



My Self-Care Journey



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Introduction

Using This Journal

Choosing to practice healthy habits each day leads to better physical and mental health. This journal helps you to intentionally tune in to your lifestyle choices and provides a guide for making positive changes. Start with the **Life Balance Wheel** to reflect on your lifestyle habits and changes you want to make.

Getting Support

The team in your Family Doctor's clinic can support you to make healthy choices. Your Family Doctor works in a team with other health professionals such as psychologists, social workers, nurses, exercise specialists, dietitians and pharmacists. This is called the **Patient's Medical Home** (PMH). A PMH aims to provide each patient with a central hub for all their health care needs. Discuss your support needs with your family doctor and health care team.

Through a local **Primary Care Network** (PCN), local Patient's Medical Homes work together to provide care specific to the needs of people in a community. PCNs provide programs and services that empower people to take charge of their health. PCNs are a made-in-Alberta approach to improve and better coordinate access to care.

Contact your local PCN for support on your journey. You can connect with your PCN through your family doctor or at albertafindadoctor.ca. Each PCN has a website with information about services offered. The services offered vary a little from PCN to PCN.

We Welcome Your Stories and Comments

Red Deer PCN led the development of this journal in collaboration with other PCNs in Alberta. Health professionals contributed their wisdom gained from years of working with patients. It is through these experiences that we learn what really works to make lasting change.

We would appreciate hearing from people who use this journal. Let us know how it worked for you and any suggestions that you might have. Email info@rdpcn.com.

Small steps lead to big changes.



Disclaimer: This journal is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis and treatment for your specific symptoms or concern. Contact your professional health care provider for your specific questions.

A The Power of Self-Care

Self-Care is a conscious choice to engage in activities that help us to maintain optimal health. We've known for a long time that healthy habits are critical to good health. However, what is newer is the holistic approach to **self-care** that goes beyond your physical well-being and physical health. This approach includes mental health, emotional health, social engagement, spiritual wellbeing and physical health. This journal takes a holistic approach to helping you achieve optimal health.

Most of us have failed at goals that we had set for healthier living, often many times. That is likely because our goals have been too large. We try to use heroic amounts of willpower to resist temptation and we fail. Researchers studying willpower found that it is most effective when we use it to create small healthy habits that we build on. So rather than using willpower to resist temptation we use willpower to build small habits. By starting small we make the right things as easy as possible. One win can start you on your way. The more wins you have, the greater your chance of living healthy now and in the future.

If you're looking for the fountain of youth, you've found it! The research shows the keys to health and healthy aging are:¹

- Exercise and physical activity
- Healthy weight and shape
- Healthy eating
- Participating in activities you enjoy
 - Hobbies and leisure activities
 - Meaningful activities like volunteering

Sleep also plays a critical role in our health and wellbeing. Research suggests that sleep plays an important role in learning and memory. Sleep helps us to feel more alert, more energetic, happier and able to function better.²

Change is a process that doesn't happen overnight, it begins with a step in the right direction.



¹ National Institute on Aging. *What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?* (2021, October 15). <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-we-know-about-healthy-aging>
² Division of Sleep, Harvard Medical School. *Healthy Sleep.* (2021, October 19). <https://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/benefits-of-sleep/learning-memory>

1 My Life Balance Wheel

Using the **Life Balance Wheel** on the next page provides you with an opportunity to reflect on your present lifestyle. Your lifestyle is a sum of your habits. By tuning into what matters most to you right now, you can make better choices about how to spend your time and energy. You will line up your choices with your values and increase your potential for positive change.

“Strive for progress, not perfection.”



My Life Balance Wheel

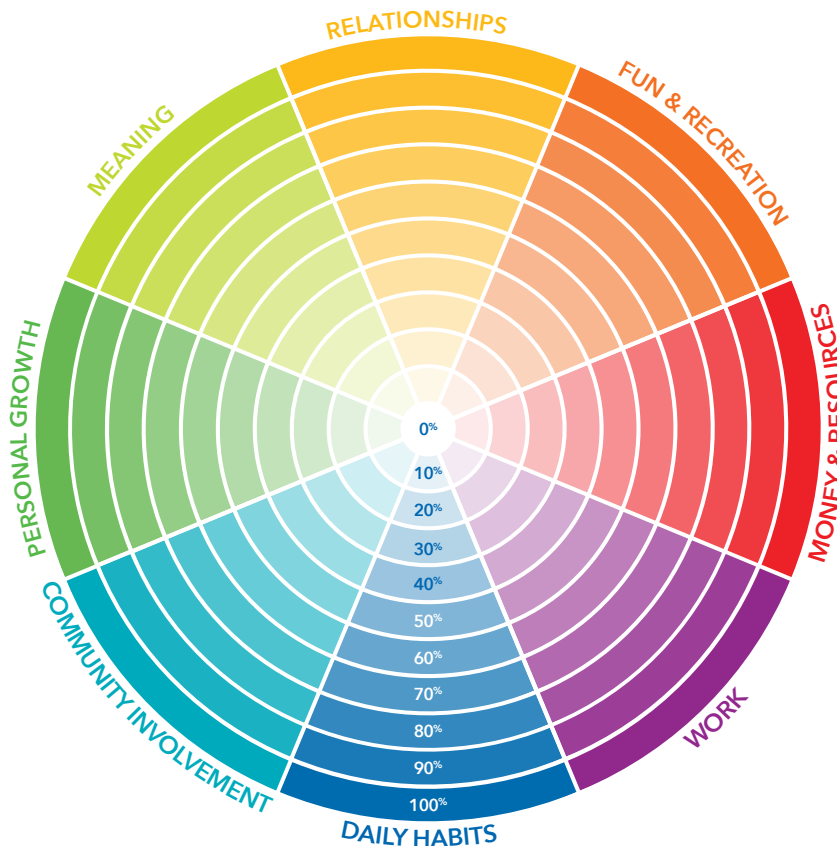
This wheel provides an opportunity to reflect on your present life balance. Life Balance is constantly changing with life circumstance and stage of life. Take a few minutes to consider your life balance.

Mark an **X** for the degree to which you are satisfied with this area of your life right now. Write the date and review monthly.

