



**Ontario Health**  
Cancer Care Ontario

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)  
Play, live, be ... tobacco-wise

## **Chronic Disease Toolkit**

### **Page 1 Provider Side: What is Chronic Disease?**

A chronic disease is a sickness in your body that can affect your ability to keep up with daily activities, and some people may need additional support, such as regular medical visits and medication.

A chronic disease (or sickness) is a long-term disease that develops over time and usually does not go away on its own. Chronic diseases can be managed and/or treated with proper care and healthy habits.

Indigenous people may experience chronic diseases at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous people, which can be caused by the effects of colonization and the social determinants of health.

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada. (2012). Chronic Disease Risk Factor Atlas. Ottawa, ON; Government of Canada.

### **Page 1 Patient Side: What is Chronic Disease?**

*“About four years ago, doctor says... I think you had chronic bronchitis... eventually it got worse and so chronic for me means something that you have continually, it doesn't go away. You have to work at it, you have to understand that it's something you gotta live with”.*

**Melvyn, Indigenous Community Member**

## **Page 2 Provider Side: Chronic Disease**

Chronic disease can affect all parts of the body. Many body parts are connected, so it is important to take care of your chronic disease. Sometimes when you have one type of chronic disease you are more likely to get another chronic disease because of how the body is connected and your overall health.

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada. (2012). Chronic Disease Risk Factor Atlas. Ottawa, ON; Government of Canada.

## **Page 2 Patient Side: Chronic Disease can affect all parts of the body**

Illustration depicts an adult's body with smaller images of the following:

- Lungs (e.g., Chronic Respiratory Diseases).
- Brain (e.g., Mental Illness).
- Body Cells (e.g., Cancer).
- Heart (e.g., Cardiovascular Disease).
- Kidneys (e.g., Chronic Kidney Disease).
- Pancreas (e.g., Diabetes).
- Body Fat (e.g., Obesity).

## **Page 3 Provider Side: Chronic Disease Risk Factors**

**Each chronic disease has certain risk factors that may increase your chance of getting that disease.**

You can reduce your risk of developing most chronic diseases by:

- Eating healthy foods.
- Being physically active.
- Not using commercial tobacco.
- Avoiding alcohol use.
- Managing stress.

Other things in your life that can make you more likely to have a chronic disease include family history, where you work and live, how much stress you have, access to healthy food and adverse childhood experiences.

Source: Public Health Ontario. (2019). Health Promotion, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Chronic Diseases and Conditions. Toronto, ON.

## **Page 3 Patient Side: Chronic Disease Risk Factors**

**Reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases by:**

Illustration gives examples by showing pictures next to the following:

- Eating healthy foods (eg. Fish, apples).
- Being physically active.
- Avoiding alcohol use .
- Managing stress (eg. Yoga).
- Not using commercial tobacco.

## **Page 4 Provider Side: Indigenous Chronic Disease**

**First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous peoples experience chronic diseases differently compared to non-Indigenous people.**

It is important to look at the unique history and culture of First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and urban Indigenous peoples and how different factors, such as geographic, financial, cultural and language, can affect how chronic disease is experienced.

Source: Cancer Care Ontario. (2016). Path to Prevention – Recommendations for Reducing Chronic Disease in First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Queen’s Printer for Ontario. Toronto.

## **Page 4 Patient Side: Indigenous Chronic Disease**

The most common types of chronic disease include diabetes, chronic kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases, cancer, obesity and mental illness.

### **Types of Chronic Disease**

**The most common types of chronic disease that we will talk about are:**

- Diabetes: Can affect the sugar levels in our blood.
- Chronic kidney disease: Can build up fluid and waste in our body.
- Cardiovascular disease: Can hurt our heart and lungs.
- Chronic respiratory diseases: Affects our breathing.
- Cancer: Changes our cells abnormally.
- Obesity: Can increase our risk for many chronic diseases.
- Mental illness: Can affect our mood, thinking and behaviour.

*“Sometimes I think it’s all the trauma that happened to you and I think that’s where all this lupus and fibromyalgia come from... trauma that happened when you were little... a little kid”.*

**Sandy, Indigenous Community Member**

## Page 5 Provider Side: Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic disease that affects your body's ability to maintain normal sugar levels in the blood from food due to a problem with the body making insulin or using it.

