

First Step: Healthy Lifestyle / Weight Management

Program Offerings

First Step is delivered in 3 formats: Small Group, Individual Weight Management Counselling and Maintenance.

Small Group

Format:

- 8 – 10 people
- Weigh-In + Self-Monitored BP Weekly
- Weekly Meetings for Support + Accountability, consisting of round circle sharing [challenges / successes / insights] and a topic relevant to weight management + healthy living.
- Meetings include educational components, practical exercises, paired / group sharing, tips + suggestions geared specifically to the individuals involved.
- There are occasional multi-disciplinary guest speakers: dietitian, nurse educator, psychotherapist / social worker, certified fitness instructors, etc.
- Some sample Meeting Topics: Restaurant Eating, Socializing Challenges, Emotional Eating, Resistance Training, Lifetime Change, Healthy Thinking, Stress Management / Reduction / Exercises, Spirituality + Health, etc.
- Each session has a unique theme and there are incentives for goals achieved.
- Group sessions are facilitated by a professionally trained counsellor with over 20 years experience in weight management, group and individual counselling

Timing:

- Two sessions per year: Mid-Oct. – Mid.-Jan. + Mid. Apr. – Mid June. Approximately 12 weeks each session.
- There are two groups per session:
Tuesday Day: 11:30 – 2:00 p.m.
Tuesday Night: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Members may miss up to 2 meetings with a valid reason.
- To ensure continuity, no one may join after the 2nd week.
- Current members may register for subsequent sessions.
- Remaining spaces may be filled by suitable applicants with medical referrals from within our catchment area.
- Members who have come through the program previously are welcome to rejoin a “Booster Session” for extra accountability / support as needed.

Who:

- This program is designed for people who:
 - Feel more comfortable in a smaller group
 - Need extra support + accountability

- Have been through a previous session of First Step and are returning for a “Booster Session” to re-enforce healthy behaviours
- Acceptance Into Group Will Be Dependent On
 - A Medical Referral
 - Patients are accepted from GBA CHC Health Providers first.
 - Remaining spaces are filled by residents from within GBA CHC Catchment Area who have a Medical Referral from their Health Provider.
 - Readiness + Willingness to Change
 - Commitment to Meetings + Implementation of Health Goals
 - Suitability for Small Group Work including:
 - Personal Insight + Application of that Insight
 - Ability To Give + Receive Support
 - Willingness to Share At More Than A Superficial Level
 - Compatibility With Other Group Members
 - Agreement with the Philosophy of First Step
- This program is not suitable for everyone.
It is not appropriate for persons with eating disorders, children or adolescents.
- Suitability for entry into First Step is at the discretion of the counsellor and is dependent upon the establishment of a therapeutic relationship between the client and counsellor.
- If sessions are full, suitable candidates will be offered Individual Counselling and put on a waiting list until a space becomes available.

Cost:

There is a nominal fee for the group sessions to ensure commitment and to cover group incentives. If there are financial constraints, this fee is waived.

Individual Counselling

- For persons not deemed suitable for small group work.
- For those not compatible with participants in the current group.
- For persons not comfortable in a small group.
- For those with scheduling conflicts or unable to commit to meetings.
- For patients who have been referred after a session start up and are too late to join the current group.
- For accountability + support of First Step members between Group Sessions. [Mid Jan. – Mid. Apr.; Mid June – Mid Oct.]
- Phone + E-mail support, as needed.

Maintenance

- Regularly scheduled individual weight management counselling to provide accountability, support and re-enforce health habits for those who have met their weight / health goals; or those who would like to maintain their current weight before progressing on to further weight reduction.
- Frequency of Weigh Ins will be decided individually but are usually monthly or bi-monthly.

- Phone + E-mail support is available as needed.

First Step: Healthy Lifestyle / Weight Management Program

Background Information

Purpose:

- To develop and re-enforce healthier lifestyle habits within individuals, their families and extended families.
- To deal with the underlying issues of why people overeat.
- To promote general overall health + strengthen connections within the community.
- To listen + respect one's body + spirit through:
 - Nutritious Eating: Learn about the 90% / 10% Guideline + enjoy your favourite foods as part of a healthy eating plan
 - Identifying the Difference Between Hunger + Appetite
 - Mindfulness + Portion Control
 - A More Active Lifestyle + Exercises that result in ↓ body fat + ↑ muscle
 - Identification + Management of Emotional Eating
 - Recognition of Cognitive Distortions + Reframing with Healthy Thought Patterns
 - Stress Reduction / Life Balance
 - Cultivating Support + Accountability
 - Recognizing and Feeding One's Inner Self
 - Devising an individualized program based on healthy habits that can be sustained as a lifestyle change
- Weight reduction is a secondary benefit of practicing the above behaviours.
- Weight Goal: decrease 5 – 10% of body weight [an identified health benefit providing reduced risk for hypertension, cholesterol, diabetes + other diseases].
 - For persons unable to reduce body weight, the goal is to prevent further weight gain.
- To maintain any weight reductions as a permanent lifestyle change. This program is consistent with the goals of:
 - The Ontario Government's Healthy Weights / Healthy Lives Initiative
 - Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living
 - The Canadian Population Health Initiative - Improving the Health of Canadians: Promoting Healthy Weights
 - The National Institutes of Health: The Practical Guide – Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults
 - Health Canada Guidelines

