



January



Member Newsletter

Keys to Adopting Healthy Habits

With daily life turned upside down for so many months, you may be eager to trade any bad habits you've picked up for healthier ones. One place to start is to have a checkup with your healthcare practitioner. Learning that your blood pressure is elevated, for instance, could help you kick start better lifestyle habits. **Here are some more suggestions:**

 **Get to the root of stubborn habits.** Anxiety, boredom, loneliness and other troublesome emotions can trigger unhealthy “coping” responses—whether it’s overindulging in snacks or alcohol, or endless TV series watching or smartphone scrolling. Recognizing the underlying emotion that triggers an automatic unhealthy response can help you break it. Instead of mindlessly turning to your unhealthy indulgence, take a few slow deep breaths, focusing on the moment. Then get up, drink some water, go fold laundry, put on a playlist and dance, or call a friend.

 **Make your game plan solid.** Overreaching and not having a strategy can defeat you before you get out of the gate. Say your goal is to rack up a ton of miles biking or walking to slim down by next month so you’ll fit into your jeans. Especially if you’ve been sedentary, it’s wiser to give yourself a more achievable time frame that includes mini goals. Start by walking around more often and going to more neighborhoods (or paths) for six months, gradually adding time and distance each week.

 **Stack your plan for success.** Ordering out a lot and still not ready to cook? Try stocking up on healthy low-fat prepared meals. When you’re ready to cook, grab some easy wholesome recipes that feature more fruits and veggies, and less fatty, salty and sugary foods. Keep a bowl of apples, clementines and other healthy grab-and-go options in plain sight for snacking.

 **Get your support team together.** Carve out time on your calendar for a shared activity as often as possible, whether that’s walking nearby trails, fixing healthier meals together, or playing a game of pickle ball. Be sure to follow safe social recommendations.

 **Avoid haphazard mealtimes or sleeping in!** Eating at the same time daily can prevent overeating or a dip in energy, while a regular bedtime and rising time can keep your body and mind functioning at its peak, giving you more stamina to stick to your behavior change plan.



Keep reviewing your pandemic habits. The new COVID-19 variant may require updating your masking, social distancing, and other habits. Go to: to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>



It is vital for your health to
put yourself first

Well-Being Tips that Matter Most

These days we're constantly inundated with news and tips about improving our health. While some of these stories have merit, there is also a lot of noise out there that can create confusion about "what it means to be healthy." We're here to help reduce some of that confusion by sharing six well-being tips that matter most.

Keep reading to learn about these tips.

- 1. Stay on top of preventive care.** This includes annual physicals, age-appropriate screenings and immunizations, and dental and vision exams. The new year is a perfect time to discuss with your doctor what preventive care measures you may be due for and begin to schedule appointments throughout the year.
- 2. Focus on healthy foods.** Review your eating habits and see how they stack up with this basic nutritional guide: At each meal, make half your plate fruits/veggies, ¼ lean protein and ¼ healthy carbohydrate (think whole grains). What do you do well? In what areas can you make improvements?
- 3. Exercise.** Aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week. You've heard it before and know it's true—exercise works wonder for your mood, mind and body. Make this year the year you begin a regular workout routine!
- 4. Improve your sleep habits.** Sleep allows your body to repair and restore itself. Find your sleep sweet spot (number of hours that help you feel your best) and aim to focus on waking up at the same time each morning and going