SANE

FACTSHEET

HEALTHY LIVING

QUICK FACTS

A healthy lifestyle is important for everyone. When we look after our physical health, we feel better too – fitter, more relaxed and better able to cope with things. This is especially important when you have a mental illness.

There are lots of ways of being healthy that feel good as well as doing you good.

BENEFITS OF HEALTHY LIVING

What you gain by living more healthily includes:

- feeling better mentally – regular exercise can lift your mood and help you feel better
- saving money – eating junk food, smoking, and drinking sugary drinks or alcohol are all expensive habits
- fewer health problems – living a healthier lifestyle means a lower risk of developing many illnesses
- taking control of your life – getting healthy helps you feel in control of your life.

Getting healthy

'Healthy living' means maintaining a healthy lifestyle and introducing habits that improve your health. It can be difficult to change old habits, but there are steps you can take to become healthier. An important first step is identifying less healthy habits and learning new, positive ones to replace them, such as:

- eating healthy foods and balanced meals
- sleeping well and managing stress
- practicing safe sex, drinking alcohol responsibly and not abusing drugs
- being physically active
- staying connected with others
- being aware of any health risks related to your illness and its treatment, and working with your doctor to monitor these and then take action
- taking responsibility for your overall health including having regular check-ups for your

eyes and teeth.

HOW TO DEVELOP POSITIVE HEALTH HABITS

The key to developing positive habits that you are more likely to keep is to:

Start slowly

Change just one thing at a time - see the benefits that can come from eating more balanced meals or, exercising more or quitting smoking

Make small changes – an achievable change is more likely to become a habit you keep.

Go slowly – making a change gradually can be easier than all at once.

Build on what you already do – for example, if you enjoy walking, try extending your usual route by a manageable amount.

Remember, increasing or adding even one new health behaviour can make a big difference to your health.

Work around challenges

There are things you can do to manage any extra challenges related to your illness and it's treatment – such as drowsiness, sugar cravings or lack of motivation. Steps you can take include:

- organise daily activities around side-effects of medication, for example, if you are drowsy in the morning, organise exercise for the afternoon.
- discuss things with your doctor – there may be another medication you can try, or ask for referral to a specialist such as a dietitian or psychologist for expert advice.

Staying healthy

Being healthy is about more than getting fit and feeling better, it's about staying that way too. Tips to help you stay motivated include:

- schedule regular check ups with your doctor to monitor your progress and for that extra push you may need to keep going.
- reward yourself – feel good about developing healthier habits by rewarding yourself with something nice.
- overcome slip-ups – if you slip-up, be realistic and start again.

Finding Support

There are lots of ways to get the support you need to help stay healthy. An important step is finding a good GP (general practitioner) you are comfortable discussing your health with. Seeing the same GP each time means you can work together to manage your health and organise check-ups as needed.

Having someone else as a ‘support person’ can make all the difference in keeping up healthy habits. Talk with your friends, family, mental health program or case worker. Don’t forget other services in your area that you can draw on too.

HOW DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Contact the SANE Help Centre or phone 1800 18 7263
- Talk to your local GP – or other medical doctor who understands mental illness – for information, assessment, referral and support. They can also tell you about any specialist services that can help with specific issues, such as weight management or improving fitness.