Healthy ageing volunteer guide
for empowering communities

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
www.ifrc.org Saving lives, changing minds.
The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world’s largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 150 million people each year through our 189 member National Societies. Together, we act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by Strategy 2020—our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade—we are committed to "saving lives and changing minds".

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.
Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the following Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, organizations and individuals for their expertise, ongoing support, commitment and contributions to the development of the Healthy ageing module and toolkit:

Argentine Red Cross, Armenian Red Cross Society, Austrian Red Cross, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, Belarus Red Cross, Bulgarian Red Cross, Colombian Red Cross Society, German Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross Society, Latvian Red Cross, Lebanese Red Cross, The Red Cross of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Red Cross of Montenegro, Portuguese Red Cross, The Russian Red Cross Society, The Red Cross of Serbia, Swedish Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross and Thai Red Cross.

We appreciate the great work and support of:


Thanks also to the following individuals and Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers and staff:

**Dr Ayham Alomari**, Canadian Red Cross  
**Cinthya Ramirez**, Pfizer, Inc.  
**Doug Schrift**  
**Dr Lasha Goguadze**, IFRC  
**Oscar Zuluaga**  
**Sofía and Natasha Tysick**  
**Sylvia Perel-Levin**  

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By 2050, the number of individuals aged 60 years or above will have tripled from 600 million in 2000 to two billion; 80 per cent of them will live in low- or middle-income countries. While these statistics highlight the scale of the challenge society faces, an ageing population provides countless opportunities. Older people are, and will continue to be, vital assets to their families, friends and communities.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) continues to call for the eradication of all forms of ageism that deny older people dignity, decrease access to care and the right to a just quality of life. The Federation therefore endorses and aligns its work in the area of healthy ageing to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) *Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health*¹, which focuses on five strategic objectives:

1. commitment to action on healthy ageing in every country
2. developing age-friendly environments
3. aligning health systems to the needs of older populations
4. developing sustainable and equitable systems for providing long-term care (home, communities, institutions)
5. improving measurement, monitoring and research on healthy ageing

The IFRC, in partnership with Pfizer, has worked on a joint initiative which aims to use the expertise and resources of both organizations to develop and test evidence-based tools to support healthy and active ageing at the community level. Both organizations continue to advocate for healthy and active ageing.

The materials within this toolkit were developed with subject matter expertise in the life course approach, healthy ageing determinants and evidence-based behaviour change theories. The toolkit includes content about noncommunicable diseases, risk factors such as falls and social isolation, as well as tools which provide guidance and activities to help people pursue healthier lives and enable active ageing with dignity and a better quality of life.

Importantly, the healthy ageing materials align with the existing Healthy Lifestyles Community—a highly successful learning and online community—which is used by a number of National Societies within their community-based health programmes. Healthy ageing is a notable component in a number of programmes run by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies across the world. We hope that this new toolkit will support National Societies in the important and valuable work they are doing in their communities.

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Introduction

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’ (IFRC) community-based healthy ageing programming is designed to empower community members to make the best choices to live longer, healthier and more active lives. The healthy ageing programme includes benefits to older adults such as:

- improved quality of life
- increased or maintained independence, positive health behaviours and/or mobility
- reduced disability (fewer falls, later onset or fewer years of disability, etc.)
- increased social inclusion and improved mental health
- contributing one’s experience to the community

The benefits to people of all ages along the life course include:

- an appreciation of how making healthy choices every day contributes to a longer, healthier life
- an awareness of how every person can be a change agent, with an emphasis on youth leading change
- an understanding of how to prevent and combat ageism and stigma associated with age
- an appreciation of how ageing adults can meaningfully contribute to the community
- being empowered to live your best life

With the support of Pfizer, IFRC has developed this package of tools for use globally to address health promotion through topics such as noncommunicable disease (NCD) risk and prevention, social inclusion and mental health with an ageing focus. These materials embrace a life course approach to bridge the generational gap by teaching both younger populations about healthy choices affecting their quality of life and older populations about managing to live healthier and happier lives.
Using the module and toolkit

The healthy ageing module and toolkit include:

**Getting started guide**

This guide, contained within the facilitator guide, gives an overview of the process and tools for facilitators teaching volunteers and for volunteers working with community members on healthy ageing. The getting started guide provides the intended learning objectives and outlines of session timing for ease of planning healthy ageing sessions.

**Healthy ageing facilitator guide**

This guide is designed for staff or trainers of trainers to conduct a training of trainers (ToT) or preparation course for staff and volunteers who will work directly with community members. The facilitator guide is comprised of nine topics which we advise teaching in sequential order to allow volunteers to see the full range of materials available. The tools, talking points and activities included allow volunteers to teach communities in an interactive way. The assessment topic allows volunteers to assess community needs and develop a healthy ageing programme for each community based on its unique needs. The assessment determines which topics will be taught and the priority of each topic at any given time in the programme. All topics allow participants to learn and practise key knowledge and skills to coach community members through social and behaviour change techniques and to set a supportive environment for healthy ageing at the community level.

**Healthy ageing volunteer guide**

This guide is designed for community volunteers who work directly with community members. The guide contains key information and discussion points to work with community members in understanding how to stay healthy throughout the life course. The volunteer guide is comprised of nine topics which include knowledge, tools, talking points and activities for teaching communities in an interactive way. The first three topics: functional ability–life course, assessment, and behaviour change should be taught to all communities. The assessment topic allows volunteers to assess community needs and develop a healthy ageing programme for each community based on its unique needs. The assessment determines which topics will be taught and the priority of each topic at any given time in the programme. Topics include: preventing NCDs, preventing falls, preventing social isolation, healthy eating, physical activity and lifelong learning. All topics promote social and behaviour change techniques and tailored activities to set a supportive environment for healthy ageing at the community level.

**Healthy ageing toolkit**

The toolkit is intended to be used with the healthy ageing guides. The toolkit features full-colour imagery, interactive formats and games material to teach all audiences according to the methodology suggested in the guides. All materials can be printed in colour or black/white and are of high resolution for those National Societies wishing to enlarge and print posters and banners for other uses in their healthy ageing activities.
Audience

The healthy ageing module and toolkit contains nine topics for use by Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers to teach about a life course approach to community members of all ages. While the materials are specifically tailored to an ageing audience, all materials can be adapted or taught as they are to any adult audience. The activities included allow volunteers and their community members to learn about what healthy ageing is and how to pursue a healthy life course. Community members can also explore the critical components for healthy ageing and assess their personal development along the various components on a regular basis. They can become familiar with, and comfortable in, identifying areas where they may need extra attention and support, as well as empowering themselves to eat more healthily and move more freely, helping to prevent NCDs, falls and social isolation and, in the process, becoming lifelong learners. These outcomes can be achieved with the highly interactive and learner-friendly tools included in this toolkit.

