



Healthy Directions /

Buddies for Health

Welcome to Buddies for Health!

If you were given this packet, it means that someone you know is taking part in Healthy Directions and has asked for your help. Your role as a buddy is very important! Your support will help your friend change their health habits and stay healthy. Thank you for agreeing to be a buddy and making use of the buddy system!

About Healthy Directions

Healthy Directions recommends that people:

- Walk 10,000 or more steps each day.
- Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat no more than 3 servings of red meat a week.
- Take a multivitamin every day.
- Do not smoke.

It is easier for people to make healthy changes if they have **help and support**. It's great that you've been asked to help your friend make changes! This brochure will explain just how to do that. Plus, you'll get to have some fun along the way. You may even decide that you'd like to make your own health changes. We have included information that might help you, too!

Your friend is in a program that helps them to make important health changes. Some of the parts of this program include:

Planning Health Changes

The “Plan My Changes” booklets can help your friend pick health goals, think about what can help them get there, and make a plan that’s just right for them. It also has information to help them learn how to overcome things that might get in the way.

→ **Hint:** Remind your friend of their plan and help them meet challenges!

Tracking Health Changes

The “Track My Changes” package includes weekly logs and a long-term graph. This lets your friend keep track of healthy habits every day and see progress over time. People who track their progress do better with making changes!

→ **Hint:** Ask your friend to see their “Track My Progress” graph. Cheer on their hard work!

Healthy Tips

No matter which health habits your friend is working on, we’ve got tips to help them out! We also have ideas for changes they can make today, this week, or this month.

← **Hint:** If your friend needs quick tips or hits a stumbling block, point them to the Healthy Tips!

Your friend also has Healthy Directions Recipes for Health, a collection of healthy and delicious meal ideas. There are even Healthy Directions Resources, which will help your friend learn about walking clubs, gyms, farmers’ markets, and more! Your friend will also be able to take part in the monthly Healthy Directions Raffle to win great prizes.

Getting Help from a Buddy:

Jackie and her Buddy Tricia

When I started Healthy Directions, I learned that it's easier to make health changes when you have help from a buddy. I thought of Tricia right away! We've been through a lot together, and she's always been great when I've wanted to make other changes. So I asked her, and she said yes!

We walk together a few times a week, which is so great. I get to blow off stress and talk to my friend while I get some exercise! Tricia and I also got some awesome recipes from the site, so I could get more fruits and vegetables in my diet. And she's right there to help with my quitting smoking. I've tried to do that more times than I can count, but I think having someone to cheer me on will make all the difference this time.

Tricia's been really great about checking in with me. We talk about how I'm doing once a week, during one of our walks. She doesn't nag me or check in more than she's supposed to—but she's usually around if I call her for a little extra support now and then! I really feel happy that Tricia's here to help me with my goals. Having her encouragement really makes them feel like they're in my reach.

—Jackie S., Boston

Helping a Friend:

Tricia—Jackie's Buddy

My friend Jackie wanted to make some healthy changes. So when her doctor asked her to take part in Healthy Directions, the timing was perfect! She decided to get more physical activity, eat more fruits and vegetables, and stop smoking.

We decided to start walking together 3 times a week, and it's going great! We meet up after work and walk for 20 minutes—or sometimes more.

Healthy Directions says that it's easier to change more than one health habit at a time, so we also took on Jackie's eating habits. She decided to eat more fruits and vegetables. We printed out some recipes from the site, and she's already made a few for her family.

Jackie's smoked for as long as I've known her—and for as long as I've known her, she's talked about quitting or tried to quit! She visited the Quitworks web site and she's now working toward becoming a nonsmoker. For my part, I'm keeping her busy with our walks.

Some days are tough for Jackie, but she knows she can count on me. I tell her not to give up, and I make sure she thinks about how far she's come!

I check in once a week with Jackie to see how she's doing. Sometimes she wants to check in more often. When we talk, I tell her that I believe in her, and that I know she can do it. It's great being Jackie's buddy!

—Tricia L., Boston

Why is it important for me to help?

