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Canadian Mental
Health Association
British Columbia

EATING AND LIVING WELL



Most of us know that we need to aim for a healthy, balanced diet and regular exercise to maintain our physical health. These same goals are also important when maintaining our mental health and well-being.

Healthy living is all about moderation, balance and flexibility. There will be some days when you don't eat healthy foods and some days when you don't do enough exercise. This is totally normal in your busy, sometimes stressful, life. You get a more accurate picture of how you've been doing if you look back over the past month or so. For the month ahead, aim to make small changes that will improve your health, both mental and physical. Here are some ideas:

- Nourish your body throughout the day—avoid skipping meals.
- Eat a variety of foods and aim for a balance over the month.
- Rather than worry about 'good' versus 'bad' foods, remember that moderation is the key.
- Try to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Drink lots of water. It helps reduce fatigue and replenishes the body.
- Use caffeine in moderation, particularly if you are prone to anxiety or sleep problems.

- Listen to your body's signals—it will let you know when you are full or hungry. Become more conscious of why you eat when you are not really hungry. Try to find other ways to cope with feelings of boredom, unhappiness, loneliness or social pressure.
- Use exercise as a way to deal with stress.
- Slowly increase your physical activity level.
- Try the free Carrot Rewards smartphone app which gives you points toward free stuff just for walking.
- Consider joining a gym or other formal exercise program.
- Check out your local community centre for a range of fun options and programs for people of all ages.
- Try adding in extra activity throughout your normal day, such as getting off transit early and walking the rest of the way. Even getting up to change TV channels can make a difference!
- Remind yourself that weight and shape are not the only way to evaluate your self-worth—think of at least one other way that shows you are a worthwhile, loveable, talented person who has something to offer the world.

Try talking to your family doctor, a trained health professional or local service provider for creative and manageable ways to make healthy choices. Start slow, reward yourself when you achieve your goals, and involve your friends and family in your plan.

For more on balanced eating, healthy exercise, and body image, find the Living and Eating Well Wellness Module at www.heretohelp.bc.ca/wellness-modules