Healthy ageing topics

Mandatory topics:

1. Functional ability-life course
2. Assessment
3. Behaviour change

Primary prevention topics:

4. Preventing NCDs
5. Preventing falls
6. Preventing social isolation

Topics for improving our life at any age:

7. Healthy eating
8. Physical activity
9. Lifelong learning
**Mandatory topics**

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**Toolkit with:**

- Healthy life course game kit (game board, die, first roll cards, game money and game cards)
- Video guide for completing and scoring assessment cards for Red Cross Red Crescent reference
- Layering puzzle
- Assessment and answer cards
- Action plan template for week one (appendix A)
- Prioritizing and planning sheet (guidelines and example)
- Action plan template for follow-up (appendix B)
- Five stages of behaviour change poster
- Behaviour stages game kit including game board, guidance, game cards and answer sheets
- Behaviour change matching cards
- Action plan template for follow-up (appendix B)

**Primary prevention**

<table>
<thead>
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**Toolkit with:**

- Effects of... posters (quitting tobacco, drinking less alcohol, healthy diet and physical activity)
- Balance cards (9)
- Emergency posters (cardiac arrest, stroke and diabetic)
- Frequency table (appendix C)
- NCDs diagram
- Action plan template for follow-up (appendix B)
- NCD risk assessment card (double-sided) with guidelines
- Action plan template for follow-up (appendix B)
- Measuring strip (in two parts)
- Social activities sheet
- Body Mass Index (BMI) chart
- Action plan template for follow-up (appendix B)
## Improving our life at any age

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Topic 1

Functional ability–life course
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

- Explain the components of healthy ageing
- Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
- Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

The life course approach

- Healthy ageing can contribute to more resilient people and more resilient communities.
- The life course perspective says that our unique mix of biological, behavioural, psychological, social and environmental factors has an effect on our health across the course of our lives.
- The life course approach says that each stage of our life—from infancy to old age— influences the next stage. The social, economic, and physical settings where we work, live and play across our life course have a huge impact on our health and the health of those around us.
- The life course approach strongly suggests that the earlier in life you start practising good health, the longer you will be able to continue to do the things that are important to you well into old age.

Functional ability

- Healthy ageing is the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age.
- Functional ability is a measure of how capable a person is to do normal daily activities that meet their basic needs and contribute to their well-being.
- Basic needs include continuing to play your role(s) in the family, workplace and community such as parent, spouse, worker or active community member.
- Your functional ability is linked to your quality of life. Your functional ability defines your independence and participation in activities, communicates if you have a disease and how severe it is, can suggest the need for services and support, and can monitor if and how your health is responding to treatment.
- Functional ability is measured along four areas: (1) how well you can move, (2) how well you feel, (3) how well you can think or problem-solve, and (4) how much social interaction you have. Your functional ability can always improve.
- Functional ability is not what people DO, but what they are capable of doing with practice and support. There are some factors that you cannot change to be healthy. The important thing is to focus on areas where you can change and improve.
- Factors associated with functional ability include good nutrition, regular
physical activity, regular health check-ups, stress management and regular participation in social or meaningful activity. These are things you can do to improve your health.

• Functional ability can change for many different reasons. Changes may be temporary such as recovering from an illness or injury, or may be long term.

Healthy ageing

What is healthy ageing?

Healthy ageing is more than just the absence of disease. Healthy ageing is about making healthy choices throughout your life to ensure that you can be and do what you physically want at all stages of your life into your old age.

The life course approach

Tool: Layering puzzle

What is the life course approach?

• The life course approach says that your behaviours, choices and environment influence you and your health throughout your life from birth to old age.

• The World Health Organization (WHO) says that the life course approach is the “underlying biological, behavioural and psychosocial processes that operate across the life course, which are shaped by individual characteristics and by the environments in which we live”. This means that who you are, how you behave, where you live, work and play, and how you think and make choices about your health have a big impact on how you age.

• As a baby, our genes can be influenced by experiences while we are still growing in our mothers, as well as by any kind of exposure and behaviours from the environment where our mother lived while we were growing inside her.

• As a child, we are a result of all the influences on us since being born. All the biological factors plus all the behaviours we practise and whether our environment is healthy or unhealthy have an impact on a child every single day. Children’s behaviours can still be modified but it gets more difficult the longer they continue unhealthy behaviours.

• As an adult, we are a result of all the repeated influences on our behaviour from before we were even born. We are a result of the influences on us as a baby, as a child and into adulthood. Our health is a result of our behaviours and our personal risk factors–some of them can be improved by just making healthier choices. This is also a result of personal elements of body and mind that are often not as changeable. These might be your gender, your ethnicity, your education level, your job or how much money you have. All of these elements plus the physical or social or cultural settings where you work, live and play have a strong impact on your health and well-being. This is why we consider healthy lifestyles as a life course approach or something that should be considered throughout one’s life.

Is the life course approach only about older people?

- Not at all. Life course is even more important to younger people because the choices and actions you make in your younger years influence you in old age. While you think that your choices only affect your body and your health today, they actually add up to how your body will feel and work later in life.

Why should I care about the life course approach?

- Life course is helpful in understanding that the health choices you make today and tomorrow help to determine how long you may live and how well you will be able to do the things that you love once you reach old age.
- While you cannot prevent old age, you can prevent unhealthy ageing by making good health choices many times, every day. This means eating a healthy diet, keeping your body and mind active, making time for leisure activities and friends that you enjoy and getting the support you need and want.
- By starting to make healthier life choices today, you can help to ensure a healthier old age now. Starting today, you can build a healthier future for yourself. Begin right now and:
  
  a. Socialize with friends or family every day, in person, on the phone or on the computer.
  b. Stop using tobacco.
  c. Eat five servings of fruit and vegetables every day.
  d. Reduce the amount of sugar and salt in your diet.
  e. Get at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.
  f. Do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol.
  g. Meditate or practise other stress-reducing activities every day.
  h. Get seven to eight hours of sleep a night.
  i. Have a positive attitude or outlook.
  j. Stay socially active such as through volunteering activities.

- By starting healthier behaviours today through a life course approach, you will improve your functional ability today and ensure better capacity of your body and mind into old age.

Functional ability

Short film: Make health last-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzu8BFDY9Tg (optional)
What is functional ability?

Functional ability is the combination of your health-related characteristics that allows you to be and do what you feel is important. You have a level of functional ability at every age. It is affected by your genetics, your health and personal characteristics, your health characteristics, and your environments where you live, work and play.

What do you mean by my health characteristics?

Your health characteristics are a result of your behaviours and your personal risk factors. This might include previous diagnoses of health conditions like high blood pressure, asthma, or any injuries you may have suffered. You can modify some of your health characteristics by making healthier choices.

What do you mean by my personal characteristics?

Your personal characteristics are elements of your body and mind that are often more fixed. These might be your gender, your ethnicity, your education level, your job and how much money you have. These all contribute to your social position within your home, work or social groups and often determine what kinds of opportunities and challenges you may face and what resources you have available.

What do you mean by my environments?

Your environments are the physical or social/cultural settings where you work, live and play. These might be a physical space like your home, your workplace or your school or they can be social or cultural environments like knowing which behaviours—even if they are healthy—may not be acceptable in your culture. An example might be of a woman going for a walk alone outside in a conservative community or a man who refuses the offer of a traditional alcoholic drink in an effort to avoid alcohol. Your environment is one of the strongest predictors of healthy ageing. By making healthy lifestyles a more participatory activity with others, you can influence your environment and make it easier to sustain behaviour change.

How does functional ability improve resilience?

Resilience is your ability to maintain or improve your functional ability even when there are challenges. Resilience can be shown through resisting temptation, recovering from a crisis or adapting to changes in the context.

If my functional ability is poor, can’t someone just take care of me?

While it is fine to ask for support when needed, when you do not use your functional ability regularly, you can lose it. In 80 per cent of older people admitted to a specific French hospital in 2015, 20 per cent of the patients became less able to perform basic self-care tasks when they left hospital than when they were admitted. This number is high and this loss of functional ability was preventable if the patients had maintained more of their mobility.

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How can I improve my functional ability?

You can improve your functional ability by improving those factors that affect your health. This might include improving the environments where you work, live and play to more easily make healthy choices in a physical or social environment that is accessible. It might also include accessing assistive technology to help you with physical limitations, having a positive attitude towards others, helping to secure services, systems and policies that increase the involvement of all people with a health condition in all areas of life, or helping to reduce stigma or negative attitudes.

Play healthy life course game.

Action planning

We’ve learned about functional ability and life course today. Let’s think about some things we can do for our next meeting and put them in writing to help us age healthfully. We can think about what actions we would like to do.

