damage and other alcohol related deaths			
	+	Limit the amount of alcohol that you drink each day	< 2 drinks per day	3-4 drinks per day	>5 drinks per day or >5 days per week

HOW TO USE THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD?

- Mark a tick in the coloured box on each row, indicating your current risk level.
- Review the potential harmful effects for each risk factor, and see what actions are required to reduce risks. If you do not understand the effects, ask your health professional to explain.
- Study the three columns indicating “goals”, “caution” and “high risk” and read the facts to see what you can do to change your risk.
- Talk to your health professional about ways to achieve a healthier lifestyle.
- Develop a plan to track progress. It is not easy to change habits and a plan can help you track your progress. Your health professional can help you.
- Read this guide to find basic information and simple suggestions on what you can do to encourage positive healthy behaviour change.
- Follow simple recommendations on the WHPA Health Improvement Card to help you prevent long term chronic sickness – it’s easy!

“SHARE THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD WITH YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS! IT IS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL FOR EVERYONE. ”

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

The ultimate goal is for you is to achieve four “greens” for lifestyle risk factors. Depending on the current level of risks for you, it may be necessary to establish step-wise milestones as part of the Health Improvement Action plan that you can use to track your progress and for monitoring by your health professional.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DIET?

A healthy diet is one that gives you the energy you need to work, exercise and enjoy life. Some foods can boost your energy, stimulate your memory and stabilise your mood; they can also reduce your risk of diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes and defend against depression and associated loss of functioning.

A healthy diet does not mean giving up the foods you love, but it does mean being aware of some basic facts⁴ about the risk associated with certain foods.

To help you make healthy choices, the following is a table on food facts and tips on what you can do to improve your diet.

	FOOD FACTS	WHAT YOU CAN DO
Fruit and vegetables	Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases, stomach cancer and colorectal cancer.	Increase your consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts. We recommend you eat at least five portions of different types of fruit and vegetables a day. It is easier than it sounds: a glass of 100% unsweetened fruit juice can count as one portion, and vegetables cooked in dishes also count.
Salt	Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure and put you at greater risk of developing heart disease or having a stroke.	Bear in mind that, even if you do not add salt to your food, you may still be eating too much: about three-quarters of the salt we eat is already in the food we buy, such as breakfast cereals, soups, breads and snack foods like potato chips.

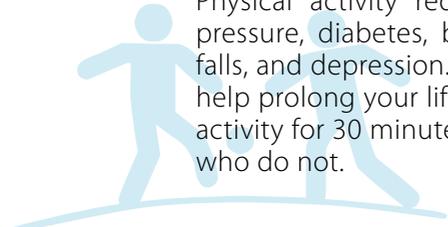
⁴National Institute of Health, USA

Fat	There are two main types of fat: saturated and unsaturated. The main danger comes from saturated fat: too much of it can raise the level of cholesterol in the blood, which increases your risk of developing heart disease and having a stroke.	Choose foods that contain unsaturated fats such as olive and seed oils, oily fish, nuts and avocados. Try to cut down on foods containing saturated fat such as cakes, pies, biscuits, sausages, cream, butter, lard and hard cheese.
Sugar	Sugary foods and drinks are often high in calories and can contribute to weight gain. They can also cause tooth decay, especially if consumed between meals.	It is OK to consume sugars found naturally in foods such as fruit and milk, but do try to cut down on foods containing added sugar such as sugary fizzy drinks, cakes, biscuits, sweets and pastries.

WHAT CAN I DO TO INCREASE MY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS?

Physical activity means all body movements that increase energy expenditure. It can be fun and includes a variety of activities such as your transport to work or school, activities during work, gardening, household work, as well as more formal sport and exercise.

Physical activity reduces the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, breast and colon cancer, stroke, weight gain, falls, and depression. Plus, it can give you a sense of well-being and help prolong your life: people who engage in some sort of physical activity for 30 minutes several times a week live longer than people who do not.



THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO BE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE:

- Walk from one place to another or use the bicycle.
- Do active work at home, such as gardening and household tasks.
- Play games with the children such as catching and throwing.
- Do exercises that are planned, structured, repetitive and purposeful. For example, dance, swim, play ball sports such as football or baseball or join an exercise class.

SOME TIPS

- Choose activities that you enjoy. Don't be afraid of doing new things: try them out, or change activity regularly so you don't get bored.

