

A New Year, A New Healthier You

Let the New Year be the Start of a Better and Healthier You



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The New Year is a time of celebration. Whether it's having the first holiday dinner in our new home, celebrating a new career change, or perhaps it marks the first anniversary of a year-long diet and exercise program that has resulted in a new and healthier you. No matter what the occasion, we lift our glasses to toast the New Year with enthusiasm and good wishes.

New Year's is also a time of resolutions. Most everyone today is focused on a healthier lifestyle and because they are, the resolve to engage in a diet and exercise program is always at the top of the list. More importantly, the resolutions made are kept and the New Year begins on a positive note for the majority of people who have made the commitment.

The key to better health is sticking to the resolution once it's made. In this report, learn how to:

- Make health-specific resolutions
- Keep those healthier resolutions
- Suggestions for resolutions for women
- Suggestions for resolutions for men
- Suggestions for resolutions for kids
- Make healthy diet changes
- Get into exercise

Tips for Making New Year's Resolutions

Consider this analogy: If you were to re-paint your entire home, you would most likely go to a paint store and choose a few colors, right?

You would then paint a few strokes on the walls in your home and after a time, would choose the appropriate color. Well, the same holds true for a diet and exercise program. You would research the many diet programs offered; check out gyms or exercise DVDs; and then set up a regimen you feel will yield the best results for you.

Moreover, allowing enough time to prepare for this commitment will increase the likelihood that the commitment to a healthier you will be kept and thus, you will be constantly motivated.

Here are some tips on how to make and keep your New Year's resolutions.

Tip #1: Create short term goals that lead up to a long term goal. Take healthy resolutions one day at a time, or rather, one month at a time. If weight loss is one of the healthy resolutions on the list, break it down. Write "I resolve to lose eight pounds a month". Since a healthy weight loss is 1-2 pounds a week, this is a manageable goal you can stick to.

Monthly goals lend staying power to those healthy resolutions. Each month there is something to look forward to accomplishing. If setbacks are encountered, there's always next month to correct it instead of waiting until next year.

Tip #2: Decide what's important to you. Use empowerment to stay on track. We all falter, and you will too. Don't let it stop you from attaining your goals and please don't be so hard on yourself. No one is seeking perfection, and neither should you. Remember to enjoy life as you begin to make the changes you desire.

Tip #3: Stick to the basics. There are no hard and fast rules about the number of resolutions you need to make. Think of what changes you feel are necessary to make for a healthier life, and use these specifics to create resolutions. Resolutions are designed to get us started on a certain path. If health is your path, these suggestions will bring your goals into focus.

Tips to Keep Healthy Resolutions

Here is another analogy you may wish to consider. Teachers look upon March as a month where they hit the wall. Why? It is the only month in the school year that has no holidays. Thus, it's akin to running the marathon and mile 13 is when you "hit the wall." Simply put, you may falter but quickly pick yourself up and continue. Resolutions are sometimes like that. As long as you recognize it for what it is, you can continue. You've worked hard in preparation for it – keep going.

Tip #1: Enlist some help. Two people can keep each other accountable to their healthy resolutions. If the other person has the same health goals, you know where their encouraging words are coming from. They share the same struggles. A helping hand also keeps you motivated to follow through.

Tip #2: Reward yourself with each milestone. When talking about achieving healthier lifestyles, there are many milestones along the way to the big goal. With each pound lost; each mile run; know that you have accomplished something great. Don't downplay these milestones; celebrate them.

Tip #3: Write it everywhere. We write our resolutions down on a piece of paper and tuck it away in a drawer. Without them constantly in our face, we tend to forget what we even put down on paper. Write these healthy resolutions on note cards and Post-It® sticky notes all around the house and the office. Everywhere we look there should be a friendly reminder to keep us honest and on track.

Tip #4: Don't give up. We all have setbacks. Throughout the year there are birthday parties, celebrations for friends, stressful situations, and any number of unforeseen circumstances. While we don't plan to be derailed, it happens to us all.

What do we do when we succumb? Start again. Don't start from square one; start where you left off. It is a common misconception that we have to go all the way back to the starting blocks. A setback doesn't have to cause us to lose all the ground we've gained.

Healthy Resolutions for Everyone

Resolutions are not necessarily gender-specific or age-specific, but men, women, and children have healthy goals that pertain more so to them. Here are some ideas for resolutions that can be included when we talk about health.

