

## Summary

# The Doctor's Guide to Health Coaching

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**Increasing numbers of doctors report feeling overwhelmed and burned-out. Health coaches can be part of the solution. Health coaches support medical practices and partner with doctors to create strong teams for patient care. When doctors add a health coach to their collaborative care team, the health of the patients improve, revenue increases, and the well-being of the providers themselves improves.**

## What is Health & Wellness Coaching?

### The Coach as Guide and Navigator

Coaches bridge the gap between practitioners and patients, empowering people to take control of their health. First and foremost, the health coaching model is patient centred and non-directive. It consists of a combination of self-discovery and self-monitoring, in addition to education, goal-setting and accountability.

The health coach uses evidence-based interventions to empower the patient to take charge of their health and the two work as a team. Essentially, individuals engage with coaches to support them, receive feedback and be held accountable. Working with a coach closes the gap between intention and behaviour.

### The Coaching Structure

Health coaches meet with patients individually or in groups, in person, over the phone, or online. During coaching sessions, the coach and patient collaborate to turn aspirations into achievable goals. Specific goals might be formulated around nutrition, hydration, exercise, relaxation, sleep, stress, or interpersonal relationships. A health coach educates and supports the patients as they make diet and lifestyle changes. A vital component of the coaching process involves helping people discover their own power to change.

## How can Health Coaches help my patients?

- Take the time to truly listen
- Provide education and clear up confusion
- Ensure that patients understand the plan of care
- Facilitate problem-solving
- Promote self-management
- Resolve ambivalence
- Ensure adherence to the treatment plan
- Help set realistic goals for behaviour change
- Provide crucial emotional support
- Celebrate wins
- Help patients persevere despite obstacles
- Bridge the gap between the practitioner's recommendations and carrying them out
- Act as the patient's advocate and personal cheerleader

## What is the Health Coach Scope of Practice?

Health coaches are not licensed providers. They cannot take the place of a medical doctor, mental health or nutrition professional. The following is outside the coaching scope of practice:

- Diagnosing medical or psychiatric conditions
- Providing psychotherapy
- Developing treatment plans
- Ordering and interpreting lab testing
- Recommending supplements

### **Do coaches need formal training in nutrition?**

Effective health coaching requires a skill set that's distinct from the requirements to become a nutrition professional. The curriculum of robust certification programmes for health and wellness coaches differs from the educational content that nutritionists and dietitians receive. Training in the patient-centred approach to behaviour change requires specialised education that incorporates both a deep dive into the study of coaching principles along with adequate time in their course of study for experiential learning and practice coaching.

### **What are the ways to engage a coach?**

- Refer to a coach in your community
- Send an existing team member to be trained
- Engage as an independent contractor
- Hire a coach full or part -time as a member of your practice

### **What should I look for when hiring a coach?**

Find a coach who shares your values, your vision and your mission. Engage with a coach who shares your speciality and enjoys working with the types of patients you treat. Ensure that they have qualified from a reputable program, are fully insured, and are either a Professional Member of the Health Coaches Australia & New Zealand Association (HCANZA) or certified through the NBHWC (National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching) based in the USA.

### **Legal compliance and ethical considerations**

A health and wellness coach must comply with ALL of the legal and health regulatory compliance requirements in regard and not limited to informed consent, client confidentiality, privacy, record keeping, and mandatory reporting.

### **Should coaches be listed on my malpractice insurance and other clinic and workplace insurances?**

Best practice would be to list the coach on your insurance coverage where required, just as you would for any other member of your team. It's also prudent to expect the coach to carry their own liability insurance coverage and share a copy with you to verify that it's current if they are consulting to your practice.

### **How can coaches be an income stream for the practice?**

One popular option consists of paying the coach a percentage of the revenue collected by the practice for their specific service. Consider creating an agreement that incentivises the coach to grow the practice with you.

### **Is there research about the effectiveness of coaching?**

There are a number of peer-reviewed papers that demonstrate that health coaching can lead to positive improvement in both physical and emotional health in patients.

For a full list of papers, refer to The Doctor's Guide to Health Coaching.

Grab a copy of The Doctor's Guide to Health Coaching here:  
[bit.ly/HCANZA-DoctorsGuide](https://bit.ly/HCANZA-DoctorsGuide)

To find an accredited Health and Wellness Coach  
visit [hcanza.org/find-a-coach/](https://hcanza.org/find-a-coach/)



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