- Try taking up an activity the whole family or your friends can enjoy – see it as a social activity.
- Make physical activity part of your daily or weekly routine. Try walking an extra block every day or use the stairs instead of the lift.
- You don't need to do 30 minutes all in one go: you can take a 10-minute brisk walk three times a day, or one walk for 20 minutes and one for 10 minutes.
- If your job requires you to sit for long hours, change your position regularly and, for example, stand up and move your arms and legs and take some deep breaths.
- If you have a heavy, physically active job, take regular breaks to stand up and move your body in different ways.
- Keep a physical activity diary to monitor your progress. Initially, set yourself easy, realistic, short-term goals you can achieve. As you progress, set yourself daily, weekly and monthly goals or targets. If you achieve your goals, reward yourself – and try not to be discouraged if you miss a target or a new goal.
- Celebrate success - despite your body benefiting as soon as you become more active, you may not see visible changes straight away. After a few weeks the benefits will become more noticeable to you.
- As you become more physically fit, the intensity of many activities such as walking or bike riding can be increased. If you would like to increase your activity level and start a more structured physical activity programme, please talk to your health professional first.

"A LITTLE IS BETTER THAN NOTHING AND MORE IS BETTER THAN A LITTLE!"

HOW CAN I QUIT SMOKING?

Giving up smoking may help you live longer and more actively, with a greater level of well-being, and to avoid dying from lung cancer or chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. It will also help to reduce the risk of shortening the life of those in your immediate environment, such as family, friends and fellow workers, who are also harmed by your smoke.

Tobacco use is not about freedom or choice of lifestyle. Nicotine is an addiction in much the same way as heroin or cocaine addiction. For your health, and for the health of those around you, you should try to quit. It will not be easy. Here are some steps⁵ to help you:

⁵ <http://www.smokefree.gov>

STEP 1: Thinking about quitting

Decide for sure that you want to quit. Promise yourself that you'll do it. It's okay to have mixed feelings. Don't let that stop you. There will be times every day that you don't feel like quitting. Stick with it anyway!

FIND REASONS TO QUIT THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU. THINK OF MORE THAN JUST HEALTH REASONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THINK OF:

- How much money you'll save by not buying cigarettes.
- The time you'll have for yourself instead of taking cigarette breaks, rushing out to buy a pack, or searching for a light.
- Not being short of breath or coughing as much.
- Setting a better example for your children.
- How smoking a cigarette doesn't calm you down.

Write down all the reasons why you want to quit. List the ways to fight the urge to smoke too. Keep your list where you'll see it often. Good places are:

- Where you keep your cigarettes.
- In your wallet or purse.
- In the kitchen.
- In your car.

STEP 2: Preparing to quit

Just thinking about quitting may make you anxious. But your chances will be better if you get ready first. Quitting works best when you're prepared. Before you quit, **START** by taking these five important actions:

S = Set a quit date.

T = Tell family, friends, and co-workers that you plan to quit.

A = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.

R = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car, and work.

T = Talk to your health professional about getting help to quit, or using nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT).

STEP 3: Quitting

Today's the day you start your smoke-free life! Remind your family and friends that today is your quit date. Ask them to support you

during the first few days and weeks. They can help you through the rough spots.

- Use a support programme such as a smoking cessation clinic at your local pharmacy or a community based support group.
- Keep busy.
- Stay away from what tempts you.

STEP 4: Keeping smoke-free

Beating an addiction to nicotine takes a lot of willpower and determination. You should feel great about yourself for making it so far. Now is the time to focus on sticking with it.

Your body has changed since you began to smoke. Your brain has learned to crave nicotine. So certain places, people, or events can trigger a strong urge to smoke, even years after quitting. That's why you should never take a puff again, no matter how long it has been since you quit.

At first, you may not be able to do things as well as when you were smoking. Don't worry. This won't last long. Your mind and body just need to get used to being without nicotine.

For more information, you can visit online resources such as:
<http://www.who.int/topics/tobacco/en/>

