

Consider Health Coaching

You really respect your primary care physician, but doctors' visits are getting shorter, so it can be hard to ask all of your questions or really partner with your doctor to get healthier. Many people have turned to books, magazines, television, radio and/or the Internet to supplement their doctors' visits. However, more health information does not always correlate with better health.

With so much information out there, how do you know what is right for you? This question becomes very important when you consider that many people often rely on information they have researched themselves to learn about illnesses or make decisions about care and treatment—sometimes for very serious conditions.



Many individuals turn to health coaches to help them interpret health information. Healthways health coaches are licensed health care professionals—dietitians, exercise physiologists, psychologists and registered nurses—with the knowledge and expertise to help you live a more vital life.

How Coaching Works

HealthFlex coaching is provided over the phone. During scheduled appointments, participants and coaches identify areas for improvement and discuss strategies to help achieve goals that have been identified.



For example, a nutrition risk-reduction program participant might discuss his or her eating habits with a coach, identify ways to eat healthier and set a goal for the next month, such as eating five different vegetables every week. Over the next month, the participant would keep track of his or her vegetable intake, reporting successes or failures to the coach at the next appointment.

Heart disease management program participants might discuss medications with a registered nurse to ensure all directions, limitations and side effects are understood; share obstacles, such as difficulty remembering to take medications, and learn strategies to overcoming these obstacles and/or talk about lifestyle changes that may lessen problems, such as starting a heart-healthy eating program. For example,

goals might include adding more vegetables to the diet and reducing sodium intake. Over the next month, the participant would keep track of what he or she ate in a food diary and report to the nurse coach at the next appointment.

Coaching is nonjudgmental. If participants fail to meet their goals, coaches help work through challenges to those goals or help them set different goals that they might be better able to achieve. The coaches work for you—motivating and supporting you, working toward your health goals.

Maximizing Your Coaching Experience

- **Schedule time for your appointments.** Just as you schedule appointments with your doctor or dentist, write your appointments with your health coach on your calendar and keep them. Make it a priority to talk with your coach on schedule so you can review successes and overcome challenges.
- **Set realistic goals.** Goal setting is most useful when the goals are “SMART”—specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-sensitive. Make sure your goals are meaningful to you, clear (so you know if you have met them or not) and time sensitive. If you set a date by which you will have met your goals, you may be less likely put them off until tomorrow!
- **Start with a good attitude.** A positive attitude is a better predictor of success than a negative or doubtful one. Don't think of your coach as someone with whom you have to work. Think of your coach as a friend and a valuable resource for helping you become healthier.



Confidentiality and Costs

While paying a health coach can be a pricey, but worthwhile endeavor— HealthFlex offers health coaching to participants **free of charge** as part of the health plan. Helping participants improve their health protects the most valuable resource of all—you.

Confidentiality is important and legally required of health coaches. Coaches cannot tell others if you are using their services. Additionally, information shared in the coaching session is protected health information under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act. This information is **never shared** with your HealthFlex plan sponsor.

