

Engelsk

A healthier life



FRISKLIVSSENTRALEN

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Preface

This brochure is for you who participate in activities offered at the Healthy Life Centre and aims to provide useful information on and simple tools for changing lifestyle habits. It has been translated into several languages. The need to develop the brochure was reinforced during the COVID pandemic since infection control considerations prevented us from gathering participants and interpreters for meetings on specialized topics.

The purpose of the brochure is to contribute to increased knowledge of health and lifestyle habits. A successful change of habits requires knowledge of health and lifestyle habits, a desire for change, an expectation of success, and a strategy. Feel free to use the brochure as a source of information and tools that are relevant to you and your life situation.

Developed by the Healthy Life Centre, the brochure is based on research recommendations and experiences from courses over several years. A great deal of the information is obtained from helsenorge.no. Information obtained from other sources is indicated as such in each chapter.

Within each topic there are related assignments for increased awareness. In addition, the brochure contains a tool (Action Plan, Appendix 1) for changing lifestyle habits.



Health, lifestyle habits and change of habits

Health: Several factors impact our health, including how we sleep, eat, move, think, and how we interact with others. Our health is affected by the choices we make in our everyday lives – our lifestyle habits.

When in good health, you can:

- Take care of yourself and your family
- Be active
- Work
- Feel well
- Do the things that are important to you
- Take care of your house and home
- Play with you children/grandchildren
- Sleep well
- Do well in school

What is important to you in your life? What would you like your life, daily activities and health to be like? Many of us have challenges related to our health because we live our lives in ways that are inconsistent with the government's recommendations for good lifestyle habits. A habit is something that you have done multiple times and that has become automated in your brain. You have both physical habits (actions) and mental habits (thoughts). Habits are our brain's best friend. Imagine how tired you would be if you had to deliberate back and forth every time you were going to do an activity, or if you had to analyze every single new thought.

Examples of ingrained habits:

- Putting your seatbelt on in the car
- Brushing your teeth before going to bed
- Thinking a pleasant thought when being greeted by an acquaintance

Think through your lifestyle habits. Which lifestyle habits do you currently have that are good for your health? Are there any changes you could make that you think could positively impact your health? To establish new lifestyle habits, you must first become aware of your own thought patterns and habits. Then, repetition, self-control and determination will be required for the new lifestyle habits to become permanent. You may want to seek support from those around you. Your determination has limited capacity, especially when you use it to handle illness, pain or other stress in addition to changing habits.

For a successful change of lifestyle habits, it can be useful to avoid changing too many habits at once. You may want to start on a small scale, for example by changing some of the following lifestyle habits:

- Choose the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- Eat smaller portions
- Stop smoking
- Be more social
- Stop when churning, negative thoughts arise, and shift your focus to what you are currently doing

A change of habits also requires planning, for example:

- If you want to eat more vegetables, you will need to plan your shopping trip and meals.
- If you want to be more active, you will need to plan when and how. Perhaps you will need to find a baby-sitter, make sure you have good shoes, or agree with a friend?

Below is an example of a new habit to be established.

New habit: In 6 months, I will be able to take the stairs instead of using the lift or escalator.
An **action plan** can be a useful tool for specifying what it takes to establish the new, desired habit.

Example of an action plan:

What?	Participate in <i>frisklvsresepten</i> (the Healthy Life Prescription). Take the stairs from the first to the second floor.
How much?	Physical exercise with the Healthy Life Centre twice a week. Take the stairs from one floor to the next every day.
When?	Tuesdays at 13:00 and Fridays at 13:00. Take the stairs after getting the newspaper Mondays–Fridays.
With whom?	The Healthy Life Centre, Tuesdays, and Fridays. I will take the stairs alone.
How realistic?	I have great faith that I will make this happen!
What might stop me?	Bad weather, getting visitors, feeling tired, something else feels more important, forgetting, easy to take the lift.

- What do you need to implement the action plan?
- Who can you go to for help and support?

Home assignments

1. Which sound lifestyle habits would you like to pursue?

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2. Which lifestyle habits do you currently have that can be changed?

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3. Fill in the action plan at the back of the brochure (p. 18).
Choose a habit that could favourably and realistically be changed in your life.

The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Helsenorge.no: <https://www.helsenorge.no/baredu/om/>, 13.09.21.
2. Norwegian Association for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy:
<https://tidsskrift.kognitiv.no/bruk-av-handlingsregler-i-vaneendring/>, 21.06.21.
3. Sunn Start: <https://www.sunnstartnorge.no/>, 10.08.21.

