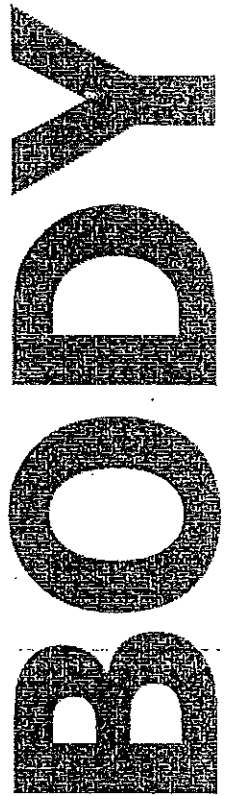


# Heads

## Up Keeping Your Brain Fit



### BRONZE

I will...

- Walk briskly at least 10 minutes a day.  
*Ideas: Once a week take a longer walk or swim/bike.*
- Try to get at least eight hours of sleep each night.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables, and less meat and processed and fried food.
- Monitor my blood pressure and weight.
- Ensure I get enough B12 and folate.

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### SILVER

I will...

- Walk briskly at least 20 minutes a day.  
*Ideas: Twice a week take a longer walk, or take an aerobic exercise class.*
- Eat cold water oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring) twice a week.
- Eat more whole grains, soy (i.e. tofu), and vegetables (preferably in a range of colours).
- Limit my sugar, salt, and alcohol intake.

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### GOLD

I will...

- Do brisk exercise 30 minutes daily.  
*Ideas: Exercise longer & more intensely three times a week.*
- Combine good exercise with socializing.  
*Ideas: Learn dance steps, play tennis or golf.*
- Stretch the body, mind and spirit with yoga, tai chi, or qi gong.
- Eat at least five servings daily of antioxidant rich fruits (i.e. prunes, blackberries, blueberries) and vegetables.

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# Heads

## Up Keeping Your Brain Fit

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### BRONZE

I will...

- Concentrate more mindfully on what I'm doing.
- Memorize three frequently-used phone numbers.
- Watch less TV.  
*Ideas: Read a book, do a crossword or sudoku, play a social game (i.e. cards).*
- Seek out new experiences.

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### SILVER

I will...

- Do some mental arithmetic every day.
- Memorize five items on a "to do" list.
- Read newspapers and stories and memorize key points.  
*Ideas: Retell the story to someone else.*
- Memorize a favourite recipe, team roster or sequence of trophy winners.

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### GOLD

I will...

- Learn a language or take an evening class.
- Memorize seven items on a "to do" list.
- Memorize a poem.  
*Ideas: Stimulate your brain with music, art, crafts, hobbies and ideas.*
- Try harder to remember names and faces, birthdays of friends, etc.

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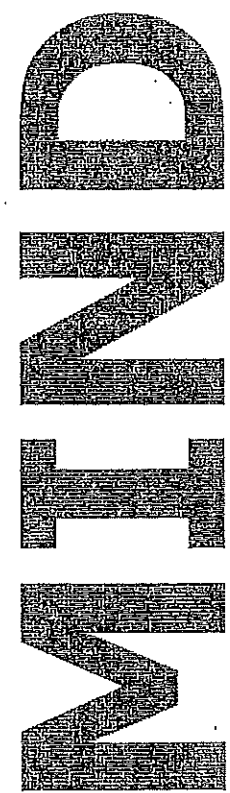
### Additional Notes

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# Heads Up Keeping Your Brain Fit

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## BRONZE

I will...

- Take steps to reduce stress in my life.
- Find ways to make my job more interesting, or change jobs.
- Seek challenges and activities that have meaning and purpose to me.
- Read spiritual writings and enjoy nature.
- Make time for prayer and/or meditation.

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## SILVER

I will...

- Meditate and/or pray at least once a week for 20 minutes.
- Read about or discuss spirituality on a regular basis.
- Maintain or develop a network of people who are supportive to me.
- Have a heart-to-heart conversation with a supportive friend regularly.

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## GOLD

I will...

- Meditate and/or pray daily for at least 20 minutes.
- Take time to consider my values and beliefs.
- Try to live in harmony with my values.
- Look for ways to support others in my community.  
*Ideas: Volunteer for a local organization.*

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*Additional Notes*

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HEADS UP

## Symptoms of Depression

Do you have any of the following symptoms...

