SUMMER 2017 ISSUE 9

HealthMatters

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FEELING BETTER BEFORE YOU KNOW IT SIX

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE EIGHT

Primary Care Networks
CALGARY AND AREA

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10 years of care

Your *Health Matters*

Health Matters is published by Calgary and area Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to give you information about the programs, services and health teams available to you through your family doctor. Primary Care Networks in the Calgary area were established about 10 years ago to provide people with health services and programs through their family doctors.

Today, PCNs work with teams of other health professional as well as offer programs such as Prescription to Get Active and Find-a-Doctor.

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Changing your life

Making a move to better health

BY JENNIFER ALLFORD
PHOTOGRAPHED BY NEIL ZELLER

Grant Dyck remembers riding his bike about a year ago. “I started with maybe five kilometres, it was really casual,” he says. “I remember pushing my bike up hills at the beginning.”

He bought his bike to help cope with a bad year. His marriage was falling apart, he lost a beloved pet, he was overweight and his anxiety disorder was getting worse. Dyck felt so hopeless that he attempted suicide three times.

Dyck asked his doctor, Sanjeeve Sockanathan of the Calgary Foothills Primary Care Network (PCN), for help. Sockanathan began by prescribing anti-anxiety medication and recommending counselling through the PCN. That helped Dyck realize that he had to make more changes. He divorced his wife and started to walk and cycle to relieve stress.

The first change he saw was physical

“I started seeing the weight come off,” Dyck says. After those first few shaky rides around the neighbourhood, Dyck started cycling to work and heading out on weekends, logging about 150 kilometres a week on his bike. That, plus walking as much as he could, helped Dyck lose

A day when I can run, followed by a bike ride, those are the days where I need less medication and I feel better

more weight over the next few months.

He soon noticed a dramatic change in his outlook on life. “It was a huge difference in my positivity,” he says. “A day when I can run, followed by a bike ride, those are the days where I need less medication and I feel better. Exercise is a huge component in my general mental well-being.”

Achieving and maintaining good mental health is “often fundamental” to a fulfilling life, Sockanathan says.

“If it wasn’t for the commitment and trust Grant gave to our wonderful healthcare system and the PCN, the success he felt he had achieved may not have been so noticeable.”

Dyck says he still has “ups and downs” with anxiety. With the help of his PCN’s healthcare professionals, he gets through the bad days. He tackles his anxiety in the same way as he tackles big bike rides. “Now I do hills and I don’t even get out of the saddle—I just push through,” he says.

A combination of medication, counselling, exercise and support from his Primary Care Network helped Grant Dyck improve his physical and mental health.

Everything under the SUN FOR SUMMER Safety

Advice for enjoying the season's sunny rays

ILLUSTRATED BY JULIE MCLAUGHLIN

LIMIT SUN: Avoid too much time in the sun between 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunburn can happen in as little as 15 minutes.

SEEK SHADE: But remember, trees, umbrellas and canopies only protect you.

WATCH REFLECTIONS: Ultraviolet (UV) rays can reflect off water, concrete and other surfaces.

WEAR A HAT: Protect your eyes, ears, face and neck with a wide brim hat.

PROTECT YOUR EYES: Wear sunglasses and prescription glasses with 99 per cent to 100 per cent UV-A/B protection.

DRESS UP: Wear loose-fitting clothes over as much of your body as possible. SPF (sun protection factor) clothing offers even more protection.

STAY HYDRATED: Bring water and drink often to prevent dehydration.

PUT ON SUNSCREEN: Before going outside, put on broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen that's at least 30 SPF. Reapply every two hours, especially if you're swimming or perspiring heavily.

PROTECT THE KIDS: Keep babies younger than six months out of direct sunlight and dress them in hats and protective clothing. For babies over six months, use sunscreen and protective clothing.

FOOT WEAR: Make sure you have the right shoes your activity. Flip flops are good for the beach; hiking boots are good for the back country.

CHECK FOR TICKS: After time in grassy or wooded areas, check yourself, your kids and your dog for ticks that may cause Lyme disease.