1. Distribute an action plan template for week one (appendix A) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.
2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to age healthfully. Each time that we meet, I will be asking you to think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”
3. Read aloud each question and model completing the form, using yourself as an example of how you apply the learning from the session until the next session.
4. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

Checking for understanding

1. What is the life course approach? How does it apply to anyone, regardless of age?
2. What is functional ability?
3. How do you improve your functional ability? Why do you want to improve functional ability?
4. How can functional ability affect resilience?
Topic 2

Assessment
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

• Explain the components of healthy ageing
• Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
• Identify the critical role of active participation in society
• Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

• To ensure functional ability and a healthy life course, there are a number of factors that contribute to healthy ageing. These include our living situation, the amount of physical activity we do, the health of our diet, how we feel emotionally, our support network, how much we engage in social activity, the amount of pain we may feel, pursuit of personal interests and general quality of life.

• By regularly checking in and assessing these important areas, we can ensure that people are living healthily to the best of their abilities—and if not, how Red Cross Red Crescent can direct people to a more optimal quality of life.

• Red Cross Red Crescent healthy ageing assessment should be done every two to four weeks at minimum to monitor the well-being of people in your group or community.

• The assessment sheets can be either collected for tabulating data of how people answered as a group or volunteers can collect the sheets with names provided to determine who needs additional support.

• It is recommended that in the first few weeks of assessing, do not ask people to indicate their names until they have become comfortable and they have a good rapport with the volunteer to share such personal information.

• The healthy ageing assessment scoring system allows volunteers to capture data from their community groups and prioritize learning according to immediate need.

Introduction

Tool: Healthy ageing assessment packet

1. Hold up an assessment packet for all to see. Explain that the assessment packet will be completed every two to four weeks as they progress through the healthy ageing programme.

2. Show that the assessment cards prompt them for information about themselves including:
3. By regularly assessing these important areas, they can help to ensure that they live healthy lives, or if not, they can explore how they can get to a more optimal quality of life.

4. Explain that they will be able to score their own cards and that you, the volunteer, will be reviewing everyone’s cards to help give direction to the healthy ageing programme for your particular group.

5. Distribute an assessment packet to each community member. Allow them a few minutes to look through the pages.

6. Explain that you will first demonstrate how to complete the healthy ageing assessment and then they will all work on completing their own assessment together. Tell them to just watch you first.

**Completing the assessment**

**Tool: Assessment and answer cards**

1. Hold the assessment cards in front of you with the “Self” card on top.
2. Hold the answer card perpendicular to the assessment card.

3. Slide the answer card under the entire assessment card packet far enough so the column with the matching symbol or sign is up against the border as shown below.
4. Starting with the “Self” card, read the questions on the assessment card and shade in the oval to match your answer on the answer card. Do not write your answer on the assessment card.

5. Once you finish answering the questions on an assessment card, turn to the next page in the assessment cards and slide your answer card over one column until the matching symbol or sign is up against the border for the new card.

6. Continue until all assessment cards have been answered and all columns on both sides of the answer card are completed.
What happens next?

**Tool: Prioritizing and planning sheet**

1. Now hold the completed answer card next to a blank prioritizing and plan-
ing sheet.

2. Starting with the “Stretch and strength” column on your answer card, iden-
tify which columns have a D or E shaded in on the answer card.
3. For each column that shows a D or E, shade in all ovals in the matching
column on the prioritizing and planning sheet.

4. Complete all columns on the prioritizing and planning sheet.
5. Once all columns are completed, total each row across on the far right-hand-side of the sheet. Responses with the highest scores indicate areas for prioritization.

6. This will help you in your planning of future healthy ageing activities for the specific group, according to the greatest need.

7. If any community members have indicated a D or E for the "Pain" column, you should encourage them to seek medical attention as soon as they can. Provide a referral of where they can go, if needed.

8. In the first few rounds of self-assessment, by referring to the information in the "Self" column, volunteers can take note of whether they have people in their group that live alone and the age range of their group. In later weeks, when people feel more comfortable indicating their name on their scoring sheet, volunteers can provide more appropriate individual support or referrals, as needed.

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**Planning your healthy ageing session**

1. Gather assessment data from all group members regarding areas of priority. Tabulate which topics have the highest scores and use that information to determine the first topics that you can teach in the coming weeks with the specific group.

2. While the content for healthy ageing topics 1, 2 and 3 are set, the other topics are optional and used only as needed. You may also choose to just go through the topics one by one. But it is advised to focus on the areas of highest priority first to keep people interested and to ensure we are meeting community needs.

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**Flow of healthy ageing topics**

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<td>Preventing social isolation</td>
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<td>Healthy eating</td>
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3. Remember to ask your community members to reassess with a fresh answer card sheet every two to four weeks. This helps to monitor how well people are progressing.

**Action planning**

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about areas where you think you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Let’s think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Read aloud each question and model completing the form, using yourself as an example of how you apply the learning from the session until the next session.

4. Encourage participants to complete an action plan with you.
Topic 3

Behaviour change
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

- Explain the components of healthy ageing
- Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
- Identify the critical role of active participation in society
- Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

- To lower risk of NCDs, behaviour change is always recommended.
- There are many interventions that can be successful in helping people to adopt healthier behaviours. These interventions are different for different contexts and determinants.
- There are five general stages in behaviour change. The steps are: knowledge, approval, intention, practice and advocacy.
- People move up and down between these stages frequently for any number of personal reasons.
- The three issues to consider when changing a behaviour are:
  1. understanding a person’s motivation to change
  2. the clarity of their plan in reaching their goal
  3. ensuring that the person’s environment supports the change
- Behaviour change is not an exact science.
- Behaviour change requires a daily commitment to healthy behaviours.
- Understanding what causes people to practise unhealthy behaviours helps them to be better prepared to respond in a healthy way.
- There are two types of behaviour change:
  - DO’S–healthy habits that we want to start doing
  - DON’T’S–unhealthy habits we want to stop doing

To stop a DON’T behaviour, you should replace the unhealthy action with a healthy or neutral action to help your brain build a new pathway.

Introduction

Tool: Five stages of behaviour change poster

A person wanting to change any kind of behaviour or introduce a new behaviour will usually go through five stages of behaviour change.
Often, it takes a person several attempts until they are successful. They may progress up a step and then fall back. This is normal. The important thing is to pick up from where you are and continue to move forward.

People move up and down between these stages frequently for all sorts of reasons.

To change a behaviour, a person has to have a clear goal, know what their motivation is to change and have support. Behaviour change requires a daily commitment to healthy behaviours.

In each person, every behaviour is triggered or prompted by specific people, events or activities. Understanding these triggers helps people to be prepared to practise healthy behaviours when the triggers happen.

How do the stages look in real life?

Tool: Behaviour change matching cards

Let’s see behaviour change stages and how Alexander (see behaviour change matching cards) progressed through these stages to be healthier.

Helping people to stay on track

As a volunteer, your role in helping community members is to help people stay in the practice stage and not fail. To support their hard work and goals, follow these guidelines with community members:

- Remind them often of their goal.
- Remind them often of their motivation for reaching the goal.
- Give them clear guidance on how to reach their goal.
• Give them frequent reminders of how to successfully respond to challenges or
  triggers in their environment.
• Provide support from others going through similar changes in behaviour, such
  as in a community group.

The five guidelines for volunteers listed above will help you keep the majority of
community members on track towards healthier behaviours.

The key to helping make behaviour change stick is frequent check-ins with a
support network such as the community health meetings. Regular meetings are
the key to allowing people to have a place to share their successes and failures,
and support each other as they learn a new behaviour. Support groups help
people to realize that they are part of a group all struggling with the same is-
issues and that the group often has answers to questions they may have, like how
to respond when someone offers you a cigarette at work after lunch or how to
say no to your friend’s offer of a second and third piece of cake. Support from
others going through the same struggles is essential in the first critical month
when new behaviours are beginning to form.