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Healthy Resolutions for Women

1. “I will lower my cholesterol.” High cholesterol in the blood leads to plaque formation in the arteries. This plaque narrows the opening through which blood can pass. High cholesterol can lead to heart disease. As a woman, changing what you eat can help lower the bad cholesterol in the blood. If the cholesterol number is over 200mg/dl, the doctor may suggest medication in conjunction with healthier eating habits to take your cholesterol out of the danger range.
2. “I will exercise at least three times a week.” Women carry most of their weight in the hips and abdomen. Extra weight around the middle increases our likelihood of having heart disease and heart attacks. Childbirth also helps to increase our girth. To rid ourselves of the extra weight exercise must go along with healthier eating habits. Experiment with different exercises to find the one that suits your tastes. If you like it, you will stick with it.
3. “I will see my doctor regularly.” Women are so used to taking care of children, husbands, and even parents that they forget about themselves. Early intervention increases survival. Regular checkups give doctors a baseline from which they can track changes in your health. Monthly self breast exams can detect lumps early so the outcome is better.
4. “I will take time for myself.” Women need to relax, too. Built up stress can manifest itself as physical symptoms and bad habits. Stress can lead to depression, anxiety, pain, headaches, and lethargy. When we are stressed we tend to revert to bad habits. Stress can lead to overeating, smoking, drinking, and drug use. Taking time for ourselves can take the wind out of the sails of stress. Plan some time alone or with friends. See a movie; get a manicure. Daily “de-stress” regimens are a great coping mechanism. Soaking away the day in a hot bath and a good book keeps stress from snowballing in our lives.



Healthy Resolutions for Men

1. “I will get in shape.” Men are mostly concerned with muscular development. They like large biceps, washboard abs, and tight buttocks. When men exercise, they concentrate on strength training. Strength training increases muscle mass, but aerobic exercise will burn the excess stored fat so that those healthy muscles can shine through. Men need regular aerobic activity for cardiovascular health. They don’t have to take a step aerobics class; running on the treadmill, elliptical trainer, or a spinning class which are acceptable forms of aerobic activity.
2. “I will visit my doctor.” Men are notorious for shirking their yearly visits. As men age, they are more susceptible to certain conditions. Starting at age 50, they should have a colonoscopy to rule out colon cancer. Regular health visits that include a digital rectal exam check the prostate gland. Routine blood work calculates cholesterol levels and blood sugar levels. Missed checkups can rob you of many years of your life if an important diagnosis goes undetected.
3. “I will eat healthier.” If you are busy at work, you reach for something in the vending machine or stop by a fast food restaurant. Over time, the fat shows around the midsection which increases the risk for heart disease. Add more vegetables to your plate and reduce the meat and potatoes portion. Healthier foods don’t have to taste bad. Experiment a little with different foods until you find combinations that satisfy the stomach and taste good.
4. “I will quit smoking.” Smoking can lead to lung cancer, emphysema, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and other respiratory conditions. It won’t be easy to quit. Nicotine is addictive. Step down the nicotine dose slowly with patches, gums, and pills. Joining support groups or creating your own family and friends support network makes the process more manageable.



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Healthy Resolutions for Kids

It is never too early to start a healthy lifestyle. The behaviors that we learn as kids carry into our adult life. Give kids every advantage by starting healthy habits for them.

1. "I will eat my vegetables." We've all heard the story of kids sneaking their peas to the family dog. If your child doesn't like peas, choose another vegetable. All vegetables have nutritional value. Try carrots, sweet potatoes, corn, okra, broccoli, and greens to name a few. Change vegetables each week until you find one that the kids will eat.
2. "I will play outside." In the age of video games and computers, kids are more sedentary than ever. Encourage your child to take up an outdoor activity like basketball, bicycling, or kickball. Participate in these activities as a family so that everyone gets some long overdue exercise. Activity keeps the weight down and the heart health up. While kids aren't normally at risk for heart disease, they are at risk for obesity which can lead to Type 2 diabetes, joint pain, and breathing problems.
3. "I will believe in myself." Mental health plays a big role in physical health. Negative self images lead to low self-esteem. To fit in with others, kids do things they normally wouldn't do. Foster a healthy mental picture for your child so that they can withstand peer pressures and stay on the right track.



Healthy Eating Habits

Part of a healthier new you is eating better. We all like to enjoy our pizza, ice cream, and cake, but we need to enjoy it less if we want to lose weight, get in shape, and live longer. Healthy eating habits are a matter of science. Knowing what is in the foods you eat goes a long way to choosing the ones that will help you to eat better and stick with it.

