



Why do Americans have trouble being healthy?

Some don't pay attention to taking care of their bodies. Some don't know enough about health to make healthy choices. Some feel that they do not have the time, energy, or money.

How can we help persons with IDD take care of their own health?

1. Teach them and use Healthy Habits tools.
2. Plan for the unusual days when daily habits don't work.
3. Provide the right level of caregiver support to help.

- Persons with IDD are sometimes less tuned to their own body signals. Examples of signals include feeling tired, thirsty, or hungry. A full bladder or rectal stretch is a signal that sends us to the bathroom. Some don't notice when toenails are too long, or body odor needs a shower. Eating too fast or not chewing bites enough to swallow safely are other concerns. It can be hard to pick correct clothes for the weather.
- There are basic rules of self-care that can be taught as simple and concrete rules. Health goals can include healthy eating and hydrating, keeping fit with enough physical activity, and bathing, toileting and sleeping well.
- Some persons with IDD have not had good health education or life examples of healthy habits. Once a person decides they want to work on using rules, they often need practice to turn new rules into habits. Because each person with IDD is a unique individual, the [Healthy Habit Template](#) can be used to personalize their own daily rules.
- Persons with ID may want and need help with their health. Encourage independence balanced with the right help when its needed. A person may need help daily or on unusual days. Unusual days might be times like vacation days or when the person is feeling sick. Use the [Healthy Habits Action Plan](#) to work on building habits.

My Health Goals

- I want to eat healthy foods and portions and drink enough fluids every day.
- I want to keep my body clean (washing up regularly) and active (exercising at least 3 times a week).
- I want to take care of my body needs, going to the bathroom regularly.
- I want to get enough sleep to be well rested every day (7-9 hours).

[Healthy Habits](#) is a project to support good health for persons with IDD and their caregivers. Follow these steps:

1. Fill out the "Healthy Habits" worksheet. Ask for advice from a health professional.
2. Begin to use the Healthy Habits rules to start and practice at home. Teach and learn together. Set good examples. Make small changes over time to build skills step by step.
3. Watch for life changes and unusual days and support with adjustments to the rules when you need them. Ask your health professional for help as needed.