Physical activity

Physical activity is any movement generated by your muscles, causing you to consume significantly more energy than when you are resting or sleeping. Regular physical activity has a number of health benefits:

- Extra energy
- Better sleep
- Positive effects on your memory and brain
- Better mood
- Stronger body
- Increased well-being
- Reduced pain
- Better weight regulation
- Better self-image and self-confidence
- Less stress
- Less anxiety and depression
- Social fellowship and better quality of life

Physical activity can be carried out with low, moderate or high intensity. With moderate intensity, you easily get out of breath, whereas with high intensity, you breathe heavily, and your heart beats faster. Daily activities are often carried out with low and moderate intensity, while exercise is often at moderate and high intensity.

For adults, it is recommended to be physically active for at least **150 minutes per week** with moderate intensity, or **75 minutes per week** with high intensity. You can also combine moderate and high-intensity physical activity. The more physically active you are, the greater the health benefit!

It may be advantageous to divide the activities into smaller blocks; you may, for instance, achieve the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity per day by:

- Walking for 10 minutes on your way to school/work in the mornings
- Playing with your children for 10 minutes
- Doing housework for 10 minutes in the evenings

How to ensure you get enough activity? Minor changes in everyday life may be enough for many. It is easier to succeed if the activities are enjoyable and become a natural part of your daily routines.

How can you be active?

- Do housework and gardening
- Take the stairs instead of the lift or escalator
- Dance
- Walk with your children to kindergarten/school/leisure activities
- Go for walks with friends
- Walk to and from the store
- Step off the bus one or two stops before your actual stop, to force yourself to walk a little farther
- Work out at a fitness centre/at home/outside
- Play with children/grandchildren
- Participate in sports, for example soccer, cricket, basketball, handball, martial arts, dancing and gymnastics
- Participate in free activity and hiking groups in your local community.
For example, the Norwegian Trekking Association has many hiking offers locally.



Home assignments

1. Which activities do you enjoy?

2. Write down when you are active throughout the day.

3. What benefits will an increased activity level give you?

4. What activity would you like to do more of?

The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Helsenorge.no: <https://www.helsenorge.no/trening-og-fysisk-aktivitet/hva-fysisk-aktivitet-gjor-med-kroppen/> 13.09.21.
2. Sunn Start: <https://www.sunnstartnorge.no/>, 10.08.21.

Diet

The Healthy Life Centre communicates the diet recommendations defined by the Directorate of Health, based on extensive national and international research. By following this advice, you can reduce the risk of ailments such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, several types of cancer, osteoporosis, tooth decay, excess weight and obesity.

Eat/drink MORE of this:

- Vegetables, fruit and berries
- Coarse bread/crispbread/flour/grain
- Lean dairy products
- Oils and soft margarine (mind the amount)
- Fish and fish products
- Drink water!

Eat/drink LESS of this:

- Sugar, cakes and candy
- White bread/crispbread/flour
- Fatty dairy products
- Butter
- Red meat and meat products
- Tea with sugar, soda and sugary juices
- Salt and foods high in salt
- Alcohol

You need to find a **meal rhythm** that suits you, be it three main meals with one to two snacks, or four main meals with a small snack. Regular and varied meals are an important part of a healthy diet. If you eat many different foods, you are more likely to get all of the nutrients your body needs.

Following the **Healthy Plate Model** can make it easier for you to eat healthy and varied meals. According to the healthy plate model, the plate is divided into three equal parts. For dinner, the plate can, for example, be composed as follows:



- 1/3 vegetables
- 1/3 boiled potatoes, wholegrain rice/barley rice or wholegrain pasta
- 1/3 fish, meat or vegetarian

The Healthy Plate Model
Photo credit: Aina Hole/
the Directorate of Health

The model can also be used for the other daily meals, including the bread meal. Mind the size of your portions, so you do not eat too much.

To enable a healthy diet, it is important to buy healthy food. We can **reduce the amount of money we spend on food** by planning purchases, sticking to the shopping list, paying attention to discounts on healthy food and avoiding shopping when hungry. Many healthy food habits are inexpensive, such as: beans, lentils, peas, root vegetables, onion, leek, frozen vegetables, frozen berries, oats, some types of wholegrain crispbread and wholegrain bread, which is more filling. The **Keyhole symbol** and the **Brødskala'n** (Bread Scale) make it easier to make good choices at the store.



The **Keyhole** symbol can be found on the food packaging. Products with the Keyhole symbol contain more fibre and wholegrain and less fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt compared to other foods of the same type. Products with the Keyhole symbol from many of the grocery stores' low-cost brands are cheaper than products of a major brand.