The Science of Food

Foods contain three components: fats, carbohydrates, and proteins. Each component plays a specific role in cellular function and metabolism. Proteins help to build muscle tissue. Carbohydrates provide energy to our bodies. Fats, well, they provide cushion. We all need a certain amount of fat in our bodies.

Eating these foods in moderation at each meal provide our bodies with everything they need for function. The trouble comes in when we eat too much of any of these. We all know what happens when we eat too much fat. Our bodies use what we need for energy and stores the rest in fat cells called adipose tissue. Instead of muscle definition, we begin to see a softer layer developing beneath the skin.

Eating too many carbohydrates can make us sluggish. If the carbohydrates are in the form of sugar such as candy and donuts, our blood sugar spikes which gives us increased energy for about thirty minutes. After that, our sugar levels in the blood plummet and we don't feel like moving. We often feel this way after a big holiday meal complete with desserts and sugary drinks.

Most foods contain protein in some form. Extra protein such as hamburgers or huge T-bone steaks is not necessary to meet our daily protein levels. Too much protein leaves the body in our urine or, if the meat is fatty, it gets stored as fat.

On top of all that, foods today are processed. Unless you have a farm and garden, the food you eat has been processed in some way. Preservatives are added to foods to increase shelf life. Our bodies aren't used to these man-made substances. They wreak havoc with our digestive systems and metabolism. For a healthier lifestyle, we should get back to consuming fresh products.

Eating Healthier: Diet Plans

Each of us can name at least two or three diet plans that exist today. These plans combine the three components of food in different proportions to come up with weight loss regimens. The plans should be evaluated on their own merits and according to individual health. Before starting a diet plan, a doctor needs to be consulted to rule out possible health concerns. Here are some of the more popular plans.

Plan #1: [eDiets](#)

My husband lost over 100 pounds with eDiets! I love eDiets because they offer so much! It's for people of all ages, both men and women. You get a personalized plan and can talk to a nutritionist on the phone as often as you like about your personal dietary needs!

eDiets offers over 20 plans. You can switch plans at anytime. Their plans include eDiets Weight Loss Diet, eDiets Meal Delivery Plan specifically designed for use with alli®, Atkins Diet, Winter Diet, Glycemic Diet™, Mediterranean Diet™, Bill Phillips' Eating for Life™, Slim Fast Optima™ Diet, Wheat-Free Meal Plan, Low-Fat Plan, Living with Diabetes Plan, Heart Smart Plan, Low-Sodium Plan, Cholesterol Lowering Plan, High-Fiber Plan, Hypoglycemic/Low-Sugar Plan, Healthy Soy Plan, Vegetarian Plan and a Lactose-Free Plan.

Plan #2: [Weight Watchers](#)

Weight Watchers works for both men and women. This plan teaches people the basics of food science through literature and weekly meetings. Weight Watchers uses the "point system". Depending on your starting weight, each weight range is assigned a specific range of points. The goal is to eat within your points range each day.

Every food has a point value. New members are given a slide tool that helps you calculate the point value of any item if you know the calories, fat content, and fiber content. No food is off limits. To help with food choices, Weight Watchers has its own line of cereals, frozen meals, breads, and snacks.

Weight Watchers encourages their members to exercise to complete the healthy picture. Even activities earn you points that can be used to splurge during a celebration. To stay motivated, they have weekly meetings, weigh-ins, and record sheets to keep track of what you eat each day.

Plan #3: [NutriSystem](#)

NutriSystem commercials are most popular on TV. There are programs for men, women, and seniors. With this plan, foods are delivered each week to your home. You receive breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert. You are required to supplement these meals with salads, fruits, and dairy products.

The basis of this program is the idea of the “glycemic index”. The glycemic index assigns a value to each carbohydrate based on how it affects your blood sugar. The higher the number, the worse the food is on your blood sugar. Basically, it spikes the blood sugar which leaves you hungry sooner. Carbohydrates with lower glycemic numbers promote a more stable blood sugar level. Stable blood sugar results in less hunger and overeating.

Plan #4: [The South Beach Diet](#)

People are attracted to this diet program because of the rapid weight loss in the beginning. It is designed to jumpstart your weight loss program for motivation and then teaches you how to continue to lose weight and not feel hungry. With the South Beach diet, the first two weeks are the toughest.

The South Beach diet eliminates carbohydrates for the first two weeks of the plan. This is Phase One. You are retraining your body to process carbohydrates. Until you read the book, you don't know just how many foods contain carbohydrates. It includes more than just bread. The book provides a list of the “taboo” foods and also a list of the accepted ones.

