

Is It Time for a Change?

Making Lifestyle Changes That Last

With a long-term illness, you may feel like you've already had to change a lot. You may not be able to do some of the things you used to do. But you may be thinking you still want to change something else in your life for your health.

Learning how to make changes to improve your health is the first step toward feeling more in control. Keep reading to find out:

- Understand what a lifestyle change is
- Why lifestyle changes are important
- How to make a lifestyle change plan and stick to it

What Is a Lifestyle Change?

A lifestyle change is any change that you make for your health. It's a change that affects your daily life. It could be stopping something that could hurt you. Or, it could be starting something new that could help you. It can be things like:

- Lose weight
- Get more exercise
- Eat differently
- Lower stress
- Get better sleep
- Stop smoking
- Cut back on alcohol use

Why Lifestyle Changes Are Important

Even with a long-term illness, making lifestyle changes may help you feel better. You might have less pain or fatigue. You might find that you move or breathe better. And, you might be able to keep doing or get back to doing things that you enjoy.

How to Make a Lifestyle Change Plan and Stick to It

Deciding you want to change something is the first step in making that change. There are four steps you may go through when changing your health habits. Where are you in these steps?

- **Contemplation.** You are thinking about making a change but are not ready to start.
- **Preparation.** You have decided to make a change and are making plans.
- **Action.** You are acting on your plan and are making the changes you set out to make.
- **Maintenance.** You have gotten used to your changes and have kept them up for more than 6 months.

As you prepare to make a change, you will need to set a goal. How you define that goal can affect your success. Parts of a successful goal are:

- **Your goal is specific.** Know exactly what it is you want to do. For example, “I will add one fruit serving to my daily diet” is better than “I will eat more healthy.”
- **You can measure your progress.** Be able to measure your change. For example, know how many minutes you will exercise and on which days. Log your progress on a calendar. Make entries soon after you do the behavior.
- **Your goal is attainable.** Pick a change you are confident you can make. You may need to lose weight or quit smoking. If you aren’t sure you can do it yet, pick a smaller goal you know you can do. Also, think about any things that might make it harder for you to meet your goal. For example, do you have a way to get to the grocery store? Do you need help knowing what to eat? Or what exercises you can do? Talk with your doctor or Program Nurse about ways to solve these problems.
- **Your goal is important to you.** Think about why you want to make this change. How will it improve your life? Having a specific benefit in mind that means something to you can help to keep you motivated.
- **You have a timeline for your goal.** When do you want to reach your goal? Decide on some milestones. Will you follow up with your doctor on a certain date? Break a larger goal into smaller goals. For example, if you want to lose 50 pounds in a year, instead set a goal to lose 5 pounds in a month. As you meet this goal, set a second goal for another month. Smaller goals like this can be less overwhelming.

Once you have taken action and are making the change, you might run into problems that make it harder to reach your goal. You might not have been able to think of every obstacle before you got started. Or things in your life may have changed. Talk about any new issues with your doctor or Program Nurse. They can help you figure out what is making it difficult for you to reach your goal.

Having support as you work on your goal can also help you succeed. Your doctor and Program Nurse are one source of support. Talk with them about the change you want to make and get their help. Talking with a friend, coworker, or family member about your goal can also motivate you. They might act as a buddy and make the change along with you. Or just knowing that someone else knows you are working on a goal and you can talk with them about it can help keep you going.

Remember that making one mistake when you are working on your goal, or even several, does not mean that you have failed. You can still get back on track.

How Do I Learn More?

Call your Program Nurse today.

2021 © Accordant Health Services, LLC a CVS Caremark company. All rights reserved. This article has been reviewed for accuracy by a member of the Accordant Health Services Medical Advisory Team. Our program, care team and care manager do not provide treatment or care. We assist you in getting the care you need and our program, including this information, is not a substitute for the medical treatment and/or instructions provided by your qualified healthcare providers. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting with a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your condition. Use of this online service is subject to the disclaimer and the terms and conditions.

Last Reviewed Date: 08/31/2021

Last Modified Date: 08/31/2021