Brødskala'n (the Bread Scale) is designed to make it easier to choose wholegrain bread at the store. It is not always easy to tell how coarse the bread is by looking at it. Brødskala'n tells consumers the percentage of wholegrain flour and whole seeds contained in a loaf of bread. In addition to the scale, the coarseness of the bread in per cent is often stated.



Home assignments

1. How can you reduce your intake of sugar from food and drinks?

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2. How can you use less fat (oil) in your cooking?

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The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Helsenorge.no:
<https://www.helsenorge.no/kosthold-og-ernaring/kostrad/helsedirektoratets-kostrad/>, 13.09.21.

Sleep and sleep difficulties



Sleep is a basic need and a vital necessity for all.

Sleep is important for many bodily functions, including maintaining and strengthening the brain, memory and immune system. In addition, your brain will use sleep to sort what happened while you were awake. If you are angry or upset, a good night's sleep may help.

The amount of sleep we need varies from person to person. Adults usually need between six and nine hours of sleep every night. The **need for sleep** builds while you are awake, and your sleep becomes deeper the longer it has been since you last slept. The amount of deep sleep matters more than how long you sleep. If you feel rested during the day, you have had enough sleep.

It is completely normal to take up to 30 minutes to fall asleep at night. It is also normal to wake up several times during the night. Not being able to sleep at night, waking up at night or waking up too early only becomes a problem if the lack of sleep affects your daily functioning. This is what we call sleep difficulties. **Sleep difficulties** are one of the most common health disorders in the population, with about one of three adults struggling with their sleep every week. Sleep difficulties have proven to have a negative impact on health and constitute a risk factor for developing mental health disorders and various pain conditions.

In the short term, little sleep may result in increased irritability, mood swings and reduced attention, concentration and memory. In the long term, lack of sleep can lead to exhaustion and depression.

Good sleep habits is about doing more of what promotes sleep and avoiding what inhibits sleep.

Here is some good advice for better sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at fixed times every day.
- Avoid sleeping during the day. Limit your after-dinner nap to a maximum of 20 minutes.
- Spend 30 minutes outdoors during the day. Daylight is important for your daily rhythm.
- Exercise is good for your sleep but should preferably not be done during the last few hours before bedtime.
- Calm your body before going to bed. Keep your bedroom cold and dark.
- Your bedroom should be a screen-free zone. Avoid screens during the last hour before bedtime.
- Do not look at the time during the night.
- Limit your intake of caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, tea, Coca Cola/Pepsi Max after 5 o'clock in the afternoon. If you are sensitive, you should not consume caffeine after 2 o'clock in the afternoon.
- If you cannot sleep, get up and do something different (do not look at a screen) until you get tired again.
- If you are kept awake by worries, you can set aside a fixed time during the day for worry thoughts.

Home assignments

1. What advice for good sleep habits do you follow?

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2. Is there anything you can change to sleep better?

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The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Helsenorge.no: <https://www.helsenorge.no/sovnproblemer/gode-rad-for-bedre-sovn/>, 13.09.21.

Mental health

Everyone has mental health. Mental health has to do with our thoughts and emotions, with our relationship to ourselves and those close to us. It also has to do with our relationship to the society we are all part of at any given time. Therefore, we could say that mental health simply has to do with how we are doing, whether we feel good about ourselves, people around us and society at large.

The WHO defines mental health as:

‘a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’.

In the same way as taking care of your body is important, it is also important to take care of your mental health. Fortunately, a great deal of what we do to take care of our bodies also has a positive effect on our mental health.

5 pieces of advice to strengthen your mental health:

1. **Build ties.** Invest time and care in the people around you. Social ties provide support, joy and happiness and enrich everyday life.
2. **Be active.** Dance, go out, play a game. Activity triggers positive emotions.
3. **Be attentive.** Use your senses, listen, see, feel, smell. This can inspire a sense of increased presence in life.
4. **Continue to learn.** Resume a hobby, repair a bicycle or old clothes, play an instrument, sign up for a course. This can inspire joy, pride, hope and confidence. Setting goals for yourself can give you a sense of accomplishment.
5. **Give.** Do something nice for others, smile to others, give a friendly comment, show gratitude, participate in volunteer work. This can strengthen ties between people and increase quality of life. Joy spreads

Who you are and the story you carry with you can influence your mental health. Your experiences can give you strength to better handle new challenges, but they can also result in difficult thoughts and emotions. Getting established in a new, foreign country can be difficult for many. Missing loved ones, insecurity related the housing situation, a new language and a new culture, as well as loss of status are only a few of the reasons why it is not always so easy to find one's place in a foreign country. Many people also carry with them stories of war, flight or other serious trauma.

