

Supporting Healthy Behaviors

Support Person Fact Sheet

Key Facts

When supporting someone taking charge of their health care, part of your role may be helping them to live a healthy lifestyle. A healthy lifestyle includes a healthy eating plan, regular physical activity, rest, and avoiding drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. It also includes positive social and emotional supports. Finding balance in all these areas helps with overall wellness and quality of life.



All too often, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) face barriers to their health and health care inclusivity and accessibility. Health promotion campaigns usually not targeted toward people with I/DD even though it is known they have higher rates of obesity and diabetes, and tend to get less physical activity than those without IDD.

Nutrition

Making healthy food choices can be challenging, so helping the person make informed choices by understanding the health consequences of their choices will be helpful. Choosing foods that are too high in sugar or saturated fat, can lead to:

- Obesity
- Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Some cancers

If someone is overweight or underweight, seek assistance from a health professional to get guidance. A dietitian can help provide a healthy eating plan.



Water

Another way for a person to live a healthy life is by drinking water. Drinking water helps:

- Maintain the balance of body fluids
- Energize muscles
- Keep your skin hydrated and looking healthy
- Bowel function
- Kidney health

Smoking and Drinking

Smoking, vaping, and/or chewing tobacco products and drinking too much alcohol can cause serious health problems. The Smoke Free Oregon program helps people to stop smoking. You can call the 24/7 Tobacco Quit Line anytime if you want help with quitting: **1-800-784-8669**. You can reach The Alcohol and Drug Help Line at: **1-800-923-4357**.

Physical Activity

Physical activity is important for a wide variety of reasons. Some of those reasons include:

- It makes people feel better
- It helps improve energy
- It helps prevent obesity
- It helps prevent other lifestyle diseases

Try to find physical activities the person enjoys, and then build it into their weekly routine. Before embarking on a new activity routine, it's a good idea to check with the person's health care provider to ensure safety. This is especially true for anyone that is aging, has been sedentary, has health problems, or a family history of heart disease.

Adequate Sleep

Sleep is important for your mental health, physical health, safety and quality of life. Sleep helps support growth, development and healing. If you are sleep deprived, you can experience health problems that can affect how you think, react, work, learn and get along with others. Not getting enough sleep has been linked to depression, suicide and risk taking behavior. It also increases your risk for obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. Some helpful tips for wellness sleep include:

- Get 7-8 hours of sleep per night.
- Regular exercise helps you sleep well.
- Don't have caffeine after 4 p.m.
- Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day.

For more information:

[Click here to learn more about living a healthy life with a disability \(URL: https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health\)](https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health)

Related fact sheets:

Support Person Fact Sheet: Encouraging Preventive Health Care

Support Person Fact Sheet: Supporting Annual Wellness Check-Ups

Support Person Fact Sheet: Supporting Oral Health

This fact sheet was created in June 2021.

The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to review the information in this fact sheet within the context of educational purposes and when appropriate, share it with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.

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