Entry:

- By Medical Referral through the patient's own Health Provider [Family Physician or Nurse Practitioner]
 - Patients can download the Medical Referral form from this website for their Health Provider. [Note: Non GBA CHC physicians may charge to have these forms filled in. Such fees would be the responsibility of the applicant.]
- Once a patient has seen their health provider and the Medical Referral Form has been completed, it is the patient's responsibility to contact the Counsellor to arrange for an Individual Assessment.

The Individual Assessment is approximately 3 hours long. It is a comprehensive and individualized structured meeting that is designed to most effectively meet the health goals of the patient referred and determine suitability for the First Step program. It includes:

- Advisement of Confidentiality and Release of Information rights in light of the Government of Ontario's Privacy Legislation
- A psycho-social history to enable person centred care and provide maximum support
- An understanding of the applicants values + beliefs; motivation for making changes; current support systems + financial status - all of which impact final outcomes
- Dieting History
- Reasons for Overweight / Obesity [Client stated + Counsellor Observed]
- Sharing of current lifestyle habits + changes client is willing to make
- Setting Health Goals: Weight, Behaviour, Activity, Spiritual
- A sharing of educational information + practical tools geared to the needs of the individual, as well as tips + suggestions for achieving stated health goals
- A detailed Plan of Action for achieving health goals
- At the conclusion of the Individual Assessment, options regarding treatment will be discussed.
- A Consult Note will be sent to the referring Health Care Provider following the Individual Assessment and will include a copy of the Patient's Health Goals + Tip / Suggestion Sheet.
- For persons accepted into the program, their Health Providers will be updated at regular intervals regarding the progress of their patients.

Food + Exercise Plans

- As recommended by the patient's primary health care provider
- Dietitian referrals are to be arranged by the patient's primary health care provider and any specialized food plans must be brought to the Individual Assessment.
- Patients not requiring specialized food plans will be instructed in healthy eating guidelines as outlined by Health Canada, Canada's Food Guide, and the World Health Organization [WHO]

Tenants of Therapy:

- A 'person centred' model of health care that recognizes the whole person: physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual + spiritual.
- A recognition that individuals are part of families and social networks, and encourages healthy behaviours that everyone can benefit from.
- Individuals take ownership + responsibility for the setting of + implementation of their health goals.
- A Multi-Disciplinary team is utilized to help individuals achieve their goals.
- Customized Counselling / Coaching / Support, which is geared to the specific challenges / needs of each individual.
- One on one weight management counselling / support / coaching via e-mail and / or phone between meetings, interim sessions, and as part of the Maintenance component on an as needed basis.
- Small Group Support / Therapy [for those clients interested + deemed suitable].
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Values Clarification
- Educational Components
- Meditation / Visualization / Guided Imagery
- Relaxation / Stress Reduction Techniques
- Utilization of internal GBA CHC programs as part of an integrated therapy plan: Exercise, Chronic Pain, other Support Groups as applicable to the individual
- Social Work / Psychotherapy referrals are made as deemed appropriate

Change Indicators Monitored

- Weight
- Body Mass Index [BMI]
- Waist Circumference
- Bio-Impedance Analysis [BIA] Testing - Measures Body Fat, Muscle, etc. This testing enforces healthy lifestyle habits and ensures patients are losing weight in a safe, healthy manner.
- Blood Pressure
- Stress Reduction Techniques
- Eating / Activity / 'Feeding My Soul' Behaviours – Tracking Tools Provided
- Self-Reported Changes: in medical conditions, medications, medical tests, etc.

Counsellor Qualifications

- 20 + Years Counselling in Weight Management
 - Developer / Facilitator First Step Program, GBA CHC x 5 years
 - Weight Management - WALMAR, Southern Ontario Franchise of Weight Watchers as Regional Manager, Program Developer, Trainer, Leader
 - Specialized training in Motivational Psychology, Relaxation Therapies

- Professional Continuing Education in Obesity Related Issues
 - Parish Ministry / Hospital Chaplaincy
- **Clinical Pastoral Education:**
Supervised postgraduate counselling training in a hospital setting.
- Professional Career Focused On:
 - Working with Multi-Disciplinary Teams
 - Creating and implementing small group motivational / educational modules
 - Facilitating / teaching / motivating groups
 - Person Centred Counselling
- Masters of Divinity from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary with courses taken in conjunction with the School of Social Work, Wilfred Laurier University
- B.A. in Religion + Culture: Courses focused on Psychology, Sociology, World Religions, Cultural Values + Beliefs