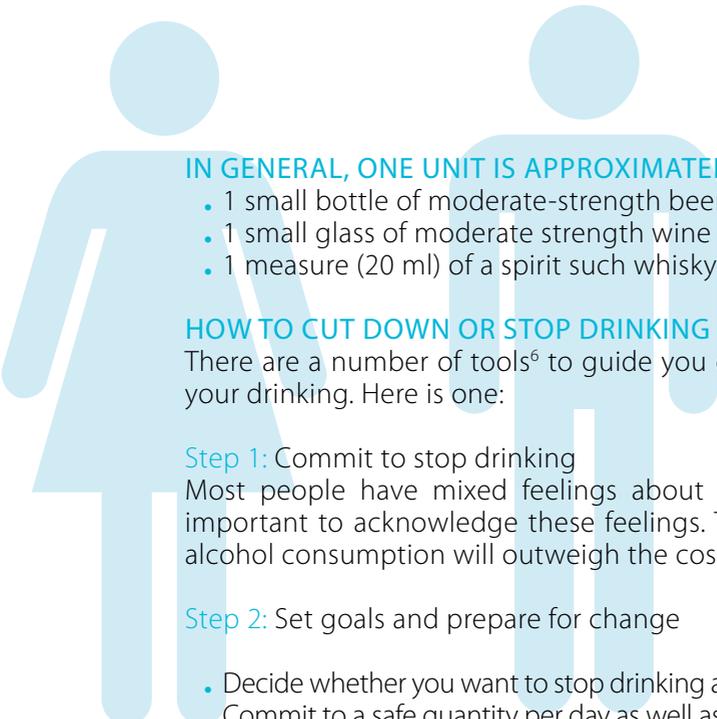
WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL?

Many people enjoy an alcoholic drink socially, with a meal or to celebrate an important event. It is important to distinguish between enjoyment of an occasional drink or two and excessive drinking. Excessive drinking can have serious long-term consequences on your health.

HOW MUCH IS IT SAFE TO DRINK?

Ask your health professional about the recommended drinking limits per day and week in your country. The World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for safe drinking limits per week are:

- Men: 21 units of alcohol
- Women: 14 units of alcohol.



IN GENERAL, ONE UNIT IS APPROXIMATELY:

- 1 small bottle of moderate-strength beer (250 ml), or
- 1 small glass of moderate strength wine (90 ml), or
- 1 measure (20 ml) of a spirit such whisky or vodka).

HOW TO CUT DOWN OR STOP DRINKING

There are a number of tools⁶ to guide you on how to cut down on your drinking. Here is one:

Step 1: Commit to stop drinking

Most people have mixed feelings about stopping drinking; it is important to acknowledge these feelings. The benefits of reduced alcohol consumption will outweigh the costs.

Step 2: Set goals and prepare for change

- Decide whether you want to stop drinking altogether or just cut back. Commit to a safe quantity per day as well as non-drinking days.
- Set a quitting date.
- Get rid of drinking temptations and reminders.
- Tell your friends and family about your goals in order to get their support. Make clear there is no drinking in your home, and that you intend to avoid events where alcohol is served.
- Distance yourself from people who do not support your non-drinking objectives.
- If you have already tried to cut back, learn from past experience on what worked and what did not.
- Bear in mind that drinking alcohol won't solve your problems. You may forget them for a short while but, in general, the problems increase.

Step 3: Ask for help and support

Support can come from family members, friends, counsellors, other recovering alcoholics, your healthcare providers, and people from your faith community.

Whether you can stop drinking on your own or need help from your health professional depends on how much you have been drinking, how long you have had a problem, and other health issues you may have.

⁶ http://www.helpguide.org/mental/alcohol_abuse_alcoholism_help_treatment_prevention.htm

Possible symptoms of alcohol withdrawal (delirium tremens) requiring emergency treatment are: severe vomiting; confusion and disorientation; fever; hallucinations; extreme agitation; seizures or convulsions. Long-term heavy drinkers may need the help of a health professional to become alcohol-free.

Step 4: Find new meaning in life

To stay alcohol-free for the long term, you will need to build a new, meaningful life where drinking no longer has a place: eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of sleep and exercise; building a support network; joining a specialised support group; developing new activities and interests; and dealing with stress in a healthy way.

Step 5: Plan for triggers and cravings

Cravings for alcohol can be intense, particularly in the first six months. Combat them by avoiding people, places, or activities that trigger a craving for alcohol, refusing offers of alcoholic drinks in social situations, talking to someone you trust, taking a walk or practising some other physical activity, listening to music, running errands, etc. Remind yourself that drinking will not really make you feel better, and simply ride out or ignore the craving until it passes.

Step 6: Do not give up

Alcohol recovery is a process—one that often involves setbacks. Remind yourself that a brief relapse does not have to turn into a full-blown failure. Get support from friends or a counsellor, and learn from the experience.

WHAT ARE THE BODY MEASURES THAT I SHOULD BE MONITORING ON A REGULAR BASIS?

The following table provides values for the four main body measures used to monitor the impact of lifestyle on the body. There is information to assist you in achieving your goal/target value in the following pages.

