

Tips for a Healthy New Year

Stepping into 2019 on the Right Foot

For many, a new year represents a new beginning. As holiday decorations are packed and stored and calendars are replaced, New Year's resolutions fill our minds and bulletin boards. The most common resolutions often include getting healthy and organized. From trying a new diet and exercise routine, to planning travel and saying "yes" more often, New Year's resolutions can have a great impact on our lives.

As common as it is to plan resolutions, studies show that less than 10 percent of individuals reach their goals by year end. The best way to beat the odds and achieve your goals is to re-frame those big-picture resolutions. Instead of making generalized, overly ambitious or restrictive resolutions, plan to make incremental changes throughout the next 12 months. While common resolutions focus solely on an end-goal, successful resolutions are approached as step-by-step plans requiring small changes with big results.

If getting healthy is your main resolution for 2019, consult the steps below to seamlessly move toward a healthier you.

Drink More Water

To curb cravings and overeating, pour a glass of water. Drinking at least 8 glasses of water per day will keep you feeling full and hydrated. Water replaces other calorie-laden beverages, minimizing sugar and empty calories. Rely on water before, during and after meals to kick start a healthy diet and boost your energy throughout the day.

Add Green to Your Meals

Green vegetables and fruits are nutrient powerhouses. Adding sautéed collard greens to a plate of meat and potatoes, or mixing spinach into a breakfast omelet can greatly elevate your plate. Once you begin to incorporate healthy foods into your diet, you will be more likely to reduce your intake of processed foods and increase your body's access to necessary vitamins and minerals.

Choose Local When Possible

Check two resolutions off of your to-do list by choosing local products, year-round. Buying local supports small, community businesses, while limiting foods to seasonal items. Seasonal produce is often fresher, less processed and chemically untouched, offering healthier meal options.

Try Meatless Mondays

Limiting your meat intake at least once per week will naturally reduce your intake of saturated fats, while increasing the likelihood of eating more vegetables and grains. Meat does offer many beneficial elements, including protein and iron, so cutting out meat only once per week will give you some of the benefits of the "meatless movement", but ensure you still get plenty of protein. Give your body a boost and try a new vegetable-based dish at the beginning of each week for a fun and healthy switch.

Get Moving

Fitting in visits to the gym can be difficult with a busy schedule. As we know, cardio and weight training are important. You can log 30 - 60 minutes in all at once or you can fit small bursts of movement and exercise into even the busiest days to stay on track. If you feel your day dragging on, do 25 jumping jacks or squats for a quick mood and energy boost. Stretching in your office chair, choosing to stand at your desk, and walking on your lunch break can also give you the jolt you need to power through the afternoon and keep moving toward your goals.

Cut Out the Sugar

While many dieters cut out carbs, meat, gluten and fats, sugar has been shown to be a major culprit in weight gain and health issues. The American Heart Association estimates that the average American consumes 22 teaspoons of sugar each and every day. Reducing your intake of added sugar can take your attempt at a healthier lifestyle to the next level. Try replacing sugar with plant-based sweeteners, or limiting desserts to special occasions. These small changes can drastically cut daily, weekly and yearly sugar intake.

Just Breathe

To meet your goals and successfully end 2019 as a happier individual, it is important to breathe. While this seems impossible to avoid, conscious, purposeful breathing can make a major difference in your mood and your health. Focus on your breathing through meditation or yoga, to dramatically reduce stress and anxiety.

Making small changes to your daily habits can have a large impact after a few days, weeks and months. Start 2019 with a realistic list of resolutions and you will be welcoming in 2019 happier and healthier than ever before.