

Why Doctors Benefit from Whole Foods 4 Healthy Living Supporting Their Practice



We are all familiar with the statistics. Chronic conditions like obesity, hypertension, and diabetes are present in our population at unacceptably high and costly levels. More than 78 million American adults are obese, and more than 1 in 20 is extremely obese. About 70 million U.S. adults have hypertension with only 52 percent having the condition under control. Just over 29 million Americans have diabetes and an additional 86 million have prediabetes. The medical costs of these conditions are staggering – an estimated yearly total of \$147 billion for obesity, \$42 billion for hypertension, and \$245 billion for diabetes. This does not take into account the additional costs of lost productivity, which among obesity, hypertension, and diabetes, are estimated to be greater than \$70 billion per year.

One of the successful yet vastly underutilized remedies for all of these conditions is behavior change in the form of dietary and/or activity modifications. The reason behind the lack of success with lifestyle interventions is simple – behavior change is hard. There is however a tool that makes behavior change easier – health coaching. Health coaches have been around for several years, but despite growing evidence of their ability to help people successfully make behavior change, providers are rarely recommending that their patients seek out a health coach. Here is why you should start recommending a health coach to your patients now.

Health coaching works. Among adults with chronic diseases, health coaching leads to statistically significant improvements in weight management, physical activity, physical and mental health status. We will take time to get to know a client and his/her goals, and help formulate a plan to help reach those goals. We will guide clients to make well defined, measurable goals, and good nutritional choices. We will keep clients on track by holding them accountable for making forward progress, measured by medical office visits and more frequent blood work/analysis. This makes the forward progress measurable to the client and provides the ability for the physician to monitor progress. Health coaching that achieves lasting results uses a personalized approach that fits each individual's unique life circumstances.

Most physicians are not trained to help patients change behavior. Doctors are primarily taught how to diagnose and treat disease. And although they are great at recommending patients lose weight, exercise more, or eat a healthy diet, they typically offer little advice on how to accomplish this beyond join a gym or see a health coach. A well-trained health coach is educated regarding behavior change, and uses a science-based process to facilitate that change.

Most physicians just don't have the time to help patients change behavior. Behavior change takes time. On average more than two months is required to successfully make a behavior change. That is obviously a lot longer than a typical 15 or 20-minute office visit. Health coaching is structured to provide the necessary time to be successful at behavior change. Coaching generally occurs over the course of 5-7 sessions with each session lasting from 30-60 minutes. The majority of physicians do not have a practice structure that accommodates this type of interaction.

[“A randomised controlled trial using a whole food plant-based diet in the community for obesity, ischaemic heart disease or diabetes](#) led to significant improvements in BMI, cholesterol and other risk factors. To the best of our knowledge, this research has achieved greater weight loss at 6 and 12 months than any other trial that does not limit energy intake or mandate regular exercise.”

Most health insurance, however, does not currently cover health coaching, in which case patients can expect to pay anywhere from \$45 to \$110 or more per session. Given that change takes time, one should expect to have between 5 to 7 sessions. This is clearly a substantial financial investment, but the result of better health is worth it in the end. A more budget friendly option is group health coaching which can be done either in person or in the physician's offices. This has the added benefit of expanding the physician's breadth of services and, in the end, will pay for itself with increased patient load; while at the same time Not increasing the demand on the physicians and medical professional staff.

Is health coaching going to help everyone? Of course not. There is nothing in medicine that benefits everyone universally. However, health coaching is a very useful tool to achieve behavior change and help reduce the burden of chronic conditions like obesity, hypertension, heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Contact us at [Whole Foods 4 Healthy Living](#) to find out how we can support your medical practice, help your patients and increase their overall health, wellness, happiness and longevity!

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