

# Small Steps to Better Health

Sometimes our goals for being healthy get lost in the shuffle. Many people begin the year with ambitious New Year's resolutions for things like losing weight and looking better. But often the goals turn out to be very hard to reach amidst the fast pace and competing priorities of day-to-day life.

So, it can help to set some *realistic* goals as you turn the page to a new year. Instead of trying to quickly lose 30 pounds or be ready to run a marathon, it's often better to take small steps toward adopting healthier habits. Without good health, it's unlikely that we'll be able to reach our goals in life.

In this issue of *Your Source*, we take a look at:

- How you can establish a realistic, achievable set of healthy objectives for the year.
- Some specific steps you can take to get back to being healthy.
- How exercise and nutrition play a key role in maintaining your well-being.

**Go online today!** Log on to access *Healthy Habits* under the Library/In the Spotlight section. There you'll find ideas on how you can begin to take small steps toward a better quality of life in 2014.



*It is never too late to begin creating the bodies we want instead of the ones we mistakenly assume we are stuck with.*

— Deepak Chopra

## Kick the Year off Right

As the calendar rolls over to 2014, it's a good time to regroup and set out some fresh goals for the upcoming year. Some tips:

- *Be realistic in setting goals.* It's important to move forward, but don't shoot for goals so high that you'll give up. If you do get off track during the year, get back up and try again!
- *Be specific in your goals.* Use dates, times, amounts—any form of measurement that helps you set clear goal targets. For example, lose 5 pounds by July 1, work up to 40 pushups a day, or walk outside twice a week, etc.
- *Put your plan in writing.* Writing down your resolutions will help you 1) maintain a clear sense of what you're trying to accomplish, and 2) chart your progress.
- *Share your goals.* If you get stuck or need a boost in reaching your goals, talk with a friend or family member about it. You might get some new ideas.
- *Track your progress and reward yourself.* Mark even your smallest progress toward your goals. Take pride in your efforts!



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## Get Back to Being Healthy

There's plenty you can do to get back to better health. But while you'll want to make changes over time, focus on small, gradual steps at first. Don't overwhelm yourself with dramatic changes such as six-day-per-week workouts or going cold turkey on all your favorite foods. Some tips:

- **Start with a can-do attitude.** If you tell yourself that you have the power to make positive changes—that you can do it—you'll be more likely to succeed. You'll have more willpower when, for example, you're tempted to make poor choices in eating and drinking.
- **Develop and draw on a support system.** Share your health goals with key people in your life. They may be able to help when you need encouragement. This can be anyone who's on your side: a friend or workout partner, your family, or a supportive coworker.
- **Try to be more active.** We can all benefit from moving more, so take every opportunity to do so. Use the stairs instead of the elevator. Park a bit further away from work and the store. Schedule a daily ten-minute walk outdoors. Take brief breaks during the day to stretch and move. It all adds up to better health.
- **Focus on changing habits.** Identify things that have not been healthy choices for you. Examples could be sugared sodas, fatty fried foods, or high-calorie processed snacks. When you're tempted to indulge, step back and make a different choice. Substitute a veggie or fruit snack for the junk food. Grab a diet soda instead of the high-sugar variety. Drink a big glass of water.
- **Finally, don't give up.** Getting healthier is a minute-by-minute process. It's all about small choices you make throughout the day. Be confident that you can make a healthier choice, and don't be hard on yourself if it takes a while to get with the program.

### Now That's An Idea!

#### *Exercise and Nutrition Tips for your Mind!*

*Adopt a healthier diet.* Try to choose foods that are low in saturated and trans fat, and low in cholesterol. Also limit your intake of sugar, salt (sodium), and alcohol. This is a great way to help your energy level and can help stimulate your mind too.

*Eat more fruits and vegetables.* You can get essential fiber from fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grain products, and nuts. You might begin by planning to eat at least one fruit or vegetable with every meal. Then increase that amount.

*Get at least a little exercise each day.* Not only is exercise great for your body, it is also great for your emotional wellness!

*Challenge yourself to boost your fitness.* Set achievable exercise goals. Then when you achieve them, raise them! A lot of exercise is controlled by our brain and not our body.

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## Small Steps to Better Health

Sometimes our goals for being healthy get lost in the shuffle. Many of us start the year with ambitious plans for getting healthier. But soon, we get off track. It's better to take small steps, with realistic goals, for better health.

Access your program for ideas on how a balanced approach to exercise and nutrition can boost your quality of life.



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