



Seirbhís Sláinte
Níos Fearr
á Forbairt

Building a
Better Health
Service



CÚRAM SLÁINTE POBAIL
CORCAIGH CIARRAÍ
CORK KERRY
COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE



Fit to Flourish

A simple guide from your HSE physiotherapist
to keep you active and healthy



This booklet was prepared by Fiona O'Shea and Teresa Twohig,
Senior Primary Care Physiotherapists, North/South Lee, Cork.

Summary of Contents

- Introduction 2
- Physical Activity, Exercise and Sedentary Behaviour 3
- Healthy Eating 8
- Body Weight 10
- Waist Measurement 11
- Fatigue Management 12
- Stress Management 16
- Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing 18
- Blood Pressure and Cholesterol 20
- Smoking 21
- Alcohol 23
- Long Term Health Conditions 25
- How well do I manage my Health and Wellbeing? 26

Please read this booklet carefully and refer to it as a useful health and wellbeing resource

Introduction

We are Chartered Physiotherapists working in a community setting in Cork. Chartered physiotherapists help people of all ages and abilities reduce pain, improve and restore mobility, manage health conditions, and maximise their wellbeing.

We take a holistic approach to health, meaning we look at the “whole person”. We look at one’s physical activity and other lifestyle factors that impact on one’s health & wellbeing such as healthy eating, sleep and stress.

Knowledge is power

Being aware of these factors will help you to manage and take control of your health.

“Every small change matters”

The aim of this booklet is to support you and to make you aware of the benefits of long term lifestyle and behaviour change. These benefits include improved physical and mental health and prevention of long term health conditions.



Physical Activity, Exercise and Sedentary Behaviour

Physical activity: Physical activity is any movement of the body that uses energy. This can include household chores, such as hoovering, cleaning and gardening. It can also include more active modes of transport such as cycling or walking to the shops.

Exercise: Exercise is a planned, structured and repetitive activity. It is carried out to improve or maintain physical fitness or health. Exercise is a type of physical activity. All exercise can be considered physical activity but not all physical activity is exercise.

Sedentary Behaviour: Sedentary behaviour is sitting or lying down (with the exception of sleeping) for long periods. Common sedentary behaviours include watching television, reading, using a computer and driving. These behaviours use very little energy and are a risk factor for certain long-term health conditions. It is especially important to discourage prolonged sedentary behaviour in children. We know that sedentary behaviour increases with age, and a sedentary child is likely to become a sedentary adult.



For more information on encouraging physical activity in children of all ages go to; <https://www2.hse.ie/healthy-eating-active-living/exercise>

Physical activity is known to help treat some health conditions. It also reduces the risk of long term health conditions and unhealthy weight gain. There are significant health benefits to exercise and physical activity. These include improved bone health, muscle strength and improved mood. Other lifestyle factors such as healthy eating, stress and fatigue, affect the benefit you get from exercise.

Starting exercise can be challenging. If you have any concerns about starting exercise, please contact your GP or chartered physiotherapist.

If you were offered a pill that

- Helped control your weight
- Boosted your immune system
- Protected you from long term health conditions
- Improved your mood and mental health
- Strengthened your muscles and bones



Would you take it? **Exercise is this 'pill'.**

*Remember: Any movement is good movement.
Some exercise is good AND more is better*

Make a start today, it is never too late, and every minute of exercise counts. Improvements in brain health have been measured even after a single bout of exercise. Healthy adults should aim for 10,000 steps per day, which is equal to eight kilometers or five miles.

Measure your steps using a

- Step counter
- Fitbit
- Free app you can download to your phone

Start slowly, fitness is a marathon, not a sprint. If you are new to walking, start off with 10 minutes at a time. Build it up every day at your own pace to reach as many steps as you can.

See the Let's Get Moving Again booklet on <https://www.iscp.ie/news/Lets-Get-Moving-Again-Booklet-Launch> which includes eight simple daily exercises to encourage people to become more active.

"Most importantly, have fun"



For more information go to:

- www.getirelandactive.ie
- www.gov.ie/HealthyIreland
- www.corkhealthycities.com
- www.healthykerry.ie

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

BONE HEALTH/ FALLS PREVENTION /BALANCE

Strength and balance exercises improve your bone health, muscle strength and reduce the risks of falls.



