

MINDFUL HEALTH ~ I WILL FOCUS ON ME

Mindful health choices to improve your mental well-being

Get mindfully healthy by adding these positive choices into your life:

Nourish the mind

Good nutrition is important for mental well-being. The food you use to fuel your bodies helps to nurture your mind. Healthy eating can improve mood, enhance brain function and can help with feelings of stress, anxiety and depression.

- Follow [Canada's Food Guide](#). Include more vegetables and fruits and whole grains, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils and fish into your diet
- Start the day with breakfast. It replenishes essential nutrients and provides energy for the day
- Make water your drink of choice
- Pay attention to what, why and how much you are eating. Deal with food cravings and stress by being active, spending time with family and friends and reaching for healthy snacks

Be tobacco-free

If you smoke, quitting is the best thing you can do to improve your health. Understanding why you smoke and learning new healthy ways to deal with stress can help you on your journey to quit.

- Monitor your smoking habits to determine your triggers
- Develop a plan, including a quit date
- Find healthy substitutes and make changes in your environment and daily routine
- Ask the people around you for support

If you drink, limit alcohol use

Drinking less can reduce health related harms. Alcohol consumption can have an impact on and increase the risk of mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and suicide.

It isn't always easy to tell when your alcohol intake has crossed the line from social or moderate drinking to problem drinking. Physical dependence on alcohol involves a developed tolerance to the effects of alcohol, in which more alcohol is needed to produce the desired effect. Physical dependence can result in withdrawal symptoms when regular use is suddenly stopped.

Following [Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](#) can help reduce alcohol related harms.

These guidelines recommend:

- No more than 10 drinks a week for women, with no more than 2 drinks a day most days
- No more than 15 drinks a week for men, with no more than 3 drinks a day most days
- Plan non-drinking days every week to avoid developing a habit
- Drinking less than the daily and weekly limits to reduce cancer and other alcohol-related conditions
- No alcohol for certain populations

Move more

[Being active](#) for at least 150 minutes or 2.5 hours per week can improve your mental and physical health.

Here are some ways to fit physical activity into your day:

- Take the stairs, go for walking breaks, stand when talking on the phone, sit tall at your

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desk and maintain good posture to build core and back muscles

- Hold [walking meetings](#) to get energized and generate creative ideas
- Use an [active mode of transportation](#) for distances less than one kilometer. Consider walking, cycling or rollerblading for short distances

Make the connection

Supportive relationships with family, friends and colleagues can build a sense of belonging and contribute to good physical and mental health. Social supports can protect you from the effects of stressful life events. Here are some ways you can stay connected:

- Schedule time with family and friends
- Volunteer your time
- Try something new and meet people with similar interests
- Incorporate teambuilding activities into meetings

Rest and relax

Sleep plays an important part in mental health. A refreshed brain improves mood, decision-making and social interactions. Most adults need about 7 hours of restful sleep per night.

- Get into a routine. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day—including your days off
- Limit caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bed as they can disrupt your sleep
- A quiet, dark and cool room is best for a good night sleep
- Engage in relaxing activities such as yoga, tai chi and mediation

“Me” time

By relaxing, refocusing and being recharged, we are able to better focus on our responsibilities and commitments.

Schedule “me” time into your day by choosing something relaxing and restorative.

Some examples include:

- Take a five to 10 minute break to sit quietly, spend time with a pet or listen to music
- Read a book or go for a brisk walk
- Take part in a class that you are interested in

Strive for balance

Competing priorities and multiple roles can make it difficult to balance your work and family life.

Restore balance by:

- Setting clear boundaries between work and family life that will help decrease conflicts and the stress associated with it
- Take time to refresh and recharge yourself
- Accessing services offered by your employer, including the Employee Assistance Program can help you to manage a work-life balance

Experience nature

Enjoying the outdoors has been shown to decrease your risks of chronic disease, increase your energy levels and lead to positive thinking.

Take time for a walk in local green spaces including your backyard, neighbourhood parks, [York Region Forests](#) or [Conservation Areas](#). Your mental and physical well-being will thank you. Include more nature in your daily routine by:

- Walking at lunch with a friend in a local park
- Scheduling walking and talking meetings with colleagues in green spaces outside your office building
- Participating with friends and family in local trail events