Blood sugar is found in the blood from the food that we eat. This is what the body uses for energy to do daily activities.

The pancreas makes a hormone called insulin that balances your blood sugar levels.

This picture shows how insulin from the pancreas is the key for the blood sugar (the white hexagons) to enter the cells in the body and give us energy.

Sometimes our body does not make enough insulin, or our body is not able to use it because the pancreas or the cells are not working properly.

When your blood sugar is too high it can damage your blood vessels, organs, and nerves.

Signs and symptoms of higher blood sugar are tiredness, increased thirst and hunger, increased urination, blurry vision, wounds that won't heal and numbness or tingling in hands and feet.

Indigenous people experience Type 2 diabetes two to five times more than non-Indigenous people.

Source: Burnett, K. (2006). Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia. [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-health](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-health)

## Page 5 Patient Side: Diabetes

Diabetes happens when the body is unable to control the amount of sugar in the blood from the food we have eaten.

The illustration shows how insulin from the pancreas is the key for the blood sugar (the white hexagons) to enter the cells in the body and give us energy. The stomach breaks down food into glucose and the pancreas produces insulin.

## Page 6 Provider Side: Types of Diabetes

**Type 1 Diabetes: A chronic disease where the cells in the pancreas can be damaged and make little or no insulin.**

- Only occurs in 10% of people with diabetes.
- Someone with type 1 diabetes needs to take insulin several times a day.

**Type 2 Diabetes: Most common and can develop at any point in your life.**

- Risks of getting type 2 diabetes are closely connected to food choices and physical activity.
- Food choices that may lead to developing diabetes include sugary foods and juices, and processed and packaged foods that are high in fat and low in fibre.
- Not moving your body enough everyday through exercise or activities may also lead to developing diabetes.
- Sometimes you may need medications and insulin to help you balance your blood sugar.

**Gestational Diabetes: This only happens in pregnancy, usually in the 2nd or 3rd trimester and will usually go away after the baby is born.**

- Sometimes the body is not able to make enough insulin during pregnancy because of the growing baby and changing needs.
- First Nations women experience gestational diabetes in 8-18% pregnancies, compared to 2-4% of all pregnancies in Canada.

### **Prediabetes:**

- A health condition where your blood sugars are higher than normal but not high enough to be diabetes.
- This can be either impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance.

Source: First Nations Centre - National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2009). Gestational Diabetes and First Nations Women A literature review. [https://fnim.sehc.com/getmedia/a7198c67-da87-44e9-9cc4-1d681303fef8/Gestational\\_Diabetes\\_LitReview\\_2009.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf](https://fnim.sehc.com/getmedia/a7198c67-da87-44e9-9cc4-1d681303fef8/Gestational_Diabetes_LitReview_2009.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf)

## Page 6 Patient Side: Types of Diabetes

Illustration depicts examples of individuals with type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes:

## Page 7 Provider Side: Chronic Kidney Disease

**Chronic kidney disease is when your kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood and waste.**

Your kidneys filter waste and excess fluid from your blood, which are then removed in your urine.

Chronic kidney disease is when your kidneys stop working properly, usually over a long period of time. Your kidneys usually slow down over time.

You can be more at risk of developing chronic kidney disease if you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of chronic kidney disease.

If you are experiencing symptoms such as weight loss, blood in urine, swollen ankles, feet, and hands, abnormal urine output, and difficulty sleeping, please contact your healthcare provider as these could be early signs of chronic kidney disease.

Source: Cancer Care Ontario. (2018). About Chronic Kidney Disease. Ontario Renal Network. <https://www.ontariorenalnetwork.ca/en/kidney-care-resources/living-with-chronic-kidney-disease/about-chronic-kidney-disease>

## Page 7 Patient Side: Chronic Kidney Disease

**Chronic kidney disease is when your kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood and waste.**

Illustration shows the comparison between a healthy and diseased kidney.

## Page 8 Provider Side: Cardiovascular Disease

**Cardiovascular disease is a disease that involves the heart and blood vessels. It includes heart attacks and strokes.**

Cardiovascular disease can be related to family history, but also is impacted by personal lifestyle choices.