BRAIN HEALTH

Exercise increases brain activity and is effective in improving short term memory, attention span, and coordination.



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

As well as healthy eating, exercise plays a crucial role in controlling your weight.



PREVENTION OF LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS

Regular exercise helps to prevent and manage many long term health conditions.



HEART AND LUNG FUNCTION

Exercise can improve endurance and reduce breathlessness by increasing oxygen capacity. Exercise can help increase the HDL or good cholesterol. Higher levels of HDL are associated with lower levels of heart disease.



MOOD

Exercise causes the release of endorphins which creates feelings of happiness and help to alleviate feelings of anxiety and depression.



ANTI-INFLAMMATORY EFFECTS

Exercise has an anti-inflammatory effect and therefore assists with pain relief.



BE ACTIVE



At least
150 minutes
moderate intensity
exercise per week



or at least
75 minutes
vigorous intensity
exercise per week



Minimise sedentary behaviour

break up
periods of inactivity

Build strength

on at least 2 days
per week, to keep
muscles, bones
and joints
strong



For older adults,
**improve
balance**

2 days a week,
to reduce the
chance of
falls and frailty

How hard should I work?

Talk test

If you can talk and sing while exercising without getting out of breath, you are exercising at a low intensity. During moderate-intensity exercise you can talk but not sing during the activity. During high intensity you will not be able to say more than a few words without taking a breath.

Check how you FEEL

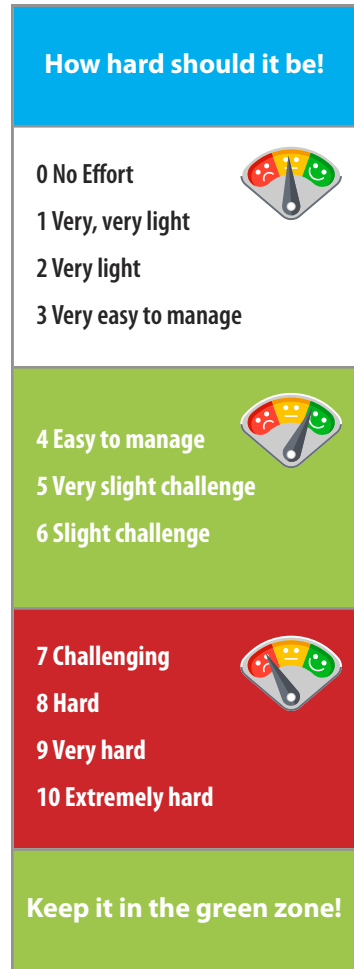
Examples of signs to look out for to see if you are overdoing things:

- Muscles cramping, twitching and feeling like jelly
- Shortness of breath
- Significant fatigue
- Soreness the following day, such that you are unable to exercise

Remember:

- Pace yourself
- Be realistic
- Don't push yourself too hard too fast
- Take breaks as needed
- Listen to your body

*Use the Rate of Perceived Exertion above to check how hard you are working. Stay in the **GREEN ZONE!***



*“Congratulations,
Keep up the good
work”*

Healthy Eating



www.healthyeireland.ie

Healthy Food for Life

The Food Pyramid

For adults, teenagers and children aged five and over

Not needed for good health. **Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt**

NOT every day

! Maximum once or twice a week



*Daily Servings Guide – wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

	Child (5-7)	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (19-50)	Inactive	Adult (19-50)	Teenager (13-18)	Adult (51+)
Active	3-4	4	4-5	3-4	3	3-4	3
Inactive	3-5	5-7	5-7	4-5	4-6	4-5	4

There is no guideline for inactive children as it is essential that all children are active. Source: Department of Health, December 2016.

Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day – water is best

Get Active!
To maintain a healthy weight adults need at least 30 minutes a day of moderate activity on 5 days a week (or 150 minutes a week); children need to be active at a moderate to vigorous level for at least 60 minutes every day.

Eating well is important for everyone. Eating healthily can help you feel good, give you more energy and stay at a healthy weight. It may help to reduce the risk factors of certain diseases such as heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes. This in combination with exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight.