0% = Not Satisfied at all

100% = Extremely Satisfied

Reflect on areas where you are satisfied, and where you would like to make some changes. Use **Positive Daily Intentions, Microsteps** and **Longer Term Goals** to make those changes. Your choices reveal your priorities.



RELATIONSHIPS

- Family and friends
- Colleagues
- Pets

FUN & RECREATION

- Sports
- Vacation
- Hobbies (e.g., art, music, reading)

MONEY & RESOURCES

- Financial and other resources
- Recognizing problem gambling
- Planning for the future

WORK

- Household work
- Caring for family
- Volunteer work
- Paid work

DAILY HABITS

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Limiting alcohol and drugs
- Not using tobacco
- Healthy use of your smartphone

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Local community
- Communities of interest (e.g., book club, environmental action group)

PERSONAL GROWTH

- Hopes and aspirations
- Learning and doing new things

MEANING

- Finding meaning in everyday activities
- Spirituality
- Feeling connected to others

2 Reflect on Your Life Balance

What is your wheel telling you?

Look at how you rated the various sections of the **Life Balance Wheel**. What does it tell you about your choices right now? Everyone will find opportunities to improve their lifestyle. Use the reflection below to determine if there is one (or more areas) that you would like to work on. You may be able to do this reflection yourself or, if not, reach out for support from someone who has your best interests at heart.

Things I'm Doing Well

Give yourself credit for things you are doing that contribute to **self-care**.

What is making me feel good?

Area(s) to Make Changes

Which area(s) can you realistically focus on right now? What matters most to you right now? Start with one or two areas at the most. Often success in one area leads to changes in other areas.

Which area(s) would I like to make changes in right now?



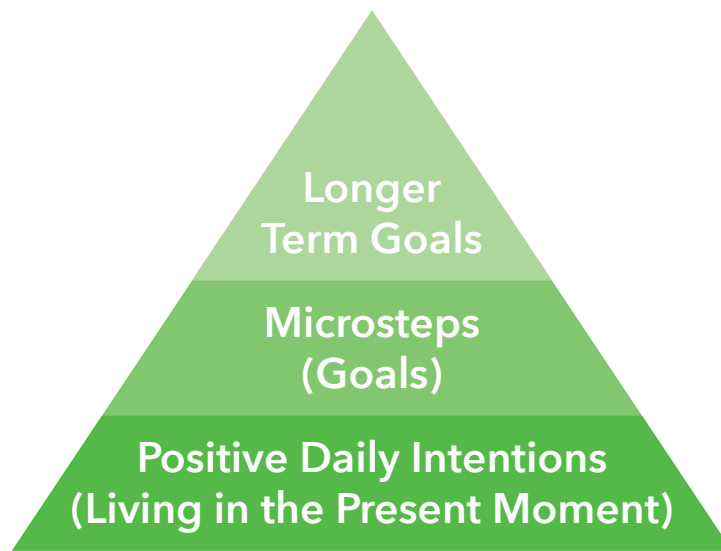
I will do my best today!



3 Choose to Set Daily Intentions, Microsteps and Longer Term Goals

Choices for Taking Action

Positive Daily Intentions, Microsteps and Longer Term Goals can be all used individually to take action. They can also build on each other to help you make healthier choices.





Positive Daily Intentions: Getting a Positive Start to the Day

Daily intentions can be used to set you off in the right direction. An intention sets the tone for that day and gently guides your choices. Intentions help you to live in the present moment. They take wishful thinking to planned action. Intentions give you focus, a positive boost and increase your confidence. You can also set an intention at any time during any day. Set an intention every day that you can. Even occasionally setting and achieving an intention will help you to move forward. An intention can be a specific action for an activity. Or an intention can be something that invites a different focus into your day, for example to show yourself compassion. People who practice yoga would be familiar with setting an intention at the start of practice.

- 1. Find a daily habit that you can associate with making an intention for the day.**

Example: First cup of coffee.

- 2. Take a moment to consider what your intention is for that day. Consider how you will show up today. Setting intentions will make you more effective. Your **daily intention** can connect to your planned small steps or simply be a word or a phrase that will keep you in a positive frame of mind.**

Example: "Today, I will be kind to myself."

- 3. Set an action to make the intention real.** *Example: "I will practice mindful breathing."*
-

- 4. Set a reminder for the day and look at it.** *Example: Write your intention on a note and carry it with you, or put in your phone.*
-

- 5. At the end of the day, ask yourself: Did I follow through on my **daily intention(s)**?**

Example: "Yes. I posted the note on my computer. I practiced mindful breathing three times."

Did it make a difference? *Example: "Yes. I noticed I felt calm."*

What did I learn? *Example: Setting a daily intention made my day better.*

If you carried through with a daily intention you are likely to do it again. It starts to build your willpower for positive change. Consistently doing this will help you to be mindful of your habits. It will also give you more calm and focus as you are living more in line with your values. Keep your intentions very simple. Don't be hard on yourself if you didn't carry through. Tomorrow is a new day.

Daily intentions can be used on their own. **Daily intentions** can also be used with **microsteps** and **longer term goals**.



Taking Microsteps

Choose one area from your **Life Balance Wheel** where you want to make changes. Then start with **microsteps**. **Microsteps** are the building blocks of making new habits. If you have been making big goals and not succeeding, your problem isn't you, it's your plan. Starting small is your best route to success. One small win builds your confidence to create healthy lifestyle habits. Your chance of succeeding will be high. Each microstep is a building block of healthier living. The more you succeed, the more you will be able to succeed in the future.

Make your **microstep** so small that you can't fail. Build on your steps each week. You could also consider these microsteps as short term goals.³ Setting goals helps to form new behaviours, guides your focus and builds **momentum**.⁴ Small steps lead to big changes over time.