Finally, remember that the practice stage is just that—practice. NO-ONE is per-
fact. All we can expect is continued practice of healthy behaviours. Soon, they
will become habit.

Remember that while our brains may tell us that we want a cigarette, a candy
bar, a third beer or to sit on the couch all day, our physical body actually wants
us to not smoke, to eat fruit and vegetables, to limit drinking and to get up and
get moving. Our bodies respond immediately to healthy changes!

**DO and DON’T behaviours**

There are two general types of behaviour change:

• **DO** behaviours or healthy habits that we want to start doing such as eating
  more fruit and vegetables, or begin doing some physical activity: these are ac-
tivities that we now have to make time for within our day or routine. They are
easy to forget or ignore, simply because they are not yet part of our routine.
They are often behaviours that we keep meaning to do, but somehow never
quite do.

• **DON’T** behaviours or unhealthy habits that we want to stop doing such as
stop smoking, stop drinking or stop worrying: these are activities which we
regularly do and which have become comfortable for us to continue doing,
despite any troubles we may feel as a result. For example, a person who knows
that they have to stop eating 10 candy bars every day because it is unhealthy
and because they are becoming obese will find it hard to stop—this has become
part of their everyday activity. To help yourself stop a DON’T behaviour, you
should replace the unhealthy action with a healthy or neutral action to help
your brain build a new pathway. When you feel the need for candy bars, ask
yourself if you really are hungry. If so, eat an apple. If not, replace the habit
of candy bars with another habit like walking around your house or doing a
simple stretch at your chair or calling a friend. After several days, your brain
will start to recognize the new path(s) and it becomes a little bit easier each
time to say no.
Some people will say that their unhealthy behaviour is what calms them down or is their stress release. They may say, “A cigarette calms me down”. The smoking is a habit and its routine and chemicals are what calms them. Explain that they can start by replacing that cigarette with a healthier habit like eating carrots or going for a walk when the urge strikes. The first few days may be difficult and/or stressful, but by replacing unhealthy behaviours with healthy behaviours, they will add years to their life and feel better as they age.

**Behaviour stages game**

*Tool: Behaviour stages game kit*

1. Display the behaviour stages poster.
2. Read cards from the behaviour change stages game and prompt the community members to share which stage is being described.
3. If you have a higher literacy group, you may also distribute game packets of the behaviour stages game to teach the behaviour change stages in a fun and interactive way.

**Action planning**

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.
2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to change your unhealthy behaviours or adopt healthy behaviours. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”
3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

**Checking for understanding**

1. How is the Red Cross Red Crescent unique in changing the lives of community members?
2. What are the five stages of behaviour change?
3. Why do people often move up and down through the stages of behaviour change?
4. What are the four conditions for a person to succeed in making a behaviour change?
5. What are the five ways that a volunteer can support a person making a behaviour change?
Topic

Preventing NCDs
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

• Explain the components of healthy ageing
• Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
• Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

Noncommunicable diseases

• While there are a small percentage of noncommunicable disease (NCD) diagnoses that are caused by genetics, most NCDs are preventable.
• NCDs are diseases that CANNOT be spread through contact with other people or animals that are sick.
• NCDs usually occur when a person consistently practises poor health behaviours like tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, eating too many unhealthy foods and/or being inactive.
• The four key NCDs are cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.
• NCDs cause more than 63 per cent of all global deaths due to cardiovascular and chronic lung diseases, cancers and diabetes.  

Cardiovascular diseases

• Cardiovascular diseases are a group of problems that occur when the heart and blood vessels work too hard to get blood through your heart and vessels, attempting to bring oxygen to your body.
• This hard work by your heart leads to high blood pressure which may lead to heart attack and stroke.
• Cardiovascular diseases are mainly caused by a blockage that prevents blood from flowing to the heart or brain. This blockage is often caused by tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, eating too many unhealthy foods and/or being inactive.
Cancer

• Cancer occurs when a single cell in one part of your body starts to grow abnormally and then grows uncontrolled in your body.

• Tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, eating too many unhealthy foods and/or being inactive can lead to many kinds of cancers.

Chronic respiratory diseases

• Chronic respiratory diseases occur when your airway and/or lungs become sick and make breathing difficult.

• Chronic respiratory diseases can occur when you use tobacco, drink too much alcohol, eat too many unhealthy foods and/or inhale smoke from burning wood or from charcoal-burning stoves or when another person is smoking nearby.

Diabetes

• Diabetes occurs when your body cannot control the level of sugar in your blood.

• There are different types of diabetes, but the most common type is called Type 2 diabetes. People who have excess body weight, eat too much sugar, and/or are physically inactive are at higher risk of Type 2 diabetes.

Knowledge about NCDs

Tool: NCDs diagram / effects of… posters (quitting tobacco, drinking less alcohol, healthy diet and physical activity)

The four major NCDs that cause the most number of deaths each year globally are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases.

In many cases, NCDs can be preventable when people:

• Increase healthy behaviours of:
  • Being active on a daily basis. Start slowly if you have been inactive for a while.
  • Eating healthy foods

• Reduce or eliminate unhealthy behaviours of:
  • Using tobacco products
  • Drinking too much alcohol
Noncommunicable diseases

Cardiovascular disease

What is it?

• Heart attacks happen when a part of the heart muscle dies or gets damaged because there is not enough blood reaching the heart. Blood vessels cannot provide enough blood to the heart when the arteries or blood vessels are blocked5.

• Strokes occur when a blood vessel in the brain becomes blocked or bleeds.

• Cardiovascular disease is often caused by eating too many unhealthy foods, using tobacco, drinking too much alcohol and/or not doing enough physical activity.

What happens if I have cardiovascular disease?

• If you eat a lot of unhealthy foods, your blood vessels become blocked. This makes your heart have to work too hard.

• If you have a cardiovascular disease, you should talk to your doctor and change your health behaviours soon.

How can I prevent or treat cardiovascular disease?

• While not all cases of cardiovascular disease are preventable, most can be prevented with healthier behaviours.

• Being physically active helps to clear some of the blockages in the vessels and heart. Be sure to start slowly if you have been inactive for a while.

• Get your blood pressure measured regularly. The blood pressure tells you how much blockage you have in your arteries by measuring how hard your heart has to work to pump blood.

• Most cases of cardiovascular disease can be prevented. To prevent heart attack and stroke of the brain:
  a. Stop using tobacco.
  b. Eat five servings of fruit and vegetables every day.
  c. Reduce the amount of fat and salt in your diet.
  d. Get at least 20—25 minutes of moderate physical activity per day. Start slowly if you are new to physical activity. Do at least ten minutes of activity at a time.
  e. Do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol.

• Stress and worry can also increase your risk for cardiovascular disease. Meditate, exercise and enjoy time with friends and family to help reduce your stress.

• If you have cardiovascular disease, take the medicines that are based on your doctor’s advice. Get regular check-ups.

5 www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/heart_attack.htm
Cancer

What is it?

- Cancer occurs when a single cell in one part of your body starts to grow abnormally and then grows uncontrolled in your body.
- Cancer starts to grow in one organ and then can spread to other organs. When cancer grows in an organ, the organ cannot function normally and can even stop.
- Cancer is a deadly disease that affects people from all races, genders, classes and nationalities.
- At least one third of all cancer cases diagnosed are preventable. These preventable cancer cases are linked to tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, eating too many unhealthy foods and being inactive.\(^6\)
- Cancer occurs in different organs of your body including your blood and skin. Lung cancer is one of the deadliest cancers and is most common in smokers and people who live and work with smokers.

What happens if I have cancer?