Key Messages to maintaining a healthy balanced diet:

- Routine is important, try your best to plan for three healthy meals a day and snacks if necessary.
- Plan ahead: Write your shopping list and include all the ingredients you need to cook the meals you've planned.
- Size matters: Use the food pyramid as a guide for serving sizes.
- Foods high in sugar and fat can affect your energy levels, your mood and your weight. Try to keep these foods to a minimum, not every day.
- Aim to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Choose high fibre breads, grains and cereals instead of white varieties.
- Drink 8 glasses of fluids a day – plain water is best.
- If you are overweight, even a small amount of weight loss can help.
- If your dietitian, nurse or doctor has given you special dietary advice or advice on your fluid intake, stick to it.
- Small changes can make a big difference. **Start TODAY!**

You can find useful information at:

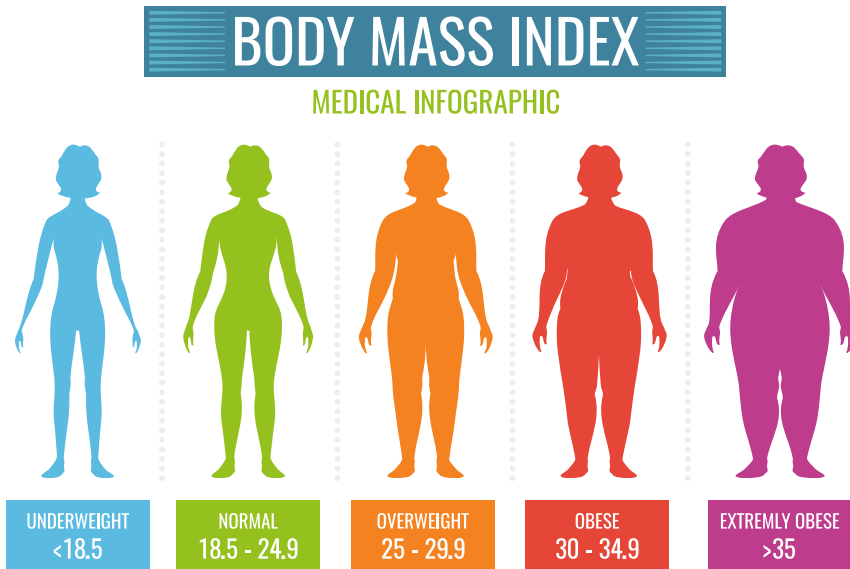
<https://www2.hse.ie/healthy-eating-active-living/nutrition/>



Body Weight

Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight. It is a good indicator of how your weight affects your health. The higher your BMI, the higher your risk of developing conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. This risk factor can be changed by losing weight through healthier eating and being more physically active.

A healthy BMI is between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/m².



For further information on how you can measure your BMI go to
<https://www.safefood.net/bmi-calculator>

If you have any concerns or would like more information
contact a healthcare professional

Waist Measurement

Waist measurement is a simple check to tell if you are carrying excess body fat around your middle. Carrying too much weight around your middle increases your risk of developing many conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

You can have a healthy BMI and still have too much tummy fat, meaning you're still at risk of developing these diseases.

	Women	Men
Normal (Low Risk)	64-80 cm (25-32 inches)	78-94cm (30-37 inches)
Overweight (Elevated Risk)	80-88 cm (32-35 inches)	94-102cm (37-40 inches)
Obese (High Risk)	>88cm (35 inches)	>102cm (40 inches)

Measuring your waist

To measure your waist:

- Find the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips
- Wrap a tape measure around your waist, midway between these points (roughly in line with your belly button)
- Breathe out naturally
- Take the measurement

Fatigue Management

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is a term used to describe an overall feeling of tiredness or lack of physical and/or mental energy. It isn't the same as feeling drowsy or sleepy. When one is fatigued, one has no motivation or energy and it interferes with a person's usual activities. Being sleepy may be a symptom of fatigue, but it's not the same thing.

Fatigue may be cognitive – affecting how you think and how you feel or it may be physical – affecting what you do. Frequently it is a mixture of both. The causes of fatigue are complex and are different for everyone.