- 1. Keep in mind the area from your Life Balance Wheel where you aim to make some changes.**

Example: Daily Habits - Exercise

- 2. Set a weekly microstep.** *Example: Week 1 Ride my exercise bike for 5 minutes each day.*

- 3. Use Positive Daily Intentions to keep you on track.** *Example: See Positive Daily Intentions.*

- 4. Set a reminder in your calendar to check in each week.**

Ask yourself: Did I set a microstep? *Example: "Yes, I did."*

Did I make this microstep every day? *Example: "Yes, I did."*

Did it make a difference? *Example: "Yes. It made me feel that I could be successful."*

What did I learn? *Example: Microsteps are easy to do and rewarding.*

How will I progress next week? *Example: "I'll ride my bike for 6 minutes."*

Practicing your **microstep** every day sets a routine. Each week consider how you can slowly build on your **microstep** for a small challenge that you can do quite easily.

³ Thrive Global. *Microsteps: The Big Idea That's Too Small to Fail*. (2021, October 15) <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/microsteps-big-idea-too-small-to-fail-healthy-habits-willpower/>

⁴ Positive Psychology. *The Importance, Benefits, and Value of Goal Setting*. (2021, October 6). <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-goal-setting/>



Setting Longer Term Goals

Longer Term Goals should be clear, specific and challenging. Research suggests that once a person believes in a particular aspect of their identity, they are more likely to act in alignment with that belief. When your behaviour and identity are aligned, you are not longer changing your behaviour, but instead acting like the type of person you already believe you are.

For example, moving from a part time couch potato to a goal of becoming a runner. As our behaviours are usually a reflection of our identity, if you think of yourself as a runner, you are more likely to become that. To get there, break it down into very small steps, which you would build on. The use of **daily intentions** and **microsteps** will provide a greater chance of success.

- 1. Keep in mind the area from your Life Balance Wheel where you aim to make some changes.**

Example: Daily Habits - Exercise.

- 2. Set a Longer Term Goal.** *Example: To become a runner.*
-

- 3. Make manageable weekly microsteps.**

Examples: Week 1: Walk to the park at lunch 3 days this week.

Week 2: Walk to the park at lunch 4 days this week.

Week 3 and on: build on these weekly goals.

Week 12: sign up for a charity run for June 1.

- 4. Use Positive Daily Intentions to keep you on track.** *Example: See Positive Daily Intentions*
-

- 5. Set a reminder in your calendar to check in each week.**

Ask yourself: Did I set a weekly microsteps? *Example: "Yes, I did."*

Did I achieve my weekly microstep? *Example: "Yes, I did."*

Did it make a difference? *Example: "It felt good to be outside. I met a neighbour on my walk."*

What did I learn? *Example: "I made progress and feel more energetic."*

Research shows that writing down goals, sharing your goals with someone and reviewing your progress weekly helps to successfully accomplish goals. Making change is rarely a straight line, but as long as you are trying and learning you are making progress.⁵

⁵ Positive Psychology. *The Importance, Benefits, and Value of Goal Setting.* (2021, October 6). <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-goal-setting/>

Monthly Check-In

Use the **Life Balance Wheel** once a month to check in on where you are at.

1. Set a monthly reminder in your calendar. Give yourself credit for every positive intention and goal you worked towards.
2. Redo your **Life Balance Wheel** and note any changes.
3. Consider how you will move forward this month using **Positive Daily Intentions, Microsteps** and/or **Long Term Goals**.

Choose Your Support

You may choose to make the change on your own or reach out for some support.

Find a Support Person

Research has shown that sharing your goals and your progress nearly doubles your chance of achieving your goals. Pick someone in your life who you can rely on to give you open, truthful feedback in an encouraging way. Ask them if they would support you in making healthy changes. Be clear in explaining your goals and how you want to achieve them, so they know how to best support you. Set a time when you will check in with that person.

My support person:

Talk to Your Family Doctor or Other Health Professional

Share the changes you are making. Ask for the help that you might need. They can support you. In many cases you can go directly to the health professional that best suits your needs. For example, if you would like to see a Mental Health Counsellor you may be able to make an appointment directly. Use the pages at the back to write ideas and resources suggested by your health care professionals.

Sign Up for an Alberta Program Workshop

There are many workshops that might be available to you. Go to workshops at albertafindadoctor.ca or check out your local PCN website.

- **Anxiety to Calm:** Skills to manage anxiety and feel calmer
- **My Way to Health:** Eating well, losing weight, increasing exercise and being mindful of your choices
- **Moving on With Persistent Pain:** Learn to improve your functioning
- **Journeying Through Grief:** A group for healthy grieving
- **Happiness Basics:** Skills to increase your happiness
- **Relationships in Motion:** Skills to increase your satisfaction with relationships

Community and Online Resources

Look online to find local resources for your health needs. See the resource pages at the back of this booklet.

1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about paying attention in the present moment without interpretation or judgement. Breathing practices, meditation, guided imagery and other exercises can help us to be more mindful in our day to day lives. **Mindfulness** practice can help to reduce stress and decrease negative thoughts. Practicing mindfulness gives us the opportunity to pay attention to our needs and care for ourselves intentionally, contributing to our physical and emotional health.

Mindfulness is being aware of when your mind slips to thoughts of the past or the future, and then guiding it back to the present. Focusing too much on the past, especially negative events, can add to depression symptoms. Focusing too much on the future, especially worries, can increase anxiety.

Mindful Breathing

The 6:2

1. Slowly inhale through your nose to a count of 6.
2. Hold for a count of 2.
3. Then let out a nice, slow breath through your mouth.
4. Repeat several times to give your body time to relax.

Deep Breathing

Think of a picture and a word or phrase to help you feel more relaxed while you do this deep breathing exercise.

1. Close your eyes (if this is comfortable for you).
2. Take a few big, deep breaths.
3. Breathe in. As you do that, imagine that the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm. Try to feel it throughout your body.
4. Breathe out. While you are doing this, imagine that the air leaves with your stress and tension.
5. Now use a word or phrase with your breath. As you breathe in, say in your mind, *"I breathe in peace and calm."*
6. As you breathe out, say in your mind, *"I breathe out stress and tension."*
7. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.

C Basic Skills for Self-Care

STOP

S-T-O-P (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed). This is a practice that you can use when you are distressed or as a tool to use regularly to stay in touch with yourself. It creates an opportunity to slow down your reactions in stressful moments and respond in a healthy way.

- **Stop** when you notice a stimulus or trigger in the environment
- **Take a breath** to reset your body and slow down your reaction
- **Observe** the thoughts, emotions and physical sensations you are experiencing and
- **Proceed** in a healthy way.