Studies show that it's easier to stick with healthy habits when you get help from friends and family. So your role as a Healthy Directions buddy is very important! You can help your friend by doing things like:

- cheering them on as they start to make changes
- asking them what you can do to help
- checking in with them at least once a week to see how they're doing
- encouraging them if they are feeling down about their progress

We've got lots of helpful hints for how to be a great buddy. Don't worry if your own health habits aren't perfect, or if you've never done this before. It's all about being there for your friend and working with them to see what helps.

Visit Buddies.TrackMyChanges.org for even more info!

Getting Started: How can I help?

You're ready to help your friend make healthy changes. Now how do you begin? A great place to start is with these four tips:

1. **Ask** your friend what their specific goals are. Remember that Healthy Directions recommends very specific goals for healthy habits—not things like “try to eat better” or “exercise more.”
2. **Talk** with your friend about the specific things you can do to help make these goals real.
3. **Tell** your friend that you'd like to check in with them once a week. (And encourage them to check in with you more often if that's better!)
4. **Encourage** your friend if they are struggling with making changes. It's not always easy, and encouraging them not to give up can make all the difference. Also, remind your friend of the progress they have made!

What can I ask?

Ask your friend what specific things they want to change. Healthy Directions encourages people to change as many habits as they can. If your friend has more than one on the list, it's a good thing! Do they want to:

- get more physical activity?
- eat more fruits and vegetables?
- eat less red meat?
- take multivitamins?
- quit smoking?

Visit Buddies.TrackMyChanges.org
for even more info!

Ask your friend why they picked you—is there something special about you that makes you a good buddy? Find out, and use those things as you offer help.

Ask your friend if there are specific things that you can do to help them make these health changes. Here are some good questions to get you started:

- What do you think would be helpful?
For example, *"Would it help if I print out recipes for you that have lots of fruits and vegetables?"*
- What specific things can I do to help you reach your goals?
For example: *"Can I watch your kids so you can have time to exercise?"*

- Are there specific things that I shouldn't do?
For example: *"If I see that you're eating more red meat than you should, is it better for me to wait until you're ready to talk about it?"*

Ask your friend how you can help if they run into problems or are getting discouraged. Are there specific things they would like you to say or do that would help?

What can I do?

Encourage your friend by offering rewards. You could offer to cook a healthy dinner once a month to congratulate them on their progress!

Offer very specific help as they try to meet their goals. Here are some examples for each of the Healthy Directions health habits.

Does your friend want to:

...eat more fruits and vegetables?

- Bring fresh fruit or vegetables when you visit, and eat them together!

...get more physical activity?

- Set up walking dates with your friend or join a walking club together. Your friend has a list of these clubs in the Resources section of their materials.
- If your friend has children, offer to watch them so he or she can get out for some exercise.

...eat less red meat?

- Cook a meat-free meal together this weekend—your friend has lots of yummy recipes in their Recipes for Health!

...take multivitamins?

- Buy a bottle of multivitamins for your friend the next time there is a “Buy one, get one free” sale at the drugstore!

...quit smoking?

- Encourage your friend to access *Quitworks*, the free Massachusetts quit-smoking program that’s recommended by Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates. The program has a web site and toll-free number with information about medications, tips for quitting, success stories, which insurance plans cover quit-smoking medications, and much more. On the web site, there is a Quit Wizard that can even help your friend create their own quit-smoking plan.

A Brother Buddy: Tom from West Roxbury

I signed up for Healthy Directions, but I was kind of worried about how I was going to do it. I really wanted to get more physical activity and eat less red meat.

I’ve tried to make health changes before, but I’d never asked anyone for help. This time I asked my brother to help me. He lives in the same town as I do, and we’re really close. We started by joining the Y together, and now we work out a couple of nights a week. It’s harder to blow off exercising when you know someone is waiting for you. So far, it’s going really well. We might add another night soon if we can. I like the way I feel after I exercise, so I hope it works out.

Eating less red meat is a little harder—I love fast-food burgers. And if I go out for a nice dinner, it’s steak all the way. My brother is helping me with that, too. If we stop someplace for a fast lunch on the weekend, he’ll remind me to look at the menu and try to find things other than a burger. He doesn’t give me a hard time, he just reminds me to try and keep my goals in mind.