- When cancer starts, cancer cells grow very quickly in the body. If untreated, the cancer will quickly spread and kill.
- If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you must seek medical attention immediately.

How can I prevent or treat cancer?

- A third of all cancer cases can be prevented by stopping the use of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods, increasing physical activity and eating more fruit and vegetables.
- Early diagnosis helps improve the likelihood of surviving cancer:
  - Women should get regular check-ups.
    - To screen for breast cancer:
      - Women over the age of 20 should practise monthly breast self-examinations. These detect over 45 per cent of breast tumours.\(^7\)
      - Women aged 50—74 should get a mammogram every two years. If there is a higher risk because of family history or past cancer diagnosis, your doctor will advise if you should schedule a mammogram more often.
    - To screen for cervical cancer:
      - Women aged 21 and over should get a regular Pap test.
      - Men should get regular check-ups and screen for cancers, as appropriate.
- Treatments include:
  a. Surgery to remove the cancer cells or a complete organ that is diseased
  b. Undergoing chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy


\(^7\) [www.uicc.org/simply-check-campaign-detecting-breast-cancer]
Chronic respiratory disease

What is it?

• Chronic respiratory diseases occur when your airway and/or lungs become sick and make breathing difficult.
• They are usually caused by breathing in tobacco or smoke. The good air that your body needs cannot get to your lungs and organs.
• Chronic respiratory diseases can also occur when you inhale smoke from someone else’s cigar or cigarette.
• You can also get a chronic respiratory disease when you inhale smoke regularly from a fire burning wood, charcoal, animal dung or crop waste.

What happens if I have chronic respiratory disease?

• When not treated, it is very difficult to breathe and you will often have a feeling that you cannot get enough air to survive. It is a very scary feeling.
• When treated, medicines can help your lungs get the air you need for short periods of time.
• But your lungs will not get a chance to recover and heal if you keep smoking or breathing in polluted air.
• A person who has a chronic respiratory disease can become worse if s/he uses tobacco, drinks harmful amounts of alcohol, eats too many unhealthy foods and/or is physically inactive.

How can I prevent or treat chronic respiratory disease?

• While not all cases of chronic respiratory disease are preventable, most can be prevented with healthier behaviours.
• Completely stop using tobacco.
• Stop breathing second-hand smoke from others who are smoking.
• Stop breathing smoke from fires fuelled by wood, charcoal, animal dung or crop waste8.
• Children and youth are especially vulnerable to second-hand smoke because their bodies are still developing.
• While physical activity may be difficult, mild activity will help to prevent or ease even further problems associated with chronic respiratory diseases. Start slowly at first and increase intensity each week.
• By eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, being physically active, reducing alcohol intake and eliminating tobacco and smoke inhalation, a person’s body can be made stronger against complications from chronic respiratory diseases.

Diabetes

What is it?

- Diabetes occurs when your body cannot control the level of sugar in your blood.
- There are different types of diabetes, but the most common type—called Type 2—affects people who have excess body weight, smoke tobacco, drink harmful amounts of alcohol, eat an unhealthy diet and/or are physically inactive.
- Diabetes can affect people of all ages, all races and genders in every country of the world.
- Adults need to monitor their own sugar, fats and calorie intake, check their physical activity levels and monitor the sugar intake and activity levels of their children.

What happens if I have diabetes?

- A person who is diagnosed with diabetes is called diabetic.
- When you have diabetes, you may feel like you need to urinate often, you may be extremely thirsty or hungry all the time, feel extremely tired, have cuts or bruises that take a long time to heal or have a tingly feeling in your hands and feet.
- Sometimes, people can have diabetes and not even know they have it. Getting your blood sugar tested is the best way to see if you are at risk.
- Having diabetes can double your risk of heart attacks and strokes of the brain, failure of the kidneys, and even blockages in your blood vessels and nervous system which can mean amputation of the feet and/or loss of eyesight.

How can I prevent or treat diabetes?

- While not all cases of diabetes are preventable, most can be prevented with healthier behaviours.
- Treatments for diabetics include reducing the amount of sugar, fat and calories they eat and drink.
- Diabetics usually also have to give themselves pills or injections every day.
- Diabetes medication is expensive and puts many families in debt. It requires regular purchases of needles, testing kits and bottles of insulin for the rest of your life or as long as you have the disease.
- Type 2 diabetes, caused by an unhealthy lifestyle, can be prevented through adopting and maintaining healthy behaviours.
- If you already have Type 2 diabetes, you can reverse the effects of the disease by adopting and maintaining healthy behaviours.
- To stop the effects of Type 2 diabetes, you would need to stop eating sugary, fat and high-calorie foods and drinks and become more active.
- You also need to stop the use of tobacco products and drinking harmful amounts of alcohol.
NCD emergencies

Tool: Emergency posters (cardiac arrest, stroke and diabetic)

People who have an NCD may not always know that they have a disease. There are different emergencies that people with an NCD may experience such as a heart attack, a stroke or a diabetic emergency. Share the posters and the symptoms and treatments for two such NCD emergencies.

Action planning

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to change your unhealthy behaviours or adopt healthy behaviours. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

Checking for understanding

1. What are the four main NCDs that are responsible for 63 per cent of global deaths every year?

2. What are the four risk factors for contracting these four NCDs?

3. Does any member of your family do any of these unhealthy behaviours?
Topic
Preventing falls
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

• Explain the components of healthy ageing
• Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people's health as they age

Main learning points

• Each year, one in three adults aged 65 or more experiences a fall, and people who fall once are two to three times more likely to fall again.
• Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries among older adults. One out of ten falls causes a serious injury, such as a hip fracture or head injury which require hospitalization. In addition to the physical and emotional pain, many people need to spend at least a year recovering in a long-term care facility.
• Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries.
• Falls can be prevented.
• There are biological, behavioural and environmental risk factors that contribute to the risk of falls.

Introduction

One of the biggest fears that people have is of losing their balance or falling. As many as 45 per cent of older people experience a fall each year. Falls can be dangerous and scary, but it is possible to do exercises to decrease the risk of falling, build strength and make people feel more confident.

People are at risk of falling and hurting themselves for many different reasons. These can include:

• Poor vision, which can affect the way you move your body and how you navigate your environment.
• Weak hip or legs from inactivity or a condition, which make it harder to walk.
• Poor posture or problems with your spine, which make it difficult to stand up straight.
• Medications or other substances or low blood-pressure that make you feel dizzy or light-headed, which makes falls more likely.
• Wearing shoes that are not right for the weather or conditions where you will be walking.
Risk factors for falls

Biological risk factors
- Muscle weakness or balance problems
- Medication side effects and/or interactions
- Chronic health conditions such as arthritis and stroke
- Vision changes and vision loss
- Loss of sensation in feet

Behavioural risk factors
- Inactivity
- Risky behaviours such as standing on a chair in place of a step stool
- Alcohol use

Environmental risk factors
- Clutter and tripping hazards
- Poor lighting
- Lack of stair railings
- Lack of grab bars inside and outside the bath or shower
- Poorly designed public spaces

What to do?

You are empowered to address these risk factors and gain better balance. For biological factors, you can practise some exercises that will strengthen your body and make you less likely to fall. You can also talk to your doctor about other medications that may have fewer side effects that affect your balance. For vision issues, your doctor can examine your eyes to address changes in vision.

For the behavioural risk factors, you can start moving your body more with simple exercises to keep your muscles working. You should also know the limitations of what you can and cannot do physically and respect your body's limits. Finally, if you limit your alcohol intake, you are less likely to feel the effects of alcohol and will feel more stable.

For environmental factors, identify items in the places where you work, live and play that could pose a hazard to your movement. This might be items left on the ground at home, a poorly lit doorway, not enough supports in the bath to help you get in or out, or too many high kerbs from the sidewalk to the street.