Helpful steps to self-management of Fatigue:

- Aim to recognise when you are fatigued or are becoming fatigued such as tiredness, sleepiness, dizziness.
- Think of your energy reserves as being like a battery. If you use up all the energy, you must then take time out to recharge it. If you can 'top up' your battery as you go along, you will always have some energy in reserve and will increase your endurance.
- Rest is one of the most important ways of managing fatigue. A brief i.e. 10-20 minute rest period is the way to provide that 'top up' to your battery or energy reserves. Aim to include 3 to 4 of these rest periods into your day.
- Rest also allows the body to recover from activity, both physical and mental. Rest is different for everybody, find what works for you. Examples include listening to music, sitting in the garden and meditation. Rest is a crucial part of managing and being in control of fatigue and activity.

Other steps that help with fatigue management include:

Eating well: Healthy eating can boost your energy. Increase the amount of fruit, vegetables, wholegrain foods, low fat dairy products and lean meats in your diet.

Stress Management: Stress uses up a lot of energy. Try to introduce relaxing activities into your day. This could be going out for a walk, yoga, listening to music, reading or spending time with friends. Whatever relaxes you will improve your energy.

Not using caffeine or alcohol: Too much caffeine, particularly in the evening, can cause difficulty sleeping. Cutting back on caffeinated drinks such as tea, coffee and energy drinks can help stabilise your energy levels to help you feel better.

Alcohol can dehydrate you and also disturb your sleep, leading to tiredness the next day.

Proper hydration: Water is vital for our bodies to function well. Dehydration is one of the main causes of tiredness and having a lack of energy. Dehydration can reduce blood flow to organs, slowing down your brain and inducing fatigue. Drink around eight glasses of water a day and don't wait until you're thirsty to do so.

Increase physical activity: Physical activity boosts energy levels, while a sedentary lifestyle is a known cause of fatigue. Physical activity has many good effects on the body and mind and also helps you sleep better at night.

Getting enough sleep: High quality night time sleep is another way to boost energy. The amount of sleep needed varies from person to person. Aim for 7-8 hours sleep per night. Getting a restful, undisturbed sleep is what's most important.



10 TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP



Maintain a
constant daily
routine



Reduce your
daily caffeine
intake



Turn off the
computer, phone
or television



Don't go
to bed on an
empty stomach



Don't go
to bed on a
full stomach



Limit beverage
consumption
before bed



Invest in a
comfortable
mattress, pillow
& bedding



Engage
in regular
exercise



Keep your
room
dark & quiet



Go to sleep and
wake up using
your internal
alarm clock

Useful skills for managing fatigue include the 3 P's

- 1. Planning:** This is thinking about what you want to get done and the best way to do this. Make a list, include one thing you enjoy and include some rest time.
- 2. Prioritise:** make a list of your regular habits and routines. Can some activities be shared, altered or even eliminated?
- 3. Pacing:** this is breaking down tasks and adding in rest periods to help you to carry out a task that would otherwise be too tiring. When using pacing, it is important to stop the activity before you feel fatigued.

Think time not task.

Managing your fatigue
is not about taking it away,
but taking control of it!



Stress Management

What is stress?

Stress is a normal and natural response of the body to demands placed on it. Some stress can be beneficial. It can get work done or get us moving such as cleaning the house if you know someone is staying. However, long term stress, if unaddressed, can cause mental health issues like depression and anxiety and harm our physical health.

What causes long term stress?

- Ongoing exposure to stressors
- Inability to effectively manage stress
- Body does not have the opportunity to relax
 - This can lead to long term medical issues such as increased blood pressure and decreased digestion

Managing your stress has many benefits:

- Improves your physical health
- Has a positive effect on your immune system
- Sharpens your brain skills
- Improves your emotional health
- Helps you live longer

For more information:

- www.yourmentalhealth.ie
- www.hse.ie or email corkbeatsstress@hse.ie

Apps:

Headspace and Calm available to download on www.headspace.com and www.calm.com

Strategies for managing stress



- **Prioritise your time** do what is most important first.
- **Plan ahead** prepare for situations that you know could cause stress.
- **Avoid the stressor**
- **Reframe the situation** remember that whatever happens around you, you can be in control of your thoughts and responses to that situation.
- **Lead a healthy lifestyle** good quality sleep, healthy eating and regular exercise all help combat stress and fatigue.
- **Use relaxation techniques** use whatever works for you. Examples include yoga, music, relaxation, prayer, mindfulness apps e.g. Headspace.
- **Seek support from others**
- **Take time for yourself** nurture yourself, doing things you enjoy can be energising and restorative.
- **Take regular exercise** this can help combat stress and depression and can also improve sleep.
- **Adjust your expectations** try not to expect too much of yourself or others. Nobody's perfect!!
- **Write about it** writing down what's on your mind can help you to process it and release the emotions involved. It may also help you problem solve and come up with solutions.
- **Don't under-rate yourself** focus on what you are managing and achieving. Set realistic goals.
- **Learn to say 'No'** trying to please everyone and taking on more than you can handle can cause stress.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The Little Things campaign focuses on sharing simple and powerful day-to-day steps – little things that we can all do to protect our own mental health and support the people we care about.

People are encouraged to:

- eat and sleep well
- take regular exercise
- talk about their problems
- drink less alcohol
- stay in touch and spend time with others – all proven to improve mental health

See the images on the next page to remind you of the little things that make a big difference to how we feel. Share them with friends and family, or download them to remind you that it's the little things that can help lift your mood.

<https://www2.hse.ie/services/campaigns/littlethings/posters.html>



littlethings

8 HOURS SLEEP MAKE THE OTHER 16 EASIER

Getting a good night's sleep as often as you can is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

ADD FRIENDS TO YOUR TEA

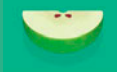
Keeping in touch with friends is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

BOOST YOUR MOOD WITH HEALTHY FOOD

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

IF A FRIEND SEEMS DISTANT CATCH UP WITH THEM

Being in touch and connecting with other people is proven to have a positive impact on how we feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

DRINK LESS AND GREAT NIGHTS BECOME GOOD MORNINGS

For the average Irish drinker, drinking less alcohol will have a positive impact on their health and mental wellbeing.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

LENDING AN EAR IS LENDING A HAND

Talking about our problems is proven to have a positive impact on how we feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

PROBLEMS FEEL SMALLER WHEN YOU SHARE THEM

Talking about your problems is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

THE MORE YOU MOVE THE BETTER YOUR MOOD

Getting regular exercise is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

DO THINGS WITH OTHERS THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Being involved in activities that you enjoy is proven to have a positive impact on how you feel.



Little things can make a big difference
yourmentalhealth.ie
#littletings

Blood Pressure and Cholesterol



120/80

What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the force that your heart uses to pump blood around the body. Healthy blood pressure is roughly 120/80.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a type of fat found in your blood.

Having high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain (angina) or stroke.

Healthy Levels of Cholesterol	
	Healthy Levels mmol/l
Total	Less than 5
LDL	Less than 3
HDL	Greater than 1

If your blood pressure and/or cholesterol is high, the following lifestyle changes can help you reduce your levels:

- Healthy eating, this includes reducing salt intake
- Engage in regular physical activity. Moderate intensity exercise ↑ HDL (good cholesterol) and ↓ LDL (bad cholesterol)
- Maintain a healthy weight or if overweight, weight loss can help reduce your risk
- Manage stress
- Stop smoking
- If you drink alcohol, stick to the recommended low risk guidelines for good health on www.askaboutalcohol.ie
- Take your medication as prescribed

Blood Pressure and Cholesterol can vary between individuals so it is good practice to get your GP or practice nurse to check them regularly.

Smoking

Smoking damages your heart and your blood circulation. This increases your risk of developing conditions such as: stroke, peripheral vascular disease (damaged blood vessels) and cerebrovascular disease (damaged arteries that supply blood to your brain).