I’m really glad that I asked him for help. It feels good to know that someone else is thinking about what I’m doing—like it’s not all on me. He’s looking out for me and wants to help me feel healthier.

—Tom A., West Roxbury

What can I say or do if my friend hits a stumbling block?

Even when people are excited and ready to make changes, it's easy to come up against stumbling blocks. If your friend is feeling down about their progress, offer to take a walk with them and talk about ways to get them back on track. You can:

Encourage your friend to think about everything they've done so far. Remind them that it's not easy to make health changes, and that everyone hits stumbling blocks. Say positive things, like:

"I know you can do it!"

"Don't give up!"

"You can get back on track—and I can help you."

Remind them that they are not alone! They have the Healthy Directions materials and resources, and YOU to count on.

Offer very specific suggestions that will help your friend overcome stumbling blocks. Here are some examples for each of the Healthy Directions health habits.

Does your friend:

...have no time to make healthy dishes that have fruits and vegetables?

- Suggest that they buy prepared vegetables (like baby carrots) that they can easily grab for a snack.
- Go to a nearby farmer's market together—see the list in the Resource section of their materials. Buy vegetables and make some

dishes together. (Frozen vegetables are as good as fresh ones—so hit the grocery store together if you can't get to a farmer's market!)

...have a hard time getting more physical activity?

- Ask your friend to walk with you a few days a week. It's a great way to unwind and talk about your day.
- Form a walking club with a group of friends and family members.
- Offer to help check out programs at the local YMCA or community center.

...have no ideas for dishes that don't include red meat?

- Remind your friend to use their Recipes for Health for delicious, meat-free recipes.
- Cook meat-free recipes together, or offer to cook a meal for them.

...forget to take their multivitamin?

- Recommend that they take their multivitamin at the same time every day.
- Suggest that they put their multivitamins in a place that they will see each day.

...live with a smoker or have friends or co-workers who smoke?

- Talk with the smokers you know and try to work something out. Ask them to limit their smoking to one area, or to smoke outside, away from your friend who is trying to quit.
- Ask the smokers that they empty ashtrays and not leave cigarettes, lighters, or matches around.

What should I NOT say or do?

As you help your friend make healthy changes, remember that some kinds of advice aren't helpful! Here are some things you shouldn't say or do:

1. Don't be critical! Never say things like, "I knew you wouldn't be able to do this." If things are tough for your friend, say things like:

"You are trying really hard, and I know this isn't easy."

"Remind yourself of what you've done so far!"

"I'm totally behind you, and I believe you can do it!"

2. Don't encourage "all-or-nothing" thinking. Some people feel that if they can't do something 100% right away, then they will never do it. Does this sound like your friend? Remind them that no one can change everything overnight, and that lots of small changes equal a big change. Suggest that they use their Healthy Directions "My Plan" to break big changes into small steps. Encourage them to track their health changes each day, and ask them to look for patterns in their tracking graphs.

3. Don't lose touch! Show your support regularly by doing things like:

- checking in with them at least once a week to see how they are doing
- reminding them that they are not alone and that they can check in with you any time
- encouraging them to track their habits daily with Healthy Directions

4. Don't nag. Check in with your friend, but don't be a pest. Remind them that they are making these changes for the long haul, so you will be keeping up the support. Explain that you aren't there to nag, but to offer encouragement as they make health changes.

Visit Buddies.TrackMyChanges.org for even more info!



What about my health?

Now that you're helping your friend change health habits, maybe you've been thinking about making changes yourself! You can use the tools on Buddies.TrackMyChanges.org to join your friend in making healthy changes.

Start by answering these 5 questions:

1. Do you get at least 10,000 steps a day, or an equal amount of moderate- or vigorous-intensity physical activity?
2. Do you eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day?
3. Do you eat no more than 3 servings of red meat a week?
4. Do you take a multivitamin each day?
5. Are you a nonsmoker?

If you have fewer than 5 "yes" answers, you can use activities and materials from Healthy Directions to make your own healthy changes! If you have 5 "yes" answers, congratulations; Healthy Directions can help you keep this up!

Start by:

Using the "Buddies For Health" web site at Buddies.TrackMyChanges.org