Studies have shown that if you regularly do some balance exercises, you can prevent falls. If you do exercises regularly and you happen to fall, you can prevent injury, even fractures. The exercises are not difficult.
Feeling good

Tool: Balance cards (double-sided with guidance) / Frequency table (appendix C)

Think about how tennis players stand when they are waiting for the ball. They stand with their feet planted wide apart, knees and hips flexed with their upper body leaning forward—a very stable and safe position. As we age, we choose this same stable and safe position, but our brain and muscles are no longer challenged. We forget how to keep our balance when we are not in this position—whether we are walking, climbing stairs or moving our bodies. Our body forgets how to balance in all those positions because it is out of practice.

The balance exercise posters in your toolkit guide you through nine exercises that, when done regularly, can help you build better balance and reduce your risk of falling. These exercises need to be practised regularly to keep your brain and your muscles trained and active. A few pointers for your practice:

- ONLY DO EXERCISES THAT YOU ARE COMFORTABLE DOING. Do not push yourself to do more than you like. Go slowly.
- If it hurts—STOP. Talk to a medical professional or physical therapist regarding any pain you may be having.

- Using hand weights or any other type of weight is not required. You can use soup cans or full bottles of water for weights—or use nothing at all.
- Keep your posture in check. Try to keep your weight over your ankles.
- Go slowly. No need to move quickly through the positions. Speed is not necessary.
- Keep the back of a stable chair near you as you do the exercise. Steady yourself as necessary. It is not a contest—slow and steady is your goal.
- Practise for 15 minutes every day. Ideally, you can do the strengthening exercises one day, the stretching exercises the following day, and these balance exercises the day after (see the topic “physical activity” for the strength and stretch exercises). When you have done all three sets of exercises over three days, start the cycle again with the strengthening exercises and so on.
- The more you move your body, the more your body will respond to help you feel better and move better.
- As you get stronger and more confident in your movements, you can try additional exercises like these:
  - Clock Reach: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTOKhh2D1ei
  - Staggered Stance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=37S6nQ32BTE
  - Single Limb Stance: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IPkg7KUEA4
  - Body Circles: www.youtube.com/watch?v=JXuU4xyKTFQ
  - Grapevine: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPicy8p3rFE
Action planning

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to keep your body moving safely to prevent falls and injuries. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

Checking for understanding

1. Why is balance important as we age?
2. What are the three types of risk factors for falls?
3. What can you do to prevent falls where you live, work and play?
4. When can you find a time to exercise with friends?
Topic

Preventing social isolation
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

• Explain the components of healthy ageing
• Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
• Identify the critical role of active participation in society
• Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

• Social isolation is when you have limited or no contact with others in society. This might include staying home for long periods of time, having no communication with family and friends or purposefully avoiding any opportunities to interact. Social isolation involves rejecting social interaction whereas loneliness is when a person wants interaction but is unable to get enough interaction with others.

• Social isolation can be caused by many factors, including low income, unemployment, lack of family ties, low educational attainment, need of care, dementia, disability, living in a rural area and poor access to public transport.

• The tendency for social isolation tends to increase with age, with those 80 years and older being more vulnerable.

• When people have low income or feel discriminated against, they are much more likely to feel socially isolated.

• When we socially isolate ourselves, we feel much more sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness and loss of confidence. It can be very difficult to break free from these overwhelming feelings.

• Meditation is a mood-enhancing activity that allows people to quieten their critical inner voice and open themselves up to be receptive to initiating and accepting social contact.

Short film: Paper memories–vimeo.com/13831362

This short film is about a man who socially isolates himself and does not seek social interaction with others, instead focusing on memories of his deceased wife. This film is sad—it is included here to allow people to see how social isolation affects one man and then discuss his struggles with sadness and social isolation—a very personal matter. Community members can talk about this man’s struggles and explore why we may choose to socially isolate ourselves and discuss ways to combat the desire for social isolation. This focus on another person through the film is a more comfortable way to explore this difficult subject sensitively and respectfully, rather than expecting community members to discuss their own personal struggles with social isolation—a sensitive topic for many.

After showing the film, discuss:

- How was the man feeling?
- Who did he have to turn to or talk to?
- There were no other people in the movie except this man and his deceased wife. This reflects that the man does not “see” anyone else and that he is socially isolating himself. Which other people were probably available in each of the places he went where he could have interacted with others?
- What activities did the man do as part of healthy ageing?
- Has anyone felt like this man? What did you do?
- What do you do when you feel yourself feeling like you do not want to see people, but want to just stay home alone?

**Introduction**

Let’s look at how being socially involved improves how you can remain healthy and feel good for many years to come.

- People can extend their lives by doing things with others that are easy and enjoyable, like going to church/temple/mosque or to the movies, gardening or playing card or board games.
- Social and productive activities—even those that do not involve physical fitness—lower the risk of all causes of death as much as exercise does\(^\text{10}\).
- Social activities are not a replacement for physical activity, but can improve physical well-being even more when combined with exercise.
- When you are social and appropriately busy, this causes changes in your brain that protect against cognitive decline. Your brain then influences and regulates physical processes such as making you less likely to fall sick or to better fight disease that may affect your body.
- As you get older, your body reacts more strongly to stressful events and takes more time to recover from stress, which is not healthy for your heart, lungs and blood vessels. Being socially involved with others and feeling productive lessens the effects of stress on your body.
- The more social ties people have at an early age, the better their health is at the beginning and end of their lives\(^\text{11}\).
- Resourcefulness, resilience and your unique characteristics are important factors that can help you prevent social isolation.

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• When you are feeling like you just do not care or do not want to interact with anyone any more, this might just mean that you definitely need more interaction. Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers can provide psychosocial support and be there to support you in engaging more socially.

What to do?

Tool: Social activities sheet

We will have some fun engaging with each other, learning new things and sharing our lives. To be or become socially included, you need to make an effort to seek the support and companionship you need.

We are social beings—human interaction is a requirement for us to thrive as people. You may have to work at it and practise your social skills at first. As you become more comfortable with yourself and seeking what you need from others, you are moving closer to happiness and better health.

Quietening our minds

Tool: Blissful mind meditation audio file and/or meditation script

• Sometimes our feelings overwhelm us and we can easily fall into depression and loneliness.

• To teach your brain to occasionally rest and help you feel less isolated, guided imagery relaxation or meditation is an excellent way to quieten an upset or angry mind.

• Meditation is a type of relaxation that is the best natural way to help you feel happier and less anxious. Evidence shows that meditation and breathing exercises can slow the progression of Alzheimer’s disease by protecting your brain from stress and anxiety.\textsuperscript{12}

• Ageing people who meditate spend less time at the doctor’s and in hospital.\textsuperscript{13}

• Meditation helps us to better quieten down our anxious thoughts, lessen our tendency to worry and avoid our mind wandering. Meditation can have the same effect on depression, anxiety and pain as many antidepressant medications—without the side effects or expense.

• Let’s try it!

How did that feel? Do you feel lighter? At first, it might be difficult to keep your mind from wandering, but always come back to focus on your breath. Don’t fight with your wandering mind—just know that it gets easier. And the time you spend meditating is helping your brain to rest and fight your worries and stress. We can meditate again next week.