A dieter could lose up to 13 pounds in the first two weeks. After week two, carbohydrates are added back into the diet in specific ways over time. Phase Two of the plan continues until all the weight that you want to lose is lost.

Phase Three is the maintenance plan. The suggestions in this section of the book teach eaters how to maintain their weight loss. The South Beach diet has their own line of frozen meals and snacks. Now, certain food companies are labeling their foods with symbols that state if their foods are “South Beach diet approved”. Online support is available to help the dieter during every phase of the program.

New diet plans spring up all the time. Some advocate the elimination of carbohydrates all together. Others say high carbohydrates/low protein, low fat/low protein, or low fat/low carbohydrates. The best program is still a healthy combination of all three components of food. Plans that advocate this are more likely to succeed.

Feeling Better: Exercise Plans

Eating healthy is one component of a healthier lifestyle. The body also has to get moving to keep the internal body healthy. If the goal is to lose weight, exercise and diet are necessary for success. There is also a science to exercise as well. All exercises are not created equal.

Exercise does have cumulative effects throughout the day. If you can't fit in a full thirty or forty minute session, it can be broken down into ten minute increments. The key to changes in your body is consistency. A regular routine at least three days a week will show results.

Exercise consists of two parts: aerobic activity and strength training. Men tend to lean more towards strength training and women, towards aerobic activity. However, both are needed to create a healthy body.

Aerobic activity

Aerobic activity involves the oxygenation of the tissues of the body. We take in oxygen and it travels to our cells where it fuels the energy making process and cellular repair. The heart learns to pump blood more efficiently throughout the body when we exercise. The heart is a muscle and it gets worked through aerobic activity.

Aerobics requires motion. This motion can be in the more traditional sense. We can become involved in running, walking, jogging, step aerobics, and bicycling. If money is an issue, these activities can be done without joining a gym. If you live in a big neighborhood or near a park with walking trails you are all set for fitness fun.

Gyms offer aerobic fitness equipment and classes. For people with any type of injuries or knee problems, elliptical trainers provide challenging aerobic activity without jarring or pounding. Aerobics classes offer beginners to advanced fitness buffs a chance to workout with others and try new things.

Non-traditional forms of exercise also provide aerobic benefit. Working in the garden, mowing the lawn, cleaning the house, and taking the stairs are all forms of exercise. You work up a sweat, increase your heart rate, and work the entire body.

Aerobic activity provides benefits after the workout session is done. A healthier body handles stress better. Easier breathing leads to more relaxed sleep and more energy during daily activities. Our skin and hair will glow when it is healthy.

Strength training

Women shy away from this part of a workout because they don't want big muscles. Men gravitate towards this part of the workout because they want definition in their muscles. Both need it to increase lean muscle mass and burn calories.

Strength training builds muscle fibers. As we age we tend lose muscle mass each year beginning around forty years of age. Losing muscle mass makes our bodies look fatter. To ward off the muscle loss, strengthen them with resistance training.

There are several ways to strength train. For women, using lower poundage (no more than twenty pounds) and higher repetitions per set promotes endurance and leaner sculpted muscles. Weight bearing exercises also helps to halt the bone loss that is common in senior women.

Men like larger muscles. For them, using free weights and machines with higher poundage and lower repetitions per set promotes strength. The muscles will grow larger. As the fat pad is decreased the size of the muscles will be more apparent beneath the skin.

For both men and women a strong abdominal core reduces injuries. If you are prone to heavy lifting at home or at work, strong stomach muscles reduces back injuries and other muscle pulls.

Exercise motivation

Now that you know what to do, how do you stay motivated to do it? Start slowly. Mix up your routine. You don't have to jump in with both feet to see results. Add five minutes to your aerobic workout or extra repetitions to your strength training each week to keep moving forward without pain.

No one says that you have to choose one exercise and that's it. Choose several different activities you are fond of and alternate them. This muscle confusion helps muscles to grow faster.

Exercise with a friend. Someone who is more advanced than you will keep you on your toes during the workout. Go to the gym, to the park, throughout the neighborhood, or pop in an exercise video.

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A Toast to a New and Healthier You!

Healthier lifestyles are within our reach. Let the New Year bring those resolutions to fruition. Once you begin a healthy eating and exercise regimen, you'll never look back. Hopefully, the aforementioned suggestions will help you get started on the road to increased health.

Once the commitment is made, you will feel a great weight has been lifted from your shoulders.

Begin preparations; write down your goals; and ...

May good health, peace, and joy be yours in the New Year and always.