Self-Compassion Break

A **Self-Compassion Break** allows you to acknowledge difficult moments and care for yourself. Creating a phrase or mantra can be a helpful reminder to be kind and patient with ourselves as all human beings suffer.

Here is an example:

This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is a part of life. Let me be kind to myself in this moment. Let me give myself the compassion I need.

- Dr. Kristen Neff

Write a mantra that is comforting to you. Write it on a recipe card or in a note on your phone. Read the mantra when you need the extra kindness.

I am worth it!



2 Gratitude

Gratitude has social, physical and psychosocial benefits. Here are some of the top reasons to practice **gratitude**.⁶

Gratitude:

- is one of the most reliable methods for increasing happiness and life satisfaction.
- reduces anxiety and depression.
- strengthens the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces symptoms of illness, and reduces aches and pains.
- helps people get more sleep, fall asleep quicker, and feel more refreshed when they wake up.
- makes us feel closer and more committed to friends and romantic partners.
- promotes forgiveness and makes us more compassionate.
- helps children be more generous and adolescents more resilient.

Here are some specific, science-based activities for cultivating an attitude of gratitude⁷

Three Good Things

Think of three good things that happen to you each day for at least a week. Write them down and provide an explanation about why they went well.

Gratitude Letter

Write a letter expressing thanks, and deliver it in person.

Mental Subtraction of Positive Events

Once a week focus on a different positive event in your life such as birth of a child, a career achievement or a special trip. Imagine your life without it. Then focus on the benefits this event has brought you. Try this same exercise focusing on an important relationship in your life.

Savoring Walk

Take a stroll outside and appreciate the wonders of nature. Notice positive sights, sounds, smells and other sensations.

Give It Up

One week each month give up a different pleasure such as chocolate. At the end of week enjoy a bit of chocolate, but savor it slowly by noticing the smell, taste and texture.

Note: If you are doing these activities and not feeling the positive emotions from gratitude, talk to your PCN health professional, as you may be experiencing depression and/or need some additional support.

⁶ Greater Good Magazine. *Gratitude Defined*. (2021, October 6). <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition#why-practice-gratitude>

⁷ Greater Good in Action. *Discover New Practices*. (2021, October 6). <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/#filters=gratitude>

D Ideas for Making Changes

Whatever area you have chosen to work on, read the tips below as they can help you to set an intention or goal and gain further perspective on healthy living.

1 Relationships

Improving Relationships

- What do you say to yourself?
 - Does your inner voice give you more positive messages than negative messages?
 - Would you consider yourself a personal cheerleader?
- Create a goal with your partner.
- Listen to understand. We tend to listen to reply. You should be able to state what the person said in your own words.
- Show love and appreciation to the important people in your life.
- Have respect for your own emotions while at the same time respecting and acknowledging the emotions of others.
- Positive shared interactions add to your emotional bank account.
- Plan a date. Make a meal together or go for a walk.
- Unplug. Spend time with your loved one without distraction. Do things that slow down time and allow you to reconnect.
- Celebrate a holiday with family/friends in a new way.
- If you are getting frustrated, consider taking a time out. Rest for 60 minutes then go back and resolve the conflict.
- Spend time playing or cuddling with your pet.

Help with Loneliness

- Ask yourself why you feel lonely. Do you have others around you?
 - Do you isolate yourself?
 - Do you feel lonely even around people?
 - Consider talking with a counsellor if you need help.
- When you are alone participate in activities such as reading, hobbies, listening to music.
- Reconnect with friends.
- Get involved in your community.

D Ideas for Making Changes

2 Community Involvement

- Join a club, community group, church group, or other group.
- Get to know your neighbours. Look for activities in your communities and opportunities to connect with people. Take an opportunity to help a neighbor. Doing something for others improves your mood.
- Volunteer to help at a local event or anything you're interested in.
- Join an interest group such as book club, gardening or walking group.

3 Fun and Recreation

- Schedule time in your week to do an activity that you really enjoy. For example, reading, knitting, playing sports, playing an instrument.
- Plan a vacation, it could be as small as an interesting outing in your community.

“My choices reveal my priorities.”



4 Money and Resources

Seek Help

- If you can't make ends meet ask for help from your healthcare professional. They can connect you with resources.
- Access local food banks and community agencies.
- creditcounsellingcanada.ca
- canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/campaigns/every-dollar-counts.html

Set a Monthly Budget and Make Long-Term Financial Goals

- Track your spending—even for a month.

Look for Ways to Lower Your Spending

- Take a lunch to work.
- Set yourself a no spend challenge for a week, month or year.
- Buy generic brands and/or use flyers.
- When possible use communal resources such as the library or parks.
- Avoid interest charges by paying off credit cards each month.

Save

- Have 3-6 months emergency funds available.
- Automate monthly savings to go into a savings account on payday.
- Plan for retirement.

Recognize and Seek Help for a Gambling Problem

- Spot the signs that gambling is a problem:⁸
 - Lying about the extent of gambling involved
 - Using gambling as an escape
 - Believing the big win will bring gambling under control
 - Often missing work or school to gamble
 - Neglecting personal or family responsibilities to gamble
 - Gambling for longer and longer periods of time
- If you think you or someone you care about has gambling problem, talk with a health professional. Further evaluation by a counsellor trained to help people with a gambling problem might be needed.

⁸ Alberta Gaming Liquor and Cannabis. *The Warning Signs. Sometimes gambling stops being a fun and affordable activity.* (2021, October 15). <https://gamesenseab.ca/get-support/the-warning-signs/>

D Ideas for Making Changes

5 Work (Paid and Unpaid)

- Take courses to pursue interests or enhance your career.
- Volunteer in an area you feel passionate about.
- Offer your skills to others who need assistance.
- Spend time learning or practicing things you are interested in, such as photography or woodworking.
- Ensure you have a healthy work-life balance. Work should provide you some challenge and learning, but also leave time for family, friends and recreation.

