

Healthy You

Resolve to be healthy: Make plans to get fit, eat right

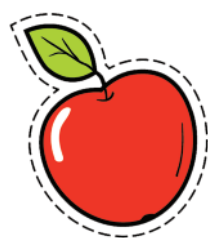
By Julia Haskins

Here it comes again: that nagging little voice in the back of your head that says, "I need to get in shape and eat right."

Once you hear it, you may feel an urge to dive right in with an exercise regimen or diet that will help you become healthier, stronger and more energized on a daily basis.

Before you take the plunge, make sure you have a plan that works for your body and your lifestyle. That way, you can take charge of your health for the long term.

First things first: Before you start any new



exercise regimen or diet, you'll need to talk to your doctor about what it will take to reach your goals safely. At your appointment, come prepared with questions that you can go over. Here are a few you'll want to consider:

- ◆ How much weight is it safe for me to gain or lose?
- ◆ Are there certain workouts I should avoid?
- ◆ How will I get enough nutrients in my diet?
- ◆ How should I plan my meals?
- ◆ Will changes to my diet or exercise regimen affect my medication?
- ◆ How should I monitor my progress?

Your doctor may have very different goals in mind for you, so be open to sound medical

advice. You might not need to gain or lose as much weight as you thought you did, or maybe you don't need to overhaul your diet completely.

It's easy to get carried away with setting goals, but be sure to pause and think about what you can reasonably accomplish.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute recommends setting goals that have three characteristics: They should be specific, doable and allow room for improvement.

It's OK to start with small steps as you work toward your diet or exercise goals. In fact, you'll have a better chance of making healthy choices into regular habits if you gradually ramp up to bigger changes.

NHLBI also recommends setting both short- and long-term goals. Within a few weeks, you may be able to fit in 30 minutes of walking into your daily routine. A year from now, you could be running several times a week.



>> For more healthy eating and exercise tips, visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Making healthy lifestyle changes shouldn't make you miserable. If your diet or exercise regimen isn't making you happy or if you feel like you run into roadblocks at every turn, figure out what would help you make the healthy choice the easy choice.

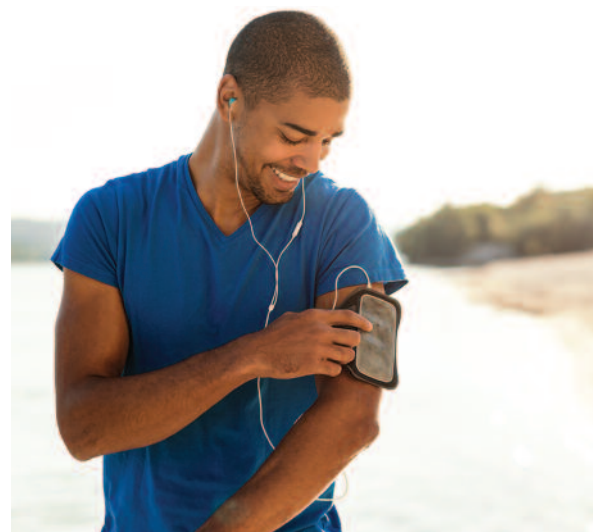
For example, you can stock your fridge with healthy snacks so you aren't tempted to reach for chips or cookies when hunger strikes.

Strapped for time to work out?

Try taking a brisk walk around the block during your lunch break or after dinner instead of making a trip to the gym.

There's also no need to force yourself to do anything that makes you uncomfortable. If quinoa just isn't your

thing, don't worry about putting it in every meal. The same goes for exercise; some people love yoga while others would prefer to kickbox. Resist the urge to compare yourself to someone else who has a different image of good health, and do what makes you feel good.



Stay motivated: Getting by with a little help from your friends

While people tend to get pumped up about their resolutions when they begin, many of these goals are abandoned soon after. It's not that people are lazy or undedicated. Sometimes it can just be a challenge to stay motivated. Reach out to your friends or family for help or ask your doctor for advice.

You can also enlist the help of an accountability buddy who is also working on improving her or his health. If you're feeling down about your progress, try keeping a journal that details your diet or exercise habits as well as your emotions. And don't forget to reward yourself with a healthy treat from time to time.

No matter what, try not to get discouraged; making changes to your lifestyle is a big leap, but better health is within reach if you keep going.



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