

Fresh Start

...a lifestyle balance program

PROGRAM BACKGROUNDER FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

What is Fresh Start?

Fresh Start [FS] is a behaviour change program delivered by healthcare professionals [HCP] in a group setting. It focuses on promoting a healthier lifestyle on 3 major components: healthy eating, physical activity and stress management. Behaviour change is promoted through goal setting, motivation, and lifestyle management skills. The main goals of the program are:

- Increase physical activity to ≥ 150 minutes/week of moderate activity
- Decrease total body weight by 5-7% (shown to reduce risk of type 2 diabetes by 60%)
- Increase healthy eating habits

“Great program, very helpful in keeping track of physical activity and meal planning”

Fresh Start participant 2018-2019

FS is an adaptation from the [Diabetes Prevention Program-Group Lifestyle Balance™](#) [GLB], created by the University of Pittsburgh (2008) to prevent type 2 diabetes. This intensive behaviour change program model was shown to be more effective in reducing risk of diabetes, when comparing to standard programs with medication: a 34% decrease of type 2 diabetes onset in adults (<60) and reduced cardiovascular risk factors.

The GLB was introduced in Ontario in 2011 by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care [MOHLTC], assuming a comprehensive approach to chronic disease prevention. The program was tested in a pilot ran by 6 Family Health Teams across the province (2011-2013) and given its success it was formally adopted by the MOHLTC. An [implementation manual](#) was released in 2017.

Fresh Start in Timiskaming

In 2018, the Timiskaming Health Unit ran the 2nd edition of this program, in partnership with health professionals across the district.

- Duration: 22 weekly sessions (1 hour length) over a 6 month period.
- Location: 2 groups – New Liskeard and Kirkland Lake.
- Total number of participants — 41.
- Facilitators from different organizations (CMHA, FHT, municipalities, hospital, local registered physiotherapists) and different backgrounds, to ensure each topic is delivered by qualified staff (registered dietitians, nurses, mental health & addictions clinicians, kinesiologists).

[Results]

Evaluation results for 2018-2019 indicate:

- ⇒ 40-50% decrease in mentally and physically unhealthy days (within a month).
- ⇒ Improvement in healthy eating habits.
- ⇒ Increase in physical activity time.
- ⇒ 53% of the evaluation survey respondents lost up to 7% of their body weight.
- ⇒ 71% of the evaluation survey respondents decreased their blood pressure.
- ⇒ Anecdotal positive feedback on how helpful the program was in supporting their lifestyle changes.

Given the success of the pilot, Fresh Start will be delivered again in September 2019. See page 2 for more information on how to support the program.

"I enjoyed the classes and feel like I am focused again. Thank you!"

- Fresh Start participant, 2018-2019

"I loved it very much. It helped me get back on track."

- Fresh Start participant, 2018-2019

Collaboration & Partnership benefits

- Ability to provide a behaviour change program to a wide range of your clients. FS is not only suitable to prevent type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome but also to support those living with chronic diseases managing their health and preventing complications. In Timiskaming, 16.1% adults live with type 2 diabetes (2011-2014), and overweight or obesity affects 62.5% (self-reported). Lifestyle related conditions are the top reason for hospital/family health teams' appointments and admission. Helping clients to prevent and better manage them can decrease their need for healthcare, its costs and allowing HCP to re-direct their work to other equally important medical issues.
- Maximizing treatment for clients. Fresh Start is delivered in a collaborative model, with HCP from different organizations facilitating the sessions on their topics of expertise. THU is responsible for the coordination of the program, including planning and evaluation. This model allows organizations to provide a 12-month lifestyle behaviour change program to complement and build on current programming.
- Cost-effective. THU supports program planning, implementation, incentives and evaluation so partner agencies main cost is valuable staff time.
- Working in a collaborative model. Clients participating in this program will have the support of registered dietitians, physical activity professionals and mental health professionals.
- Opportunity to connect your clients with other resources in the community.
- Access to a support group outside of individual counselling. While individual support is important, the social support in a group setting is important for behaviour change motivation. It contributes positively for participants' mental health and can be the key factor to move them from the contemplation/preparation to action stage in the other components of the program (healthy eating and physical activity). And because all these 3 components are very much interconnected, successful changes in healthy eating and physical activity have great potential to benefit participants' mental health (a positive cycle).



How can you help with program rollout?

There are different ways you can support the 3rd edition of *Fresh Start* program:

- Promote the program to the target population: share the information with your staff and clients
- Support program recruitment by referring at-risk clients to the program.
- Being available to support, as possible, program participants that may need specific follow-up during/after the program (i.e. mental health support, access to a registered dietitian).



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