6 Daily Habits

Sleep

- Keep naps to before 3 p.m. and less than 45 minutes duration.
- Exercising during the day can help you sleep better at night.
- Tossing and turning in bed? Get up and do something relaxing for 30 minutes, then try again.
- Concerned you have sleep apnea? Some symptoms include snoring, gasping for air or pauses in breathing during sleep or general insomnia. Don't wait. Talk to your doctor.
- Only go to bed when you are tired. Spending time awake in bed weakens your brain's association with bed and sleep.
- Everyone requires a different amount of sleep. 6-8 hours is normal for adults.
- It's normal to wake up a few times throughout the night, as long as you can fall back to sleep rather quickly. It is also normal to have 1-2 nights of less ideal sleep each week.
- Wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Consistency is the key.
- The best way to determine if you need to improve your sleep is how you are functioning the next day and whether you wake up feeling rested and refreshed.
- Keep a [Sleep Diary](#) for a few weeks (see page 26). Talk to your doctor or other health care professional to get more help.
- Try a sleep app to track and improve your sleep. Insomnia Coach is a free app that works well.

Change "Have to" to "Get to."



D Ideas for Making Changes

Nutrition

- Eat healthy 80% of the time and give yourself permission to be flexible with your eating the other 20% of the time, for example birthdays and special occasions.
- Be aware of your reasons for eating. Ask yourself: Why am I eating? Are you physically hungry or do I want to eat for other reasons such as loneliness or when socializing. If you are bored or feeling stressed, but not hungry, consider trying an activity that responds to how your body is feeling such as meditation, exercise, or hobbies.
- Choose drinks with less added sugar. Enjoy cold water or try sparkling water or fruit infused water instead. There can be up to 9 teaspoons of sugar in a can of soda pop or juice.
- Regular Food Journaling is one of the best tools to learn about your eating habits. It can help you work towards your goals such as controlling your blood sugar, increasing your fibre intake or working towards a healthy weight. Use pen and paper, phone app, or snap pictures of your meals. Use this information to learn about your habits: healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating/food-journal.
- Eat mindfully. Eat slowly and pay attention to the different tastes and textures as you chew your food. Notice when you feel satisfied and comfortably full.
- Use the visual guide below⁹ for selecting healthy food portions. Aim to fill half your plate with vegetables and some fruits, a quarter of your plate with protein and a quarter with whole grains.



⁹ Government of Canada. *Canada's Food Guide*. (2021, October 15). <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

D Ideas for Making Changes

Exercise

- Any movement is good movement. Look for any opportunity to move during the day.
- Use the **5 Minute Rule**. Just go for 5 minutes, typically you will feel refreshed and willing to continue. If not, at least you did 5 minutes more than you would have.
- Having a hard time getting started? Say **3-2-1 GO!** This simple tool gets you out of your head and into your walking shoes quickly!
- Explore the outdoors; walking, biking, and outdoor gyms are all great options.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Dance. Put on your favourite song and move to the beat.
- Practice the **5:60 Rule**. Get up for 5 minutes for every 60 that you sit.
- Adults and seniors gradually increase up to a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week. **Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines** recommend adding muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 2 days per week.
- Keep track of your exercise using an app or your calendar.
- Schedule your exercise to increase the likelihood you will do it. If you need help scheduling activities, try the **GoGet.Fit** app. Parents can also schedule their children's activities in the app.

Exercise is the best medicine. It benefits both physical and mental health. Get your daily dose!

What went well today?



¹⁴ Alberta Doctors. *Alberta Screening and Prevention Program*. (2021, October 28). <https://actt.albertadoctors.org/file/asap-maneuvers-menu.pdf>

¹⁵ Alberta Health Services. *Screening for life*. (2023, February 14). <https://screeningforlife.ca>

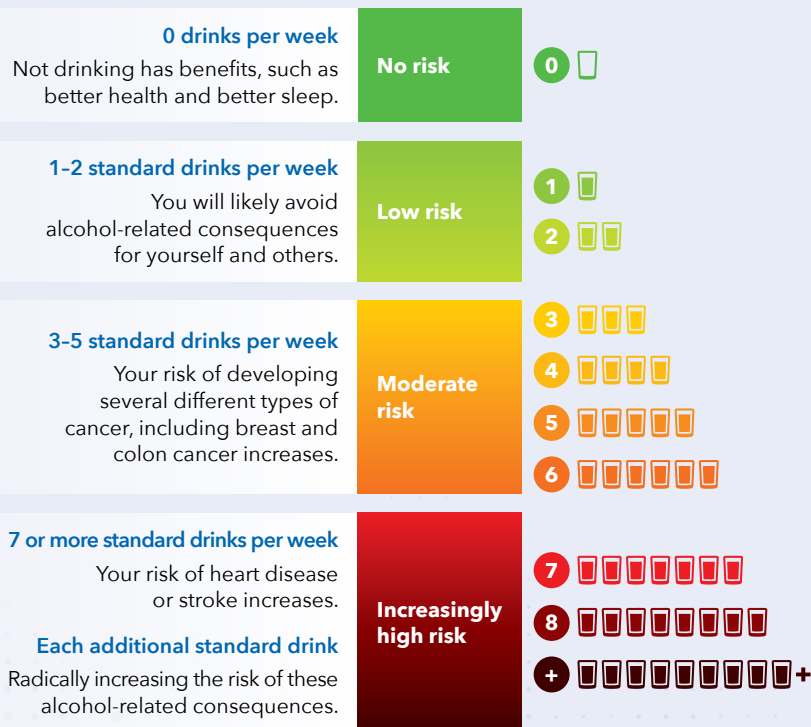
D Ideas for Making Changes

2023 Alcohol Guidelines

Drinking less is better. We now know that even a small amount of alcohol can be damaging to health. Research shows that no amount or kind of alcohol is good for your health. That's why if you drink, it's better to drink less.

Alcohol Consumption Per Week

Drinking alcohol has negative consequences. The more alcohol you drink per week, the more the consequences add up.



During pregnancy, none is the only safe option.