\textsuperscript{12} Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center & Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, (2013). Stress Reduction through Meditation May Aid in Slowing the Progression of Alzheimer’s Disease. [online] Available at: www.bidmc.org/News/PRLandingPage/2013/November/Wells-Meditation.aspx

\textsuperscript{13} See: doctorsontm.org/reduced-health-care-costs, 2016.
Action planning

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to be open to social activities and feel more tolerant and open to social interactions. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

Checking for understanding

1. How does social isolation affect your body?
2. Can social isolation affect your lifespan?
3. Which social activities do you do now?
4. Which social activities would you like to do but you either do not know how to start or are uncomfortable doing them?
5. In what ways does meditation improve your health?
6. Make one new friend before you leave today.
Topic
Healthy eating
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

- Explain the components of healthy ageing
- Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people's health as they age
- Identify the critical role of active participation in society
- Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

- There are four main behaviours that contribute to being diagnosed with an NCD. These behaviours are tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diet.
- An unhealthy diet leaves you feeling unwell, your body poorly nourished and less able to fight off sickness. Start to eat a healthy diet by eating five servings of fruit and vegetables every day, and your body is less likely to become sick as it has the nutrients it needs to make your body strong. Eating five servings also means you are less likely to eat unhealthy foods that can make you sick, overweight and tired. By eating five servings of fruit and vegetables every day, a person can greatly reduce their risk for NCDs.
- Reduce the use of salt, sugar and fat in your foods. Salt, sugar and fat can usually be found in most condiments used to flavour food like seasoning salt, ketchup, dressings, dips, sauces and cream.
- If you already have an NCD, you need to ensure you are eating the healthiest food you can to help your body fight the effects of your NCD and prevent further NCD diagnoses.

Introduction

One of the biggest risk factors for disease is an unhealthy diet. Failing to regularly eat a healthy diet is one of the strongest risk factors for noncommunicable diseases and prevents you from feeling your best.

Unhealthy eating

Tool: Effects of an unhealthy diet poster

Let's look at how unhealthy foods and drinks affect the body.

- When you eat food, your body will store what it does not immediately need as fat in the blood vessels, heart and other organs.
- This extra fat blocks your arteries and makes your heart work harder to push
your blood through to the rest of your body. Fat also gets stored in your organs which makes your organs work extra hard to do their job.

• All foods have calories which fuel the body. A high calorie food is not necessarily a high grade or high quality food.

• Fruit and vegetables have a small number of calories but are a high grade or high quality fuel. They contain a lot of water and fibre as well as vitamins and minerals that your body needs to feel and be well.

• Some foods that are high in calories like lard, butter, ghee, candy and fried foods are low quality fuel. They usually just contain things that your body does not really need. They contain too much fat, the material which blocks up your heart and blood vessels, making your heart work harder than it should.

• Sugar, when eaten or drunk, turns to fat and makes your cells sick. Drinking sugary drinks only adds more stress to your body as it tries to process the sugar and puts you at risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

• When your body continually does not get all the vitamins, minerals and water it needs in the foods you eat, your body struggles to do its work well and you will feel tired, exhausted and unwell.

• If an organ in your body does not have all the ingredients it needs from the foods you eat to do its job well, it simply will not do its job well or even at all, and is much more likely to become sick and stop working.

• When your body organs do not work well or stop functioning, you can become very sick or even die.

What to do?

Tool: Healthy eating guide poster / Fruit and vegetable serving sizes poster

• Drink lots of water—about four to five large glasses every day helps your body to wash out the bad things it is trying to get rid of, helps you to defecate more often and gives your body the fluid it needs to work properly.

• Eat five servings of fruits and vegetables every day in addition to other fresh foods, such as wholegrains and pulses.

• Limit fat, sugar and salt in your diet.

The healthy eating guide poster in your toolkit compares healthy to unhealthy foods. The poster shows how the healthy foods benefit your body and how the unhealthy foods damage your body.

The fruits and vegetables serving size guide poster shows what a serving size is.

What do I eat if I already have an NCD?

If you have an NCD, you need to be even more attentive that you are eating enough fruit and vegetables. They give your body the vitamins, nutrients and energy it needs to get or stay healthy. Fruit and vegetables independently contribute to preventing cardiovascular disease. It is likely that certain vegetables and fruits, especially cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli, kale, cauliflowers and radishes protect our bodies from developing cancers of the colon and rectum, mouth, pharynx, larynx and oesophagus.
Everyone should also limit their intake of sugar, especially sugar that has been added to foods and drinks by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, or sugars in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates. Much of the sugars consumed today are “hidden” in processed foods that are not usually seen as sweets such as ketchup or pasta sauce. There is solid evidence that sugar contributes to many health problems, including NCDs.\(^{14}\)

Everyone, especially people with NCDs, should watch their intake of salt. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “high salt intake is one of the factors leading to the increase in noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) worldwide. Cardiovascular disease and stroke are two of the main NCDs often related to salt”.

In general, eat plenty of fresh foods each day including vegetables, fruit, wholegrains and pulses. Limit the amount of processed or convenience foods which are foods that are not in their natural state when you eat them and have to be processed in a factory, such as bread, noodles, cereals and crisps.

**Action planning**

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to change your unhealthy eating behaviours and make more healthy eating choices. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

**Checking for understanding**

1. How does an unhealthy diet affect the body and make you vulnerable to NCDs?

2. What are unhealthy foods in your country or region?

3. What are healthy foods in your country or region?

4. How can NCDs affect you and your family physically? Emotionally?

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Topic
Physical activity
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

- Explain the components of healthy ageing
- Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
- Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

- There are four main behaviours that contribute to being diagnosed with an NCD. These behaviours are tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diet.
- Physical inactivity causes the body to start to break down. By staying physically active for at least 30 minutes every day, a person can greatly reduce their risk for NCDs.
- Sitting for long periods of time—in front of a TV, a computer screen, sitting while commuting, etc.—is dangerous for your health, whether you exercise or not.
- By doing at least 30 minutes of activity every day such as walking or cycling, you keep your body healthy and more ready to fight disease. Doing some activity every day lowers your risk for NCDs.

Physical inactivity

Tool: Effects of physical inactivity poster / Effects of physical activity poster (from “preventing NCDs”)

Let us look at how not doing physical activity affects the body.

- Physical activity keeps muscles, joints, bones, tendons—all your body parts—moving and working to their fullest potential. When you do not use them, they lose their flexibility or ability to do the things they should be able to do. The less you use your muscles, the more muscle you lose. When you do too little activity, your body starts performing poorly and working abnormally.
- When you consistently do fewer than 30 minutes of activity each day, your lungs process less oxygen even though your body always needs oxygen, your heart pushes less blood through it, you have a hard time defecating, and your bones and muscles actually start to weaken and even break down.
- In this weakened state, your body is vulnerable—it is not working at 100 percent and so is much more likely to become sick.
- When you sit too long, the activity in your muscles slows down, your body stops burning energy efficiently and loses much of its ability to break down fat in your body.
- Sitting too much for too long every day can greatly contribute to your risk for NCDs and/or dementia15.
• The longer you stay inactive, the more your muscles break down, the less able your body is to pump blood and breathe efficiently and you are at a higher risk of having diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer or chronic respiratory disease.

What to do?

• Become a little more active each day. Try to move your body as much as you can throughout the day every day.

• Walk to the office, the Red Cross Red Crescent centre or the market when you can.

• In addition to moving more, you should also stretch and strengthen your muscles. Strength exercises help to build stronger bones and muscles so that you can keep doing the things you enjoy. Strengthen your muscles twice a week to feel more energy, improve your balance and feel great. Give your muscles a workout by doing simple exercises that stress the muscles safely, such as those your volunteer teaches you.

• Stretch your muscles by doing stretching exercises or yoga twice a week. Gentle stretches can help with back pain, stiff muscles, and staying flexible. It can help to prevent falls.

• Do sports or activities that you enjoy like gardening, walking, etc.

• Play some of your favourite music while you move—it can energise you and lift your mood.

Let’s move!

Tool: Strength cards / Stretch cards / Frequency table (appendix C)

Let’s get up and get moving with some exercises you can do now and at home.