It can be caused by a build-up of plaque (hardened fat) in blood vessels, which narrows or blocks the blood vessels to the heart and brain. This can then lead to high blood pressure, which can cause cardiovascular disease.

Indigenous people are 50% more likely to develop cardiovascular disease than non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Early signs of cardiovascular disease include shortness of breath during exercise, heart palpitations, and dizziness.

Cardiovascular disease can be passed down through genes, so it is important to speak with family members about their health history.

Source: Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. (2020). Helping to close the gap in Indigenous health. Heart and Stroke. <https://www.heartandstroke.ca/what-we-do/our-impact/helping-to-close-the-gap-in-indigenous-health>.

## Page 8 Patient Side: Cardiovascular Disease

**Images depict examples of the following conditions that can lead to cardiovascular disease:**

- Heart Rhythm Disorders.
- Structural Heart Disease.
- Heart Failure.
- Coronary Artery and Vascular Disease (a build-up of plaque (hardened fat) in blood vessels).



## **Page 9 Provider Side: Chronic Respiratory Diseases**

### **Chronic respiratory diseases are diseases of the airways and the lungs.**

Chronic respiratory diseases, like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), can severely impact your ability to breathe. Over time, they can impact and damage the lungs.

Chronic respiratory diseases can be related to family history, but also is impacted by personal lifestyle choices.

Smoking and second-hand smoke are the leading causes of developing chronic respiratory diseases.

Some signs and symptoms can include difficulty breathing, coughing and wheezing, shortness of breath, and tightness in the chest.

Indigenous children and adults are at higher risk of respiratory illness, compared to non-Indigenous Canadians.

Source: Cancer Care Ontario. (2013). Cancer Risk Factors in Ontario: Evidence Summary. Toronto, Canada.

## **Page 9 Patient Side: Chronic Respiratory Diseases**

### **Chronic respiratory diseases are diseases of the airways and the lungs.**

The illustration shows a comparison between a Healthy Lung and one with Respiratory Disease.

## **Page 10 Provider Side: Cancer**

**Cancer is when cells that are not normal grow and spread very fast in your body.**

There are many different types of cancer.

Cancer is when cells that are not normal (also called abnormal) multiply and can spread throughout the body.

The most common types of cancers in Indigenous people are lung, prostate, colorectal and breast cancer.

There are cancer screening programs available to help find some cancers early, including breast, cervical, colorectal and lung.

There are vaccines that can prevent healthy people from getting certain cancers caused by viruses, including Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines and Hepatitis B vaccines.

Some early warning signs to look out for include developing a lump somewhere on your body, becoming extremely tired, weight loss, and changes in or on your body that are unexplained.

Please see your healthcare provider for more information on cancer screening programs.

Source: CCO and Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion. (2019). The burden of chronic diseases in Ontario: key estimates to support efforts in prevention. Queen's Printer for Ontario; Toronto.

## **Page 10 Patient Side: Cancer**

**Cancer is when cells that are not normal grow and spread very fast in your body.**

The illustration shows a comparison between Normal Cells and Cancer Cells.

## **Page 11 Provider Side: Obesity**

**Obesity is when the body has an extra amount of fat and can increase your chance of developing other diseases, like diabetes or high blood pressure.**

Obesity refers to an extra amount of body fat, which can be a health risk to the person.

Stomach (or abdominal) fat results in a higher risk of developing many other diseases.

Our genes, behaviours, metabolism and hormones can play a role in obesity.

Obesity can happen over time and can be related to many things, such as not eating nutritious foods, not moving enough during the day (either with work or through activities) and can also be related to mental health, such as depression and anxiety.

Obesity can also develop from other things out of our control, like aging, medical conditions, medications, and metabolic issues.

Obesity is the leading cause of developing heart disease, diabetes and some cancers – so in preventing obesity you are also reducing your risk of other chronic diseases.

On-reserve First Nations men and women experience higher rates of obesity compared to off-reserve and non-Indigenous adults.

Source: Chiefs of Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario. (2016). Cancer in First Nations in Ontario: Risk Factors and Screening. Toronto.

## **Page 11 Patient Side: Obesity**

**Obesity is when the body has an extra amount of fat and can increase your chance of developing other diseases, like diabetes or high blood pressure.**

The illustration shows comparisons between persons with healthy and unhealthy body weight.

