

Get Moving Health Goals

With the New Year comes the opportunity for a fresh start. For many people, this means leading a healthier lifestyle and losing weight. If this is your goal, follow these tips to stay on track.

Find Your Motivation

What is motivating you to lose weight? Do you want to look better in your clothes, feel more energetic, or simply improve your health? Get clear about what you want, and then use that to inspire you throughout your journey.

Have a Plan

If you were to go on a long road trip, you wouldn't just jump in the car and go. If you did, you'd arrive hungry, tired, and fatigued. That's the same way you'd feel if you jumped into a whole new lifestyle with no planning. Before January 1st arrives, outline the changes you want to implement and decide how you'll fit them into your schedule. Keep in mind that it may be best to take steps rather than tackle everything at once.

Make Goals

Goals help measure progress. If you don't know where you want to end up, you won't really know how to get there. When making your goals, you need to make SMART goals:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

For example, a SMART goal would be something like, "I will walk for 15 minutes 3 days for one week." Or, "I will prepare one new healthy recipe each week for the month of January."

Track What You Eat

Looking closely at what you eat is often an eye-opening experience. There are free online calorie counter and fitness logs to keep track of everything you put into your body. You don't have to do it for the rest of your life, but it is a great habit to start. Tracking will help you tweak your diet so that you can still enjoy foods you love without sabotaging your weight loss or healthy eating efforts.

Use Reliable Resources

It may be tempting to try a fad diet, but these are usually unrealistic, difficult to maintain, and sometimes even dangerous. Instead, find a reliable source of information to help you understand nutrition. The USDA offers a number of tools and resources, or you can consult a registered dietitian in your area. An RD is specially trained and can give you tips and tricks to help you achieve your specific goals.

Eat Breakfast Every Day

Surely you've heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It is! Eat a big healthy breakfast as early as possible. It will give you more energy, lead you to make healthier choices during the day, and keep you feeling full so you eat less later on.

Fill Up on Vegetables

Vegetables are filled with nutrients, water, fiber, and very few calories. If you fill half of your plate with vegetables, you'll get fuller faster and cut down your calories without feeling deprived. Use herbs and spices to jazz up vegetables instead of using butter and/or salt to flavor them

Exercise

In order to burn calories at a faster rate and build a healthy body, you'll need to incorporate exercise into your life. Take it slow at first, and then increase your time and/or intensity once you feel comfortable. If you haven't exercised in a while, talk to your doctor to make sure that you are healthy enough to begin an exercise plan.

Take It Slow

A major mistake many people make when trying to tackle a health resolution is trying to do everything at once. This is almost always a recipe for disaster. Spend a few weeks just trying to achieve 1-2 goals at a time. When you have established new good habits, put a couple more goals on your plate. Remember: You want to make permanent changes, and these will take time to implement.

Be Prepared for Lapses

A lapse is when you temporarily "fall off the wagon." This is a normal part of the process; no one is perfect. It is important for you to take a moment to recognize that you got sidetracked, but don't use it as an excuse to throw in the towel. Every day is a new chance to start over, so return to your healthy lifestyle immediately

Note: All information is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.