Since everyone has mental health, everyone can also experience mental problems, injuries and disorders to different degrees. Some find it difficult to talk about mental problems and are concerned about the consequences this might have. In Norway, it has fortunately become more common to talk about mental unhealth, and there are good healthcare services that can help when you need it. **It may be wise to seek help when difficult emotions and thoughts take up a great deal of space in your life over time, or when they limit you in the life you want to live. A good start can be talking to your regular general practitioner about what bothers you.** Your regular general practitioner can help you find the treatment or help you need. When a person is struggling mentally, it often affects the whole family. Therefore, seeking help with mental problems will also be important for those around you.



Home assignments

1. How do you talk about mental health in your culture?

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2. What can you do to strengthen your mental health?

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The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Helsenorge.no: <https://www.helsenorge.no/psykisk-helse/> , 14.09.21.
2. Mental health: strengthening our response (who.int), 05.10.21

Pain

The information in this chapter is obtained from Pain Australia's video on pain. The video is available on YouTube and explains pain well, in many different languages. The video can be found by googling «Understanding pain in less than 5 minutes» and the language in which you would like to watch the video, for example: «Understanding pain in less than 5 minutes Arabic».

Pain is a sensory experience **produced by the brain**. Its purpose is to protect us. Pain can be felt as sharp, dull, strong or mild. Your individual pain experience is affected by a number of factors: culture, experience, life situation and how you are doing. The pain experience may, therefore, vary a great deal.

Pain that has lasted for a few weeks or months is called **acute pain** and is usually caused by tissue damage, such as a back injury or a sprained ankle. In this case, the advice is to stay as active as possible and gradually get back to a normal life. If the pain lasts for more than 3 months, we call it persistent pain.

In case of persistent pain, tissue damage is usually not the main cause since most injuries are healed by 3–6 months. Persistent pain is less about structural changes in the body and more about the sensitivity of the nervous system being changed. In addition, the way in which your brain processes pain is changed.

To reduce the experience of pain, we must look at all factors that can affect the nervous system and brain. Since there are many things that affect persistent pain, it may be wise to take a broad perspective. Using a structured approach and making a plan makes it less likely that something important will be missed.

Many people think medication and surgery are the answer. Using medication to stay active is fine, as long as the use is gradually tapered. Surgery, however, is often of no help. Rather than surgery and medication, it is more sensible to use **active approaches** to retrain the brain.

Suggested active approaches:

- Having a healthy diet, in accordance with government recommendations
- Reducing your alcohol and nicotine intake
- Staying physically active in accordance with government recommendations
- Controlling your thoughts to reduce stress and negative emotions

Thoughts and emotions are brain impulses that may impact the nervous system. Learn ways of controlling your thoughts and **reducing negative emotions**. This will calm the nervous system and reduce your pain experience.

It may be smart to think back on your personal story. This will help you make useful links between life challenges and your pain experience. Sometimes, recognizing deeper emotions can be part of the healing process.

Diet and lifestyle also play a significant role in relation to pain experience. What you eat and how you live may contribute to a sensitized nervous system. Think about which factors in your life can be improved, for example smoking, food, alcohol and activity level.

Activity level and function in daily life are important for handling pain well. Here, the trick is to start by being active at a level that is low enough, daring to use easy, comfortable body movements. Avoid worrying about the consequences of the activity. If you worry or exceed your limits, your brain will try to protect you with more pain. By gradually increasing your activity, you will be able to restore yourself slowly but surely.

To sum up:

Pain comes from the brain and can be retrained. Looking at this from a whole personal broad perspective gives you opportunities to do something about the problem. Get a helping hand if you need it, set a goal and begin.

Home assignments

1. What can trigger increased pain?

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2. What can help to reduce the pain?

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The information in this chapter is obtained from:

1. Pain Australia: «Understanding Pain What to do about it in less than five minutes»: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWMKucuejls> , 08.10.21.
2. University Hospital of North Norway: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=E9tVWoRhPKU>, 30.06.21.

Other useful information on the topic can be found by following these links:

- "Movement with pain": <https://painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au/pain-module/movement-with-pain/>
- Retrain pain foundation: <https://www.retrainpain.org/>
- TEDxAdelaide - Lorimer Moseley - Why Things Hurt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwd-wLdlHjs>
- Pain-ed: <http://www.pain-ed.com/public/patient-stories-2/>

Action plan

New habit:

What?	
How much?	
When?	
With whom?	
How realistic?	
What might stop me?	

- What do I need to implement the action plan?
- Who can I go to for help and support?