• ONLY DO EXERCISES THAT YOU ARE COMFORTABLE DOING. Do not push yourself to do more than you like. Go slowly.

• If it hurts—STOP. Talk to a medical professional or physical therapist regarding any pain you may be having.

• Using hand weights or any other type of weight is not required. You can use soup cans or full bottles of water for weights—or use nothing at all.

• Keep your posture in check. Try to keep your weight over your ankles.

• Go slowly. No need to move quickly through the positions. Speed is not necessary.

• Keep the back of a stable chair near you as you do the exercise. Steady yourself as necessary. It is not a contest—slow and steady is your goal.

• Practise for 15 minutes every day. Ideally, you can do the strengthening exercises one day, the stretching exercises the following day, and the balance
exercises (see “preventing falls”) the day after. When you have done all three sets of exercises over three days, start the cycle again with the strengthening exercises and so on.

- Move your body every day, regularly throughout the day.

**Exercise frequency table**

- Stretch two days a week.
- Strengthen two days a week.
- Do your balancing exercises (from “preventing falls”) on two days.
- As you get stronger and more confident in your movements, you can try additional strength and stretch exercises like these:

**Stretch**

- **Seated hip lifts**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=puXOYj6sm7Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puXOYj6sm7Q)
- **Back stretch**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UnTdbj1WCs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UnTdbj1WCs)
- **Chest stretch**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAQVJID69qE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAQVJID69qE)

**Strength**

- **Reverse straight leg raise**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVylAG-9uY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVylAG-9uY)
- **Sit to stand**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdLuOKRjxj8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdLuOKRjxj8)
- **Diagonal inward shoulder raise**: [www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=ynvILvBM9rU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=ynvILvBM9rU)

**Action planning**

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.
2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to keep your body moving and staying strong and flexible. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”
3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

**Checking for understanding**

1. How does physical inactivity affect the body and make you more vulnerable to NCDs and poor health?
2. How can sickness affect you and your family physically? Emotionally?
3. How does sitting for long periods affect your health?
Topic
Lifelong learning
Learning objectives

At the completion of this topic, community members will be better able to:

• Explain the components of healthy ageing
• Identify critical risk and protective factors to do with people’s health as they age
• Identify the critical role of active participation in society
• Demonstrate the impact of the life course trajectory in all stages of life

Main learning points

• Lifelong learning is important for those wishing to work longer in their lives, but also to reinforce feelings of well-being.
• Lifelong learning is a key factor in healthy ageing. You are never too old to learn.
• In society, people of all ages and cultural groups who are informed and who have current skills contribute to a stronger economy, fuller employment, and community protection and participation.
• Lifelong learning significantly contributes to solidarity between generations.
• Keeping mentally active might lower the risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s or dementia.
• Lifelong learning can take place formally or informally.

Introduction

Let us look at how lifelong learning contributes to remaining healthy and feeling good for many years to come.

• By keeping your brain engaged in learning, your mind and body can maintain health.
• Learning allows you to acquire and update knowledge and skills to stay relevant about your health16.
• The healthier and more knowledgeable you are, whatever your age, the better your chances to be active in your community. Health and knowledge are the most important key factors for empowerment.
• The earlier in life that you start to improve your health, lifelong learning, participation and security, the better your chances for enjoying quality of life longer.

Your brain and body connection

Tool: Lifelong learning poster

In our brains, we have lots of routines and habits. These form grooves in our brain—like a frequently walked path.

To develop your brain, you have to build new paths by learning new habits and information that challenges your brain’s way of thinking. Challenges could include learning a new language, learning a new skill or hobby, doing different kinds of puzzles or changing an old habit.

By building those new paths, you develop more complex thinking, you can learn more easily and your memory improves. Your brain becomes more flexible and stronger. You feel good and your body responds, becoming more able to move the way you want to.

By learning a new way to do something, you build a new pathway in your brain with new connections. These new connections could mean improved sensation, cognition, memory and motor skills17.

What to do?

1. Engage your brain to change and improve it.
2. When you are working on a task, focus your energy and attention only on the task at hand, with no distraction. This gives your brain the focus it needs to build those pathways.
3. If you have a long list of things you think you need to do, select the two most important tasks and focus on those. This lets you keep your focus while you build new paths.
4. Feed your body and your brain with healthy habits. Eat healthily, get enough quality sleep and keep your body active throughout the day. Give your brain a rest when you have learned something new.

Let us build some new pathways and get healthier!

Activity 1–Language processing

Learning a language is one of the best ways to keep your brain flexible and to build new paths. After each language lesson, your memory improves a little bit and you will feel better. Your brain is working on your body!

Tool: Let’s learn ASL video

Let us watch a video of Sofia teaching us some new words in sign language. Sofia will first show you how to make the word as she says it. She then simply explains how you make the word. Sofia then makes the sign again and repeats the word verbally. Follow along with her at your comfort level. She will teach us the following words:

Learn  Thank you  Yogurt  
Eat  Daddy  Bath  
Milk  Mother  Ice-cream  
More  Orange  Mouse  
Please  Potty  I love you

How was that? Sign language is a fun way to learn a new language because it is visual and it helps your brain along with familiar motions. You can try other languages or keep learning sign language.

Let us see what your brain learned and remembers: What is the sign for Eat? Yogurt? Ice-cream? Bath?

Activity 2–Visual thinking
Now let us get more of your brain busy by using your eyes, your mouth, your ears and your hands together to solve a problem.

Everyone will get into pairs. Stand or sit back-to-back with your partner.

Tool: Activity graphics
I will give each of you in your pair a different set of tools. One person in the pair will get a picture. The other person will get a blank piece of paper and a pencil. Neither of you can turn around or look at each other during the activity. There are several different pictures being used in the room.

The person with the drawing must explain in words to their partner the image that is on their sheet. The person with the image must give verbal directions to their partner who will draw the same image on their blank paper from the directions. Both people can ask the other questions but they may not look at each other’s sheet until I call time. You have five minutes.

After five minutes, ask the pairs to turn around and share their pictures.

How was that? Is your brain a little tired? That’s good—that means it is getting some exercise. You may sleep a little better tonight and you will even feel better having stretched your brain.

Activity 3–Non-verbal communication
You have spent your life using basic methods of communication. Today for our final activity, we will explore new ways to communicate, so we can challenge our brain in a fun way.

Let us get started! I will clear chairs and tables from the middle of the room.

I will ask that we have silence—no talking—during the next activity. Down the middle of the room, I would like everyone to get into one queue from this wall to the other, BUT I want you to get in the order of your birthdays. On this end of the room, anyone born on January 1 should be standing here and other January birthdays should be behind them—in order. As the
queue moves away from this wall, the birthdays are progressing towards December 31 (if there is anyone with that birthday) who should be the last person against this opposite wall.

There is no talking but you can use hand signs to make yourself understood. Ready? Let us start.

After the line is formed, I start at the January end and ask each person to state their birthday. We shall see how well we do at communicating differently!

How was that? Your brain must be tired now, but that just means that we worked your brain a bit and it is tired but happy. Let us take a rest.

**Action planning**

1. Distribute an action plan template for follow-up (appendix B) to each participant. Allow them a minute to review the form.

2. Say: “Today you learned about what it means to keep your brain active and learning. Think about how you might be able to make some improvements for better health and more happiness. Think about some things you can do before our next meeting and put them in writing to help you age more healthfully.”

3. Encourage participants to complete an action plan in writing.

**Checking for understanding**

1. How does your brain affect your whole body?

2. How does lifelong learning help to improve your health?

3. What kinds of games and activities do you enjoy that make you think in new ways?
**The fundamental principles** of the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement

**Humanity** The international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality** It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality** In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence** The movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

**Voluntary service** It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

**Unity** There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

**Universality** The international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.