

NWAC Diabetes Action Plan Supplement: Individual Application

This supplement was created to assist the individual person in implementing the NWAC Diabetes Action Plan. As each person's health care needs and situations vary, the following is designed to guide the individual in identifying what their personal action plan. Developing and designing an Action Plan requires careful thought to ensure that it supports the individual person's lifestyle, and evolves as that person moves through life. Diabetes is a disease that requires constant care and monitoring. A personal plan will help in maintaining good overall health status and diabetic care.

This supplement includes three steps to an Action Plan:

- **Personal Plan:** *Knowing yourself, your lifestyle patterns, needs and wants*
- **Strategic Approach:** *Knowing your medical needs and support sources*
- **Wholistic Application:** *Knowing yourself and how to include this in your action plan*

Personal Action Plan

As with all things in life, having a personal plan helps to ensure that we meet our goals, ambitions, needs and wants. Naturally, a personal plan should revolve around our lifestyle patterns, and yet be flexible enough to incorporate changes in lifestyle patterns as you progress in your action plan. For example, a person may normally walk her dog once during the day, but after developing her action plan may wish to incorporate a weekly nature walk with her children, thereby extending her walking and adding a wholistic approach by taking advantage of the outing to talk about medicinal uses of plants or teach her children about the animals and ecosystems of the forest.

The personal plan is all about the individual. It is a plan for life that respects the individual, grows with them and ensures a health-balanced approach to diabetes management. This plan does not need to be complicated and should in fact be simple enough to explain in a few short sentences. It should be based in reality and be developed in part with the assistance of your health care provider.

How do we start designing a personal action plan to address our diabetic needs?

- Start listing your likes and dislike's in one column. In a second column list how this effects or impacts upon your diabetes. In a third column, list what action, if any can be implemented to address the item. Ask your health care professional for assistance if necessary.
- Examine these columns and think about your lifestyle, both past and present. On another piece of paper, list the past in one column and the present in a second column (ensure that related

topics are beside each other). In a third column, list a potential lifestyle change that you may wish to work towards, if applicable.

Strategic Approach

Many strategists will agree that a plan without an appropriate approach is like a car without the gas. Naturally, your action plan requires a strategic approach, after all what good is the car without gas? Now, the thought of incorporating a strategic approach may sound intimidating, but it's fairly straight forward – in fact, we all do it on a daily basis. So, what is a strategic approach? It is the way in which we go about educating ourselves in order to make an informed decision. For example, before going out for the day, we check the weather report and dress accordingly; remembering to take our umbrella's if there is a 60% chance of showers. Simply put, a strategic approach is the information and the support systems, the medical care, and the community infrastructure you need to make an informed decision.

How to develop a strategic approach to your personal action plan?

- Identify your information needs. List these needs in one column, in the second column list where and how you can gain access to this information, in the third column list how you will use this information. Ask your health care professional for assistance, they can provide this information or direct you to sources.
- Identify your support needs. Be honest with yourself, and include supports for your family and friends. List in one column what your support needs are. In the second column list how this support need can be addressed. In a third column list what your plan to meet this need. Ask for assistance, your family and friends would gladly provide feedback and may have been waiting for you to ask them. Remember, our support needs can vary depending on our circumstances and will change often, keep this in mind and update as required.
- Identify your medical care needs. Your health care professional is your best source of advice and direction. In one column list your medical care needs, in the second column list your doctor's advice. In a third column, list how you are meeting your health care needs.
- Identify community infrastructure needs. In preparing your strategic approach, you may have identified what community infrastructure needs you have, list these needs in one column. In a second column, identify the source and address for fulfilling this need. In a third column, identify your goals to implement community infrastructure needs into your personal action plan.

Wholistic Application

The final stage to developing and designing your action plan is a very personal one, and will vary from person to person. What works for one individual may be quite foreign to another. Look back at the sections on your personal action plan and strategic approach. At this point, you may be asking, "now what?" and "what is a wholistic application?"

To better answer these questions, let us imagine the action plan as a car (the body) and the strategic approach as the gas (the energy). We wish to move forward, in this case, to better address and live with diabetes and maintain good health. To put this in perspective, we now have the car and the gas, yet are lacking the “map”. The map referring to the will to move forward, the element that gets us from here to there, it is the source of strength that is us, the guide. To each our own, we know what this is. In this action plan, we call it the wholistic application.

During the development of the NWAC diabetes action plan, Aboriginal women from across Canada identified the need to include culturally appropriate mechanisms to guide Aboriginal women. For some this includes the application of the medicine wheel teachings, for others it is religion, and still for others it is something else. Regardless of the “type” of wholistic application, it has been identified as being fundamental to the overall health status of Aboriginal women dealing with this debilitating disease.

To make this section applicable to all Nations across the country, we provide some cues for you to make your own determination as to what is important to you. For some, this may be a return to cultural and traditional practices, for some it is incorporating the medicine wheel teachings throughout the action plan, for others it is the application of a state of mind. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to do this, what is important is capturing beliefs, mind process, and foundational elements. It is the part that identifies us as who we are, and takes us to where we need to be. It is being respectful to ourselves and implementing this into our action plan.

- Similar to the previous exercises, list in three columns. The first column should list the topic, the second column should list how this topic relates to your action plan and strategic approach, and the third column should list how you will implement or include this topic.

Your Personal Diabetes Action Plan

Once you have gone through the three stages, re-evaluate each area, adding to or deleting if necessary. This is a process that will constantly evolve, changing as you change, adapting as you adapt, and growing as you grow. It is an entity that is part of you. Your personal action plan is developed and designed by you and includes the input of your family, friends and health care professionals.

Your personal diabetes action plan is your framework for healthy living. It is also a healthy living framework that family and friends can easily follow and incorporate without drastic changes. It is one that can enrich your life and the lives of family and friends. Diabetes is not a life sentence; it is an opportunity for positive change.