## Page 12 Provider Side: Mental Illness

**There are many different types of mental illness, including the following categories:**

Mood disorders affect your emotional state where your mood may be unpredictable and does not allow you to perform your daily activities effectively.

- Mood disorders include depression, bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder.

Anxiety disorders are long periods of time where you may feel distressing thoughts and fear about uncertainty or unknown events. This persistent fear and unease can affect behaviour, thoughts, emotions and even physical health.

- Anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety, social anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and panic disorder.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is triggered after experiencing a distressing event that caused physical, mental or emotional harm.

Eating disorders affect everyone differently; however weight is often the primary concern and an all-consuming factor in someone's life living with an eating disorder. Eating disorders may be used to cope with emotions or stressors in life as they can provide a false feeling of control.

- Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Psychotic disorders are serious illnesses that affect the mind and make it difficult for someone to make decisions, manage their emotions, understand reality and communicate or behave properly in social settings.

- Psychotic disorders include schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and substance induced psychotic disorder.

Source: Government of Canada. (2009). Mental Health - Anxiety Disorders.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/diseases/mental-health-anxiety-disorders.html>. Canadian Mental Health Association. (2021). Eating Disorders.

<https://cmha.ca/mental-health/understanding-mental-illness/eating-disorders>

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2021). Psychosis. <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index/psychosis>

## Page 13 Provider Side: Chronic Disease Prevention

### There are many ways to prevent getting a chronic disease.

It is important to know your body and to speak with a healthcare provider about your health.

Reduce your risk of developing a chronic disease by:

- Eating healthy foods.
- Being physically active.
- Not using commercial tobacco.
- Avoiding alcohol use.
- Managing stress.

The ways to reduce your risk of developing a chronic disease are not always fully in your control because of where you live, stress in your life, life experiences and the effects of colonization and the social determinants of health; however, there are many ways to manage these as best as you can.

Having a connection to community can help to provide a sense of well-being and support.

Do your part in protecting yourself so you can be there for family, friends and your community.

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada. (2012). Chronic Disease Risk Factor Atlas. Ottawa, ON; Government of Canada.

## Page 13 Patient Side: Chronic Disease Prevention

*“What would I tell myself?... Try to maintain a healthy lifestyle... you get to this point in your life and you start counting years”.*

**Greg, Indigenous Community Member**

## Page 14 Provider Side: Healthy Eating

### Make it a habit to eat healthy foods each day!

Healthy eating is an important way to reduce chronic disease and manage symptoms of chronic disease. The food we eat has three main groups which are protein, fat and carbohydrates.

Protein is needed to build, repair, and maintain muscle and tissue in the body.

- Healthy protein sources include lean meats (e.g., moose, deer, wild game, chicken), fish, eggs, and beans.

Fats are necessary to absorb vitamins, support brain function, and generate cell growth.

- Healthier choices of fats include eggs, fish, nuts and nut butters, and unsaturated oils.

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. There are two different types of carbohydrates – simple and complex.

- You want to focus on eating complex carbohydrates that provide fibre and whole grains, like fruit, vegetables, potatoes, brown rice, beans, whole wheat bread, and oats.

Be mindful of your eating habits. This means being aware of how, why, what, when, how much and where you eat, which helps us to eat healthy and manage portions with hunger cues.

Access to healthy foods can be difficult, so try to make the best choices for you and your family based on what you have available to you, such as eating berries instead of chips, nuts instead of crackers, etc.

Source: Government of Canada. (2021). Eat a Variety of Healthy Foods Each Day. Canada's Food Guide. <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

## Page 14 Patient Side: Healthy Eating

The illustration is of a plate divided into three sections for fruits and vegetables, protein foods and whole grain foods and examples of each:

- Fruits and Vegetables – eg. Carrots, potatoes, grapes, apples, broccoli, strawberry, beans.
- Proteins – Lean meats eg. Moose, deer, wild game, chicken), fish, eggs, and cheese.
- Whole grain foods – Whole wheat rice, pasta, cereals.

## Page 15 Provider Side: Physical Activity

### Move your body every day!

Physical activity is any type of movement that raises your heart rate and uses energy.

Being physically active is a way to reduce your chance of developing chronic diseases, improve your mental health, and live a healthy lifestyle.