A standard drink means:

- Beer**
 - 341 ml (12 oz) of beer
 - 5% alcohol
- OR**
- Cooler, cider, ready-to-drink**
 - 341 ml (12 oz) of drinks
 - 5% alcohol
- OR**
- Wine**
 - 142 ml (5 oz) of wine
 - 12% alcohol
- OR**
- Spirits**
 - whiskey, vodka, gin, etc.
 - 43 ml (1.5 ml) of spirits
 - 40% alcohol

- When pregnant or trying to get pregnant, there is no known safe amount of alcohol use.
- When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest.

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction: Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health: Final Report (2023, January). <https://ccsa.ca/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health-final-report>

D Ideas for Making Changes

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis use Guidelines

1. The most effective way to avoid the risks of cannabis is to **abstain from use**.
2. Delaying cannabis use, at least until after adolescence, will reduce the likelihood or severity of adverse health outcomes.
3. Use products with low THC content and high CBD:THC ratios.
4. Synthetic cannabis products, such as K2 and Spice, should be avoided.
5. Avoid smoking burnt cannabis and choose safer inhalation methods including vaporizers, e-cigarette devices and edibles.
6. If cannabis is smoked, avoid harmful practices such as inhaling deeply or breath-holding.
7. Avoid frequent or intensive use, and limit consumption to occasional use, such as only one day a week or on weekends, or less.
8. Do not drive or operate other machinery for at least 6 hours after using cannabis. Combining alcohol and cannabis increases impairment and should be avoided.
9. People with a personal or family history of psychosis or substance use disorders, as well as pregnant women, should not use cannabis at all.
10. Avoid combining any of the risk factors related to cannabis use. Multiple high-risk behaviours will amplify the likelihood or severity of adverse outcomes.

Government of Canada: **Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines**. (2019).

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/themes/health/carousel/LRCUG%20Evidence%20Brief%20Final%20English%20v2.pdf>

Recognizing and Seeking Help for Alcohol and Drug Problems

Answer the following four **CAGE**¹⁰ questions about your drinking or other drug use:

1. Have you ever tried to **Cut down** on your drinking or other drug use?
2. Have you ever felt **Angry** at or annoyed by someone else's comments about your drinking or other drug use?
3. Have you ever felt **Guilty** about your drinking or other drug use?
4. Have you ever used alcohol or other drugs as an **Eye-opener**—that is, have you used first thing in the morning?

If you answered yes to one or more questions, you might have a problem with alcohol or drugs. If you think you or someone you care about has an alcohol or drug use problem, talk with a health professional. Further evaluation by a counsellor trained to help people with an alcohol use problem might be needed.

¹⁰ CAMH. *Addiction*. (2021, October 15) <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/addiction>

D Ideas for Making Changes

Not Using Tobacco

- If you are ready to quit, get support and make a plan.
- Ask your family, friends and/or coworkers for support.
- See your doctor or other health care professional to put together a plan.
- Call Alberta Quits **1.866.710.7848** or visit albertaquits.ca.

Healthy Use of Your Smartphone

The average person checks their phone about 80 times a day and receives about 45 notifications. Is this you? Unhealthy use of technology can lead to anxiety, depression and insomnia. Here are some things to consider:

Make Relationships a Priority

Using your smartphone in the presence of a friend or family member can leave that person feeling ignored, annoyed or even pushed away.¹¹

- Be present for the people you are with. Put your phone away when you are visiting.
- Make a no phones rule at the dinner table.
- Be a role model. Kids pay a lot of attention to what we do.

Make Sleep a Priority

Smartphones can sabotage sleep. This is because they keep your mind engaged, the blue light from the screen suppresses melatonin and the alerting properties delay REM sleep.¹²

- Cut off screen time 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Put your phone in another room if you are struggling with limiting screen time.

Reduce Distractions¹³

The smartphone is a tool for your use. However many of its features demand your attention throughout the day. Take back some control of how you use it to reduce distractions and increase your focus.

- Turn off almost all notifications.
- Only check email and social media a few set times each day.
- Delete apps that you are not using.
- Consider a digital vacation. Choose to try this once a week.

¹¹ Association for Psychological Science. *How Smartphones Are Affecting our Relationships*. (2021, November 1). <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/how-smartphones-affect-relationships.html>

¹² Cleveland Clinic. *Put the Phone Away! 3 Reasons Why Look at it Before Bed is a Bad Habit*. (2021, November 1). <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/put-the-phone-away-3-reasons-why-looking-at-it-before-bed-is-a-bad-habit/>

¹³ The Guardian. *One ping after another: why everyone needs a notification detox*. (2021, November 1). <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/jan/27/one-ping-after-another-how-constant-notifications-are-driving-us-to-distraction>

D Ideas for Making Changes

7 Personal Growth

- Stretch yourself to learn something new.
- Find ways to manage stress effectively such as meditation, mindful breathing, or exercise.
- Visualize your best possible self. Write it down in detail
- Practice self-compassion. Be kind to yourself by speaking to yourself as you would speak to a friend.
- Seek a counsellor if you are feeling stuck or struggling emotionally.
- Make a vision board or collage of pictures and words that represent how you want to feel and what you want to be doing. Use it as a way to visually represent goals and intentions.

8 Meaning/Life Purpose

- Keep a journal to work through your thoughts and feelings.
- Practice gratitude by savoring morning coffee/tea/beverage, appreciating friends and family, and admiring the beauty in your surroundings.
- Experience awe in nature: take a walk, sit in the park, or watch the sunset. These moments can leave you feeling inspired and connect you with something much bigger than yourself.
- Doing good deeds for others can add meaning to your life.
- Every so often ask, "What is the meaning of **my** life?" The questions below will help to explore that.
 - What is important to me? Structure your time to ensure you are making time for the things that you value.
 - What am I truly good at? Use this as a guide to share your talents in the world as they are often the things you enjoy the most.
 - Ask yourself, "What do I enjoy?" Write these down in your journal and try to do more of the things you enjoy most.
 - What is my potential? Setting micro goals can build motivation and overall sense of accomplishment. Move up to longer term goals. Step out of your comfort zone. Dream big!
 - Look through some personal photos and reflect on what they represent and what the moment in time means to you.

Choose to have a positive attitude.



E Appointments and Tests

1 Your Patient Medical Home (PMH) Team

Your family doctor works in a team with other health professionals such as nurses, pharmacists and psychologists. You may be able to book directly with the health professional who can best address your concern.