Smoking also damages your lungs, leading to conditions such as: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Smoking can also worsen or prolong the symptoms of respiratory conditions such as asthma, or respiratory tract infections such as the common cold. <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/lifestyle/what-are-the-health-risks-of-smoking/>

It is never too late to stop smoking - the benefits begin as soon as you stop

- **After 20 minutes:** Your circulation will improve and your blood pressure and heart rate will get lower. This immediately reduces your risk of a heart attack.
- **After 8 hours:** The nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood go down and the oxygen level rises.
- **After 48 hours:** The nicotine and carbon monoxide have left your body. Your sense of smell and taste will start to improve.
- **After 72 hours:** Your breathing will improve and your energy levels will increase.
- **After 2 to 3 months:** Your lung capacity could increase by up to 30%.
- **After 1 year:** Your chance of having a heart attack drops by half.
- **After 5 years:** The risk of smoking-related cancers is greatly reduced.
- **After 10 years:** The risk of lung cancer is reduced by half.
- **After 15 years:** The risk of having a heart attack is the same as a non-smoker.

QUIT

Don't Smoke and if you do,
quitting smoking is the best
thing you can do to improve
your health.

YOU can Quit and WE can help.

Call 1800 201 203
www.quit.ie

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol in excess or above the recommended guidelines increases your risk of serious health conditions. These include high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems. It is important to keep track of how much you drink to make sure you don't exceed the guidelines and ultimately, protect your health and wellbeing.

Recommended Low Risk guidelines:

up to **11** standard drinks spread out over one week



up to **17** standard drinks spread out over one week

A standard drink is:



Small glass of wine (100ml)



Half pint of lager, beer or stout (284ml)



Pub measure of spirits (35.5ml)

Drinks should be spaced out over the week and should never be saved up to drink on one occasion. These guidelines are intended for adults only. There is no safe level of alcohol intake for those below the legal drinking age of 18 years.

Regularly drinking alcohol to excess can increase your risk of experiencing alcohol-related harms to your body such as:

- **The heart:** causing high blood pressure, increased risk of stroke and irregular heartbeat
- **The brain:** causing poor memory, balance and co-ordination problems
- **The liver:** causing fatty liver which stops the liver from working properly
- **The stomach:** causing increased amount of acid in your stomach, resulting in reflux, gastritis and ulcers
- **Weight gain:** increasing your risk of diabetes, stroke and cancer
- **Sex life and fertility:** lowers libido and reduces fertility

Are you concerned about your alcohol intake? Maybe you feel that you're drinking too much or too often. Perhaps it's a habit you'd like to better control. There is a self-assessment tool available on www.askaboutalcohol.ie. Take this test to find out what type of drinker you are and the impact of your drinking.

There are so many benefits to drinking less alcohol, some you may expect and others that may be a welcome surprise. It is good for your general health, improves your appearance and how you feel. Drinking less alcohol will also have a positive impact on other aspects of your life including your relationships and work.

If you need further assistance please contact:

- Your doctor or practice nurse
- www.askaboutalcohol.ie
- HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline Freephone 1800 459 459
- Alcoholics Anonymous 01 8420700 email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
- HSE South Addiction Service Cork; 021 4968933



Long Term Health Conditions

What is a long term health condition?

A long-term health condition is one which can be treated and managed but usually not cured. Examples include asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, heart conditions and stroke.

If you have a long term health condition, you have an important role in the management of your **own** healthcare. Family members or carers may also have a role to play. If you have a long term health condition it is important that you have a full understanding of it. You need to know how to manage it and how it will affect your life.

What is Self-Management?

Self-Management is what a person with a long-term health condition does every day. This may include:

- Recognising and dealing with symptoms
- Taking prescribed medication(s)
- Attending various appointments
- Making lifestyle changes e.g. healthy eating, staying active
- Coping with the emotional effects of the condition e.g. managing stress

To do this well a person needs to have the right information, education, support and services.