GOAL
 CAUTION
 HIGH RISK

BODY MASS INDEX	 18.5 - 24.9	 25 - 29.9	 30 or greater
FASTING BLOOD SUGAR	 less than 100 mg/dL	 100 - 125 mg/dL or treat to goal	 126 mg/dL or more
CHOLESTEROL	 Less than 200 mg/dL untreated	 200 - 239 mg/dL or treat to goal	 240 mg/dL or more
BLOOD PRESSURE	 SBP less than 120 mmHg and DBP less than 80 mmHg	 SBP 120 - 139 mmHg and DBP 80 - 89 mmHg	 SBP more than 140 mmHg and DBP more than 90 mmHg

WHERE:

Body mass index (BMI) is a simple way of measuring your level of body fat and it is calculated as measured weight in kilograms divided by measured height in metres squared.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{\text{height (m)} \times \text{height(m)}} \quad (\quad) \text{ kg/m}^2$$

OR

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (lb)}}{\text{height (in)} \times \text{height(in)}} \times 703 \quad (\quad) \text{ lb/in}^2$$

HOW DO I USE THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD?

- Mark a tick in the coloured box on each row, indicating your current risk level, only if you know these values.
- Ask your health professional how you can get a test for fasting blood sugar and serum cholesterol.
- Ask your health professional to take your blood pressure. If you have a blood pressure monitor or machine at home, you may ask your family member to help you measure your blood pressure.

WHAT ARE MY GOALS?

The ultimate goal for all individuals is to achieve four “greens” for the body measures. Depending on your current level of risks, it may be necessary to establish step-wise milestones as part of the Health Improvement Action plan that can be monitored and tracked for progress at home and by your health professional.

“FIND OUT YOUR METABOLIC VALUES BY ASKING A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL TODAY “

HOW CAN THE WHPA HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CARD HELP ME ACHIEVE MY HEALTH GOALS?

The Health Improvement Action plan has been included on the Health Improvement Card for you and your health professional to establish mutually agreed goals so as to improve your lifestyle and body measures over time.

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN		
my commitment		my goal : 
my action		target date :
health professional action		

WHERE:

My commitment refers to the target that both the health professional and you wish to achieve by a specific *target date* (such as for reducing weight, blood pressure, and/or tobacco use).

My action refers to a task that you have agreed to undertake on your own (such as walking to work instead of using public transport, or reducing the number of alcoholic drinks per week).

Health professional action is where the nurse, pharmacist, dentist, physician or physical therapist may indicate locally available diagnostic tests or make a referral to a district health centre or other health professional. It is also where your health professional may prescribe specific interventions (such as checking total cholesterol at a local laboratory centre, making a referral to a district hospital

for further evaluation, checking blood pressure within one month or proposing a specific programme of physical activity and exercise).

USEFUL HEALTH INFORMATION

The following information has been obtained from the World Health Organization and may provide you with answers to some of your questions.

DIET

Overweight and obesity are the fifth leading risk for global deaths. At least 2.8 million adults die each year as a result of being overweight or obese. In addition, 44% of the diabetes burden, 23% of the ischaemic heart disease burden and between 7% and 41% of certain cancer burdens are attributable to overweight and obesity.

Overweight and obesity, as well as their related noncommunicable diseases, are largely preventable. Supportive environments and communities are fundamental in shaping people's choices, making the healthier choice of foods and regular physical activity the easier alternative, thus preventing obesity.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical inactivity (lack of physical activity) has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6% of deaths globally). Moreover, physical inactivity is estimated to be the main cause for approximately 21–25% of breast and colon cancers, 27% of diabetes and approximately 30% of ischaemic heart disease burden.

TOBACCO USE

Almost 6 million people die from tobacco use each year, both from direct tobacco use and second-hand smoke. By 2020, this number will increase to 7.5 million, accounting for 10% of all deaths. Smoking is estimated to cause about 71% of lung cancer, 42% of chronic respiratory disease and nearly 10% of cardiovascular disease.

Counselling and use of nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT) can more than double the chance that a smoker who tries to quit will succeed.

HARMFUL USE OF ALCOHOL

Approximately 2.3 million die each year from the harmful use of alcohol, accounting for about 3.8% of all deaths in the world. More than half of these deaths occur from NCDs, including cancers, cardiovascular disease and cirrhosis of the liver.

Two separate but related dimensions of drinking largely determine the impact of alcohol consumption on disease and injury: the total volume of alcohol consumed and the pattern of drinking. Therefore, a broad range of alcohol consumption patterns, from occasional hazardous drinking to daily heavy drinking, creates significant public health and safety and social problems in nearly all countries.



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