Getting regular physical activity is very important in preventing all chronic diseases.

It helps you maintain good health, manages appetite, improves heart health, and reduces stress.

Physical activity can include activities like walking, playing sports, hiking, paddling, berry and medicine picking, pow wow/jig/drum dancing, stretching, biking, and so much more!

Exercise with a friend, family member, or community group to make it more enjoyable.

The current recommendations for adults in Canada suggest a total of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week. This means about 30 minutes 5 times a week. You can do this in 10-minute time periods 3 times a day.

Moving throughout the day is an important way to prevent or manage chronic disease, so set a timer, stand more, or put it in your schedule.

## Page 15 Patient Side: Physical Activity

Illustration depicts people of different ages participating in physical activity eg. Walking, kayaking

Source: Government of Canada - Public Health Agency of Canada. (2018). Physical Activity Tips for Adults (18-64 years). <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/physical-activity-tips-adults-18-64-years.html>

## Page 16 Provider Side: Commercial Tobacco

### Play, live, be tobacco-wise!

Traditional tobacco is used in many different ceremonies for spiritual purposes. It does not have the same connection to disease as commercial tobacco.

Commercial tobacco includes products like cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco.

Commercial tobacco use is connected to many different types of chronic diseases (e.g., cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and cardiovascular disease) and can worsen symptoms from previous conditions.

There are no safe guidelines for commercial tobacco use, and it should be avoided to prevent chronic disease.

The use of vaping devices can also expose you to chemicals and nicotine which can be harmful.

Indigenous people use commercial tobacco more and are exposed to second-hand smoke more than non-Indigenous people.

## Page 16 Patient Side: Commercial Tobacco

Illustration depicts pictures of commercial tobacco and traditional tobacco

Source: Ontario Health. (2021). Vaping and Your Health – For First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Urban Indigenous Peoples. <https://tobaccowise.cancercareontario.ca/en/resources/community-members>



## **Page 17 Provider Side: Alcohol**

### **Avoid alcohol use for a healthy life.**

There is no safe limit of alcohol to prevent an increased risk of cancer and other chronic diseases.

For people who decide to drink alcohol, the guidelines recommend that men have no more than two drinks a day and women have no more than one drink a day.

Excessive use of alcohol can increase your risk of developing health conditions and chronic diseases. For example, excess alcohol can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease and more.

## **Page 17 Patient Side: Avoid Alcohol use for a health life**

Illustration depicts bottles of alcohol.

Source: World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. (2007). Food, nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective. Washington, DC.

## Page 18 Provider Side: Managing Stress

**Stress is a normal part of life. Look for ways to deal with stress in a healthy way.**

Stress is the emotional, physical, or mental strain that is the body's way of reacting to a perceived threat or challenge.

Stress can be caused by many factors, such as physical activity, job worries, or the effects of colonization and intergenerational trauma.

Chronic stress is when the body is in a constant state of disruption, which can cause harm to your health and well-being.

Stress can increase your likelihood of developing chronic mental health and addiction issues like depression, anxiety, substance use issues and other mental health diseases.

Stress can present itself in physical symptoms that can poorly affect your health. This could include low energy, increased heart rate, weight gain, hair loss, body aches, and chest pain.

When your body reacts and you deal or cope with stress in a healthy way, you build stress resiliency.

Traditional healing methods, like healing circles, smudging, land-based activities, prayer, and dreamwork are all frequently used to support people and families experiencing anxiety and depression. Look in your community or Indigenous organization to see what resources or programs are available.

## Page 18 Patient Side: Managing Stress

**Stress is a normal part of life. Look for ways to deal with stress in a healthy way.**

Illustration depicts different ways that may be used to manage stress eg. smudging, healing circles, physical activity

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Source: Government of Canada. (2020). Mental health and wellness in First Nations and Inuit communities. <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1576089278958/1576089333975>

## **Page 19 Provider Side: You and Your Healthcare Team**

**One of the best ways to prevent chronic disease is visiting your healthcare provider regularly.**

Screening for some chronic diseases will uncover early signs of possible disease before you show any symptoms.

- For example: pre-diabetes can be found early with a blood test to look at glucose (sugar) levels.