FIGHT THE BITE: Avoid West Nile virus with a hat, pants and a long-sleeved, light-coloured shirt. Use insect repellent with DEET and consider staying in at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.

Feeling better *before you know it*

Active Adult program encourage cardio and connections

PHOTO BY NEIL ZELLER

Baljit Dhanoa and her husband Ajit have been playing badminton, walking and exercising in the the Active Adults program at the Genesis Centre in northeast Calgary for years. "It's truly the pillar of support in our everyday lives," Dhanoa says.

Every weekday morning, the Mosaic Primary Care Network offers free activities at the centre to help people reduce stress, increase energy and manage their weight while they strengthen their bodies.

The program also has kinesiologists and nurses on

People get active and before they know it, they're feeling better

– Jackie Zimmerman, Mosiac PCN kinesiologist

hand to offer support, help people with the exercises and check their blood pressure and glucose levels, if needed.

For Dhanoa, the program had another very important benefit. "A little over three years ago, my eldest son passed away suddenly, and I was grieving, depressed and physically unwell," she says. "I attended many classes including, yoga and cardio exercises. This helped enable me to come out of my grief and become the outgoing positive person I once was."

Other people in the program also see positive changes in their lives. Jackie Zimmerman, a Mosiac PCN kinesiologist, has seen it time and time again: people start exercising because a health professional suggests it (see the sidebar: Prescription to Get Active) and before you know it, they're feeling better.

"They'll notice that their blood sugar or blood pressure is going down or they've lost weight," says Zimmerman. "People notice the health changes, feeling fitter and stronger and they can do more laps than they used to."

Another win is getting to know people—whether on the badminton court or yoga mat. "It's a great place to socialize with the rest of the community," says Dhanoa. "With the diverse makeup of the northeast, I now have close friends and acquaintances from many religious and cultural backgrounds."

Zimmerman says the social aspect keeps people coming back to the Genesis Centre. "People come for exercise but they also come to sit and talk with their friends," she says. "It's pretty rewarding knowing that people who didn't know each other have come and made a connection and walk around the track with their new friend."

Ask your family doctor about the Active Adults program closest to you.

Prescription to Get Active

People across Calgary have been filling prescriptions to get active. On the advice of a healthcare professional, they can try a number of fitness facilities around the city for free.

"This is a good option for our clients that really want to try something out before they get into it," says Katie Elgie, kinesiologist at the South Calgary Primary Care Network. "Some people can find the gym intimidating and this lets them get a feel for it before they sign up for anything." Patients can pick up a prescription from their doctor or health team. In Calgary, there are more than two dozen facilities that offer everything from Zumba class to swimming. All of the facilities start you off with a guided tour and an introduction to the fitness equipment.

As well as a free pass to different facilities, the Prescription to Get Active program offers motivational advice such as: "start slowly" and "try a variety of activities." And it suggests easy ways to get more active such as park a little further away from the door, take the stairs and walk over to a co-worker instead of emailing. Health guidelines recommend adults get 150 minutes of physical activity every week.

Ask your doctor or visit: prescriptiontogetactive.com.

Primary Objective

BY BRETT TIESMAKI
PHOTO BY TRUDIE LEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Name: Dr. David Lardner, 52, pediatric anesthesiologist

Health condition: Type 2 diabetes

Health goal: To maintain my weight and blood sugars by making better food choices and monitoring the carbohydrates I eat.

How has your PCN helped you? The diabetic educator gave me very practical advice and I think that's made the biggest difference. She took the time to explain how to manage and count carbs, which I had no idea about.

How I feel now: Well, I still feel hungry sometimes (laughing). Aside from that, I'm carrying around 50 fewer pounds (23 kilograms) when I'm biking or skiing and I've found my endurance is much better. Maybe I can even make it up Home Road N.W. on my bike.

Working together: "We worked with David to identify and tailor lifestyle and medication management strategies that met his health goals. David is a perfect example of how individualized, comprehensive, patient-centered care can help a patient both manage diabetes and become healthier.

—Natasha Veric, RN, Certified Diabetes Educator, Calgary West Central Primary Care Network

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