- Depressed or irritable mood
- Lack of interest in activities and hobbies
- Change in appetite resulting in weight loss or gain
- Sleep problems, especially waking up in the morning
- Low energy or fatigue
- Low self-esteem
- Poor concentration and/or memory difficulties
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Feeling low in the morning, but feeling better as the day goes on.

If you "checked" 1 or more of these items, you might want to talk with your doctor about the possibility of depression.

## Resources

Your family doctor can provide treatment and refer to specialists and programs including:

- Community Mental Health Team in your area or The Geriatric Psychiatry Outreach Team, 604-875-4728: Provides assessment and treatment of older adults with mental health concerns.
- Changeways for Older Adults, 604-875-4728: Group cognitive-behavioural therapy for depression.
- Mood Disorders Association of BC, 604-873-0103 or [www.mdabc.ca](http://www.mdabc.ca): Self-help and support groups and information on mood disorders.
- Self-Care Depression Patient Guide. This can be downloaded for free at [www.mheccu.ubc.ca/publications](http://www.mheccu.ubc.ca/publications)
- B.C. Psychological Association, 1-800-730-0522: Provides public referral service to registered psychologists in BC

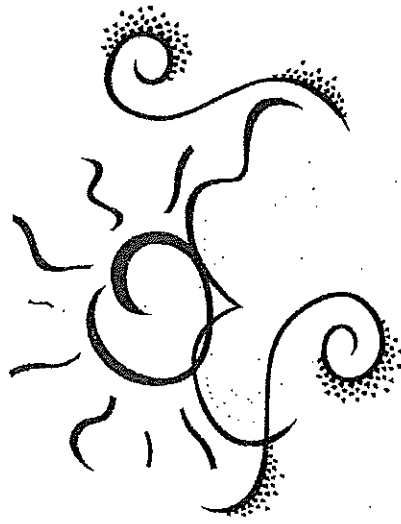
# Depression & Aging

For older adults  
and their families

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email [pthem@vch.ca](mailto:pthem@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **GT:380.D442**  
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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.  
[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

North Shore, Sea to Sky,  
Sunshine Coast, Powell River,  
Richmond and Vancouver



"I just don't feel like myself. I'm tired all the time and I don't have much appetite. I've stopped meeting friends for lunch, and I'm becoming increasingly forgetful. What's wrong with me?!"

Doris Age 70

Everyone feels down from time-to-time. When these feelings start to interfere with your ability to function, you might be experiencing symptoms of depression. Depression affects your mood, your ability to think clearly and your physical well-being.

## Antidepressant Medication

1. Your doctor may suggest taking antidepressants to rebalance the neurochemicals in your brain that contribute to depression.
2. Antidepressants should be taken exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
3. Antidepressants take 4-6 weeks (of the right dose) to work.
4. Always tell your doctor about side effects. Adjustments can be made to minimize the side effects and maximize the effect of the drug.
5. Antidepressants improve sleep, appetite, energy, concentration, and mood.
6. You should continue taking your medication for at least 6-12 months **after** you feel better. This will help prevent a relapse.

## Depression and Self-Care

Here are some other things you can do to help improve your mood and prevent relapse:

1. **Stay physically active.** Work with your doctor to create an exercise plan. This might include walking or other enjoyable activities.
2. **Nutrition.** Food is the most obvious source of energy. It's important to eat regular meals, even if you aren't hungry. If you have a tendency to over-eat, watch your sugar intake and avoid "fad-diets."
3. **Make time for pleasurable activities.** People who are depressed often drop the activities that they enjoy because they just don't have the energy! But these activities are important to your mood!
4. **Spend time with supportive people.** Withdrawing from others is a common symptom of depression. Family and friends are especially important when you are feeling low.
5. **Work toward change.** Identify the changes you would like to make in your life. Break these goals down into small, achievable action items. Remember, start with small steps.

# Depression vs. Dementia

Mental decline is relatively rapid.	Mental decline happens slowly.
Knows the correct time, date, and where he or she is.	Confused and disoriented, becomes lost in familiar locations.
Language and motor skills are slow, but normal.	Writing, speaking, and motor skills are impaired.
Notices or worries about memory problems.	Doesn't notice memory problems or seem to care.