Your healthcare provider can see and discuss the results of your tests. They can work with you and provide tips to reduce your risk of developing chronic diseases in the future.

Contact your community health centre or healthcare provider about Indigenous health services available to you, including Indigenous Patient Navigators.

You may connect with your healthcare provider through different ways, such as by the phone, virtually through video at a health centre or in the comfort of your own home. Virtual health appointments may allow you to connect with a healthcare provider without having to travel far distances.

## **Page 19 Patient Side: You and Your Healthcare Team**

One of the best ways to prevent chronic disease is visiting your healthcare provider regularly.

Illustration shows a patient in consultation with a health care provider.

## Page 20 Provider Side: Managing Chronic Disease

### **Chronic disease can last a lifetime, so it is important to learn to self-manage your disease.**

You may only see your healthcare team a few times a year, but your disease is still with you the rest of the time.

To self-manage means to take care of yourself by taking actions to help live with your chronic disease.

You can do this by making small, manageable commitments to change:

- Writing down clear steps on how you will commit to small changes can be very helpful.
- These small goals need to detail the actions you want to take - the when, how often and how much. For example, losing weight is not an action, but walking is, and can help you lose and maintain weight.
- Make your goals short term to keep you motivated.

Source: Ontario Health. (2019). Healthy Living Now. Healthy Living Now - Helping you live a healthy life with a chronic condition. <https://healthy-living-now.ca/recommended-reading/>

## Page 20 Patient Side: Managing Chronic Disease

*“You know it [chronic illness] has affected my life greatly, but I am able to be stable most of the time with the help of my doctors and my caseworkers... or family members that support me... it is a hard thing to live with, but... I'm kind of used to it”.*

Levi, Quote from Indigenous Community Member

## Page 21 Provider Side: Goal Setting

To manage your chronic disease, it can be helpful to set small goals to help you be successful, such as S.M.A.R.T. goals.

S.M.A.R.T. goals can be used as a tool to keep you on track to reach your health goals.

- **Specific:** Clearly defining your goal will help you better understand your target. Think: who, what, where, when and why.
- **Measurable:** Create a system that allows you to track progress. This includes what you want to do, how much or how often.
- **Attainable:** Your goals should be flexible so that you are successful in your commitment to change and self-management.
- **Realistic:** Goals should be relevant to your current life and should start with smaller targets that build habits overall that you could reach.
- **Timely:** You should set short-term goals to help you be successful and keep you motivated to self-manage your chronic disease.

## Page 21 Patient Side: Goal Setting

Illustration depicts the word SMART with the meaning for each letter.

- S – Specific.
- M – Measurable.
- A – Attainable.
- R – Realistic.
- T – Timely.

Source: Government of Canada. (2020). Eat Well and Be Active Educational Toolkit.

[https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/fn-an/alt\\_formats/pdf/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/toolkit-trousse/plan-3a-eng.pdf#:~:text=SMART%20goals%20are%3A%20Specific%2C%20Measurable%2C%20Attainable%2C%20Realistic%2C%20and,SMART%20goals%20as%20a%20step%20toward%20healthy%20living](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/fn-an/alt_formats/pdf/food-guide-aliment/educ-comm/toolkit-trousse/plan-3a-eng.pdf#:~:text=SMART%20goals%20are%3A%20Specific%2C%20Measurable%2C%20Attainable%2C%20Realistic%2C%20and,SMART%20goals%20as%20a%20step%20toward%20healthy%20living)

## **Page 22 Provider Side: Managing Your Stress**

Managing stress is important in preventing and managing chronic disease. One way to avoid stress is to create a routine for yourself that allows you to prioritize your health.

This could include:

- Scheduling walks and spending time in nature. Spending time outside can improve mental health.
- Making time for family and friends.
- Attending pow wows, cultural or community events.

If you find it hard to manage stress, speak with your healthcare provider on other ways to help manage stress.

## **Page 22 Patient Side: Managing Your Stress**

Illustration shows examples of activities that can be used to manage stress eg. spending time in nature, walking, making time for family and friends, attending cultural or community events.

## **Page 23 Provider Side: Healthy Habits**

### **Chronic disease risk factors play a part in prevention and management of chronic disease.**

It is never too late to incorporate healthy habits, even if you have a chronic disease.