2 Appointments with Healthcare Professionals

Before your appointment:

- Write down your questions and concerns.
- Write down all medications you take or, bring them with you.
- Make sure your doctor has your current contact information and emergency contact number.

During your appointment:

- Ask your questions. Listen carefully to the suggestions/answers. Ask for clarification if needed.
- Make notes or take a family member or friend with you.
- Ask if you are up to date with your health checks and screening tests.

After your appointment:

- Write down what resonated with you and anything that you might do differently now. Consider programs your healthcare professionals have suggested. The group workshops offer learning with other people who are working on similar changes.
- Do the tests that your doctor/nurse practitioner have ordered.
- Make an appointment to review your tests. You can also check for some of your results online at myhealth.alberta.ca, and myahsconnect.albertahealthservices.ca. You will need to register for these accounts.

3 Medications

Ask your pharmacist or doctor for a print out every time your medication changes. Be sure to ask why you are taking each medication. You can also write down your medications in the notes section that follows.

Instead of I wish, I am.



E Appointments and Tests

4 Screening Tests^{14,15}

The information below is for adults 18 and over. The needs of individual people may vary. Ask your doctor what is recommended for you.

Test	Age	Interval	Notes
Blood Pressure	18+	Yearly	
Height	18+	At least once	
Weight	18+	3 years	
Exercise	18+	Yearly	
Tobacco Use	18+	Yearly	
Cholesterol	40-74	5 years	
Cardiovascular Risk Calculation	40-74	5 years	
Diabetes Screen: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fasting Glucose Hgb A1c Diabetes Risk Calculator 	40+	5 years	
Breast Cancer Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mammography 	45-74	2 years	
Colorectal Cancer Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIT Colonoscopy 	50-74 with no history of polyps or colorectal cancer 40 or under for those with a personal, or family history of colorectal cancer	Yearly Ask your family doctor	
Cervical Cancer Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pap Test 	25-69	3 years	
Lung Cancer Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CT scan 	50-74 and currently smoking or have quit after many years of use	N/A	Please check with your primary health care provider to find out if you are eligible.

¹⁴ Alberta Doctors. *Alberta Screening and Prevention Program*. (2021, October 28). <https://actt.albertadoctors.org/file/asap-maneuvers-menu.pdf>

¹⁵ Alberta Health Services. *Screening for life*. (2023, February 14). <https://screeningforlife.ca>

E Appointments and Tests

5 Eye Exam and Dental Check-up

Test	Age	Interval	Notes
Complete Eye Exam ¹⁶	20-39	2-3 years	
	40-64	2 years	
	65+	Yearly	
Dental Check-up ¹⁷	Adults	Yearly	

6 Health Checks for People Living with Diabetes

Ask your health care provider for a blood glucose monitoring log or download and print copies from diabetes.ca.

Test	Aim for	Date and results		
HbA1c (Average blood sugar over 3 months)	Ask your nurse or doctor			
MACR (kidney test)	Less than 2.0 mg/mmol			
Meter check	Yearly by lab			
Foot sensation	Yearly by your doctor or nurse			
Diabetic eye exam	Yearly			
Blood pressure	Less than 130/80 mm HG			
LDL cholesterol	Less than or equal to 2.0 mmol/L			
eGFR (Shows how well kidneys are filtering)	Greater than 60 ml/min			
ECG	Ask your doctor			

For more information go to The Diabetes Canada My Diabetes Care handout. It can be found at: guidelines.diabetes.ca/docs/patient-resources/my-diabetes-care-not-just-about-blood-sugar.pdf

¹⁶ Canadian Association of Optometrists. *Frequency of Eye Exams*. (2021, October 28). <https://opto.ca/health-library/frequency-of-eye-examinations>

¹⁷ Alberta Dental Association and College. *Adults & Seniors*. (2021, October 28). <https://www.dentalhealthalberta.ca/prevention-conditions/adults-seniors/>

E Appointments and Tests

7 Immunizations

Immunization is not just for children—it is a lifelong process. To protect themselves and the people around them, adults need the following immunizations.¹⁸ Check with your healthcare provider to find out if you need any other vaccines.

Vaccine	Number of doses	Notes
Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping cough)	One dose every 10 years With every pregnancy	
Hepatitis B	3 doses for adults born in 1981 or later who have not received this in school	
Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	3 doses for adults 18-26 who did not get it in school	
Flu (Influenza)	1 dose every year	
Measles and Mumps	2 doses for Adults born in 1970 or later	
Rubella	At least one dose for adults born in 1957 or later	
Pneumonia	1 dose at age 65 or older	
Chickenpox	2 doses for unprotected adults	
Shingles Vaccine	2 doses adults 50 and over ¹⁹	
Other Vaccines	Ask your doctor if there are other vaccines you may need.	

I believe in myself.



¹⁸ Alberta Health Services. *Adult Immunization*. (2021, October 29). <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/cdc/if-hp-cdc-ipsm-adult-imm.pdf>

¹⁹ Alberta Health Services. *Herpes Zoster (Shingles) Vaccine - Shingrix*. (2021, October 29). <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/cdc/if-hp-cdc-herpes-zost-info-sht-07-215.pdf>