**Learning how to manage your condition
may help you feel better, stay active and live well**

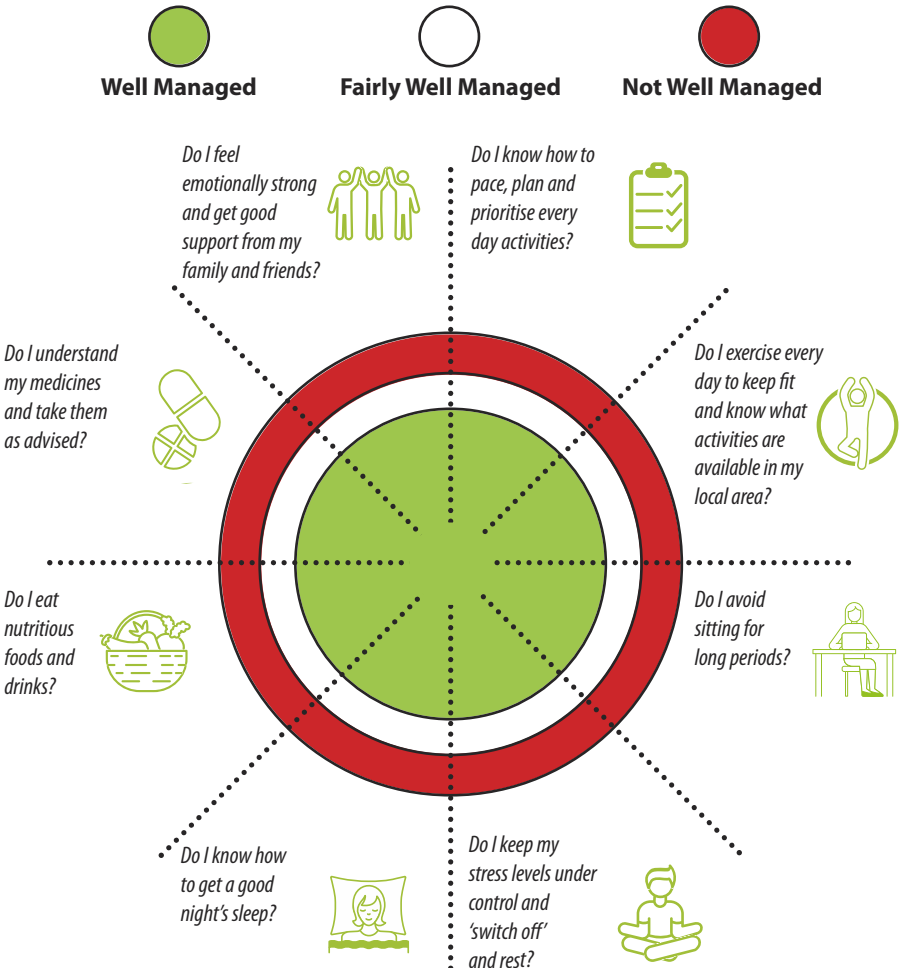
For further information:

- <https://www.hse.ie/selfmanagementsupport>
- <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/being-active-with-a-health-condition/being-active-with-a-health-condition.html>

How well do I manage my health and wellbeing?

The Better Health Strategy Wheel

Choices you make about your health and lifestyle can affect how well you manage your wellbeing. Ask yourself 'How well do I manage each of the 8 sections below and in each section place an X on the colour you feel most appropriate for you. Start taking control by finding ways to improve the "not well managed" areas.



Other useful resources:

www.thewellbeingnetwork.ie

to find information on supports & services in the Cork & Kerry area

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/healthy-ireland/community-healthcare-organisations/know-your-numbers-card.pdf>

This wallet-size card lists key numbers that impact health and wellbeing (blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugars, body mass index, waist measurement, alcohol, healthy eating and active living). Knowing these numbers can help prevent the onset of chronic diseases.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/hl/selfmanagement/cork-kerry-community-healthcare-directory-of-services-and-programmes-for-adults-with-asthma-copd-diabetes-heart-conditions-and-stroke.pdf>

Cork & Kerry Community Healthcare Directory of Services and Programmes for Adults with Asthma, COPD, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Stroke



We would like to acknowledge and thank Maeve Carmody, Self-Management Support Co-ordinator for her advice on this booklet.

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Disclaimer:

It is your responsibility to undertake the advice in this booklet safely. Seek medical advice if you have any concerns about any of the issues covered in this booklet. The authors and advisor who have created this booklet, accept no liability for injury caused as a result of undertaking this advice.