Some risk factors can be passed down from family – it is important to speak openly with family members to see if there is any health history that you should be aware of.

You can manage and reduce symptoms of chronic diseases by modifying your lifestyle habits.

Some factors that will help you live a healthy life and reduce or manage chronic disease include:

- Being physically active.
- Eating healthy foods.
- Avoiding commercial tobacco and alcohol.
- Managing stress.

Setting goals based on these factors will help you live a healthy life.

## **Page 23 Patient Side: Healthy Habits**

### **Chronic disease risk factors play a part in prevention and management of chronic disease.**

Image shows people kayaking as an example of physical activity.

Source: Cancer Care Ontario. (2016). Path to Prevention – Recommendations for Reducing Chronic Disease in First Nations, Inuit and Métis. Queen’s Printer for Ontario, Toronto.

## **Page 24 Provider Side: Supporting Your Health**

### **Support systems are essential to your health and well-being.**

Support systems are often family members, friends, community groups, and healthcare providers who are close to you, know about your chronic disease and are able help you stay on track with your healing and wellness plan.

Supportive environments encompass support systems. These environments promote healthy and safe living and working conditions.

Speak with your community health centre or healthcare provider to help connect you with events and groups in your area.

Examples of community supports can include:

- Aboriginal Health Access Centres.
- Indigenous Family Health Teams.
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.
- Ontario Native Women’s Association.
- Métis Nation of Ontario Healing and Wellness Services.
- Tungasuvvingat Inuit.

## **Page 24 Patient Side: Supporting Your Health**

### **Support systems are essential to your health and well being**

Illustration shows a group of people of various ages and genders holding hands in a circle , they can be family, friends or community support groups.



## Page 25 Provider Side: Treating Chronic Disease

**Chronic disease treatment is a group effort that requires a commitment to change and understanding of the disease to move forward.**

This can include healthcare education and interventions such as:

- Traditional healing and medicine.
- Lifestyle changes.
- Medication, herbs or supplements.
- Surgery or other procedures.
- Alternative medicine.

## Page 25 Patient Side: Treating Chronic Disease

*“Just listen to your doctor, listen to your body. I would say that, listen to your body, you're the only one who knows your body”.*

**Glenda, Quote from Indigenous Community Member**

## **Page 26 Provider Side: You and Your Healthcare Provider**

Chronic disease treatment can require visiting your healthcare provider regularly to talk about the options available to you to best treat your symptoms and prevent disease progression.

Lifestyle changes may be combined with other methods, like traditional healing and medicine, medication, surgery, procedures, or other therapies prescribed by your provider.

It is important to ask questions or to bring someone from your support system along with you to ensure you understand your disease, its symptoms, and how to treat it.

If you feel unsure about a course of action, be sure to reach out to additional providers or educators in your area who will be able to support your decisions and answer your questions.

## **Page 26 Patient Side: You and Your Healthcare Provider**

**Working with a healthcare provider you trust can help you treat your chronic disease.**

Illustration shows patients talking with a healthcare provider to discuss the best options to treat symptoms of chronic disease.

## Page 27 Provider Side: Cultural Connections

Traditional medicine and cultural practices can be important ways to practice self-care, wellness, and to treat side effects and symptoms of chronic disease.

This could include sweat lodges, smudging, healing circles, and other ceremonies.

Traditional healing can provide psychological benefits that help improve emotional and spiritual strength when living with a chronic disease.

This can also include your family, friends, community, and spirituality, including prayer, to create supportive, healthy environments for healing.

Feeling connected to your environment, nature, and the community are all great ways to improve mental health – which in turn can improve your physical health by reducing stressors in the body!

## Page 27 Patient Side: Cultural Connections

**Cultural connections are important to improve health outcomes and reduce stress.**

Illustration shows a couple gardening as a form of stress management.

Source: Canadian Cancer Society. (2021). Aboriginal traditional healing.

<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/diagnosis-and-treatment/complementary-therapies/aboriginal-traditional-healing/?region=on>

## Page 28 Provider Side: Mental Health

### Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act.

Mental health is our emotional, psychological, spiritual and social well-being.

Our emotions are connected to our sense of being, our relationships, the land and the Creator.