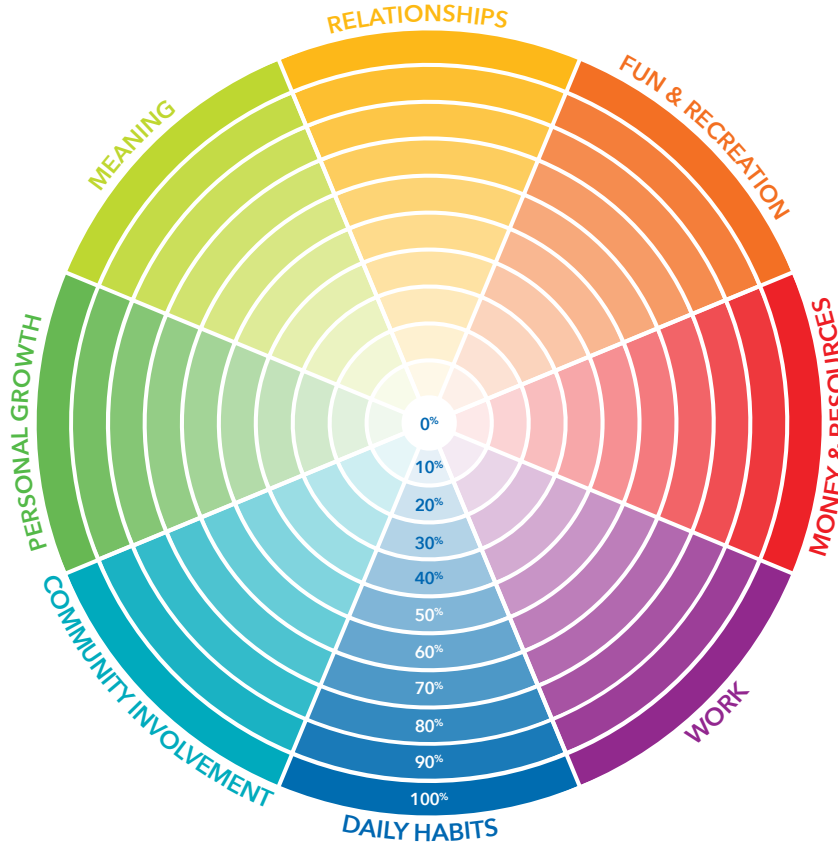
F Sleep Diary

At the end of each week, review your diary to see where you could improve your sleep habits.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Date							
Caffeine I drank							
Alcohol I drank							
Amount of sleep medication I took							
Time I spent napping during the day							
Time I went to bed							
Approximate time I fell asleep							
Number of times I woke up during the night							
Time I woke up in the morning							
Hours of sleep I got							

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Date							
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H My Life Balance Wheel



RELATIONSHIPS

- Family and friends
- Colleagues
- Pets

FUN & RECREATION

- Sports
- Vacation
- Hobbies (e.g., art, music, reading)

MONEY & RESOURCES

- Financial and other resources
- Recognizing problem gambling
- Planning for the future

WORK

- Household work
- Caring for family
- Volunteer work
- Paid work

DAILY HABITS

- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Limiting alcohol and drugs
- Not using tobacco
- Healthy use of your smartphone

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Local community
- Communities of interest (e.g., book club, environmental action group)

PERSONAL GROWTH

- Hopes and aspirations
- Learning and doing new things

MEANING

- Finding meaning in everyday activities
- Spirituality
- Feeling connected to others

Things I'm doing well:

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Areas to make changes:

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.....

My Plan: **Daily Intentions, Microsteps and Longer Term Goals:**

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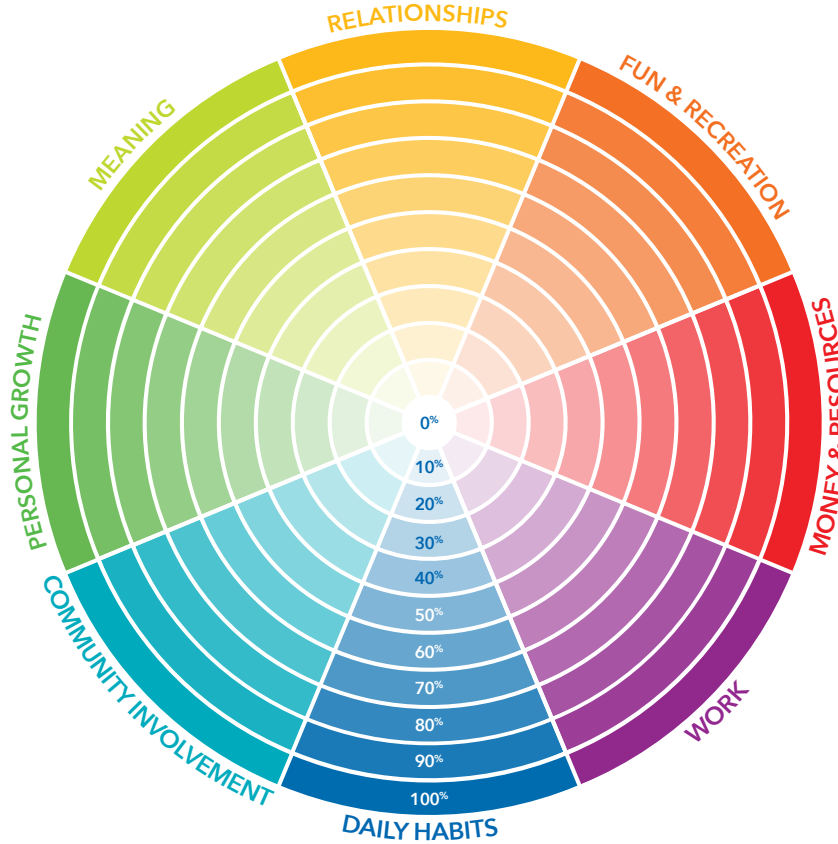
Check-in:

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My Life Balance Wheel



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Check-in:

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1 Find a Doctor

albertafindadoctor.ca

- This website helps people find a family doctor.

2 Personal Health Record

myhealthalberta.ca and myahsconnect.albertahealthservices.ca

- Personal health records such as vaccination, medication, tests ordered and results.
- Health information, tools, and patient care handouts. The content and function of the site continues to grow.

3 Health Information and Services

albertafindadoctor.ca

- This website lists many programs offered by most Alberta PCNs under the [Workshops](#) and [Programs](#) tab and information on how to register. Each Primary Care Network has a website that will provide you with more detailed information on the service provided.

ahs.ca

- Health information and services available in Alberta.
- Search: [Help in Tough Times](#) for an extensive list of mental health resources.

Call 811 Health Link Alberta Health Services

- A telephone service that provides 24/7 nurse advice and general health information for Albertans.

Call 211 Alberta

- A telephone service that provides information on social, community, health and government services in Alberta.

helpseeker.org

- A free App that provides location-based community information on health and social services in communities across Canada.

Addiction Helpline: 1-866-332-2322

Mental Health Helpline: 1-877-303-2642

Support for Gambling: gamesenseab.ca/get-support/find-help





Contact us

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