Tips to Prevent Relapse

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health

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What is relapse?

Relapse means that the symptoms you had before being treated have come back or gotten worse. It can also mean you are not able to do as many of your everyday activities. Relapse is common for people who have a mental illness or a substance use disorder. It is even more common for people who have both.

The best time to plan for a possible relapse is when symptoms are controlled.

> **Relapse does not mean failure. Relapse is a chance to learn how to better manage your illness.**

What can I do to help prevent relapse?

- Develop healthy lifestyle habits, like getting enough sleep and eating well-balanced meals.
- Limit alcohol and drug use.
- Plan your day so that it has structure (a schedule). Stay active, but also make time for rest.
- Find meaning by doing hobbies, sports, or other activities you enjoy.
- Pay attention to your mental health. Talk to your family and friends about how you are feeling. Tell them how they can help you.
- Take your medication(s) as prescribed by your doctor.
- Identify stressors (triggers) that may lead to a relapse.
- Learn ways to manage situations, people, and things that trigger you.
- Identify your pattern of relapse in the order it tends to happen, including early warning signs.
- If you do not have a Relapse Prevention Plan, develop one with your health care team to monitor these warning signs. **Do not wait for these signs to get worse.**
- Use the skills you have learned in treatment and from your past experiences.

Triggers are different for each person. Your family and friends can help you identify possible triggers. Together you can find ways to:

- Develop coping strategies to deal with situations that you cannot avoid.
- Take steps to deal with problems early, before they get worse.

Common triggers of relapse

Each person's triggers are different. Some common triggers are:

> › Stopping medication or missing a dose
> › Using alcohol or drugs
> › Not getting enough sleep
> › Spending too much time alone
> › Setting unrealistic goals
> › Feeling overwhelmed
> › Feeling like you are not able to deal with problems

Life stressors

> › Frightening news or events
> › Relationship tension or conflict
> › End of a relationship
> › Money problems
> › Legal problems

The pattern of **early warning signs of relapse** is different for each person. It is important for you to identify your pattern of changes when you become ill. Your family and/or friends can help with this. The sooner you can identify these early warning signs and take action, the more it will help to prevent or lessen a relapse.

Ask your mental health and addictions health care provider about the Relapse Prevention Plan. This is a tool that you, your family and friends, and your health care team can work on together to help prevent relapse.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

Notes:

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Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit https://811.novascotia.ca
Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit http://ns.211.ca

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Prepared by: Mental Health and Addictions Program
Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services

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