Sometimes the terms mental health and mental wellness are used in the same context; however, mental wellness is a process that helps us thrive in all aspects of our lives when we are practicing good healthy habits. Your mental wellness can affect your mental health.

Mental wellness relates to how we talk to ourselves, with others and is influenced by our daily routines (e.g., the Seven Grandfather Teachings - Wisdom, Love, Respect, Bravery, Honesty, Humility, and Truth).

Mental wellness also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make positive choices.

Promoting positive mental health and wellness is important at all stages of life, from conception, to childhood, to adulthood, and Elder stages.

## Page 28 Patient Side: Mental Health

*“We can't say stress in Ojibwe, so we don't have it. If you got a lock on your door then you're in stress, but if you can open that door, it's so beautiful to get out there to greet that sun, to have that wind blow in your face and to go for a walk on Mother Earth”.*

**Willard, Quote from Indigenous Community Member**

## Page 29 Provider Side: Intergenerational Trauma

Intergenerational trauma is harm that dates back to the banning of Indigenous culture, but has now continued through generations.

This has led to trauma resulting from not being able to practice traditional ceremonies and teach Indigenous practices to the younger generations, often causing a loss of culture and language.

Some historic and present-day events that contribute to this trauma include residential schools and locating the unmarked graves, the Sixties Scoop, High Arctic relocation, Indian hospitals, and tuberculosis sanatoriums.

Intergenerational trauma can have lasting effects on mental health. People may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and substance abuse because of this trauma.

Despite these traumatic events, Indigenous people have shown resilience through culturally focused, community centred and holistic strengths-based approaches.

## Page 29 Patient Side: Intergenerational Trauma

Image is of a residential school building.

Source: Shein, E. (2020). Crisis & Trauma Resource Institute. Intergenerational Trauma, Healing, and Resiliency. <https://ca.ctrinstitute.com/blog/intergenerational-trauma/>

## Page 30 Provider Side: Managing Mental Health

It is important to manage your mental health and wellness so that you are aware of how you feel with different situations or people. These types of check-ins with yourself and others will ensure you are in touch with your thought and emotions, and help you to surround yourself with positive situations and people.

Talking to your healthcare provider or a trusted counsellor can be helpful in navigating your thoughts in a private setting.

Support systems like family, friends, community and spiritual groups are important for positive mental wellness and meaningful relationships.

Managing overall health through exercise, eating well and avoiding substance use will also make a positive impact on your mental health and wellness.

## Page 30 Patient Side: Managing Mental Health

Three separate pictures show examples of activities that can assist in managing mental health and wellness, they are:

- Talk to a healthcare provider or counsellor (image of healthcare worker talking with patients).
- Receive support from family, friends and community groups (image of a group of people of various ages and genders holding hands in a circle).
- Manage health through self-care (image of a pregnant woman).

Source: Help Guide. (2021). Building better mental health. <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/building-better-mental-health.htm#>

## **Page 31 Provider Side: Traditional Practices**

**Traditional practices can be used to promote a wholistic approach to health and mental wellness.**

Cultural ceremonies can help achieve a balance between spiritual, emotional, physical and mental states which are all important to maintain well-being and to stay healthy.

Nurturing interpersonal relationships and connection to nature, community, language, and family better mental health and improve quality of life.

There are resources available in communities and at Indigenous organizations that are specific to Indigenous mental health and well-being, including programs from the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Aboriginal Health Access Centres, Ontario Native Women's Association, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, Métis Nation of Ontario and others.

## **Page 31 Patient Side: Traditional Practices**

**Incorporate traditional practices to promote mental health and wellness.**

Illustrations show examples of traditional Indigenous practices that can be used to promote a wholistic approach to health and mental wellness, the pictures are of the following:

- An Indigenous man dressed in regalia and drumming.
- A Metis citizen playing the fiddle.
- An Elder smudging.

Source: Thunderbird Partnership Foundation. (2020). Indigenous Wellness Framework Reference Guide. <https://thunderbirdpf.org/iwf-ref-guide/>

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Ontario Health is the provincial agency responsible for ensuring Ontarians continue to receive high-quality healthcare services where and when they need them.

The Indigenous Cancer Care Unit at Ontario Health aims to improve cancer care with, and for, First Nations, Inuit, Métis and urban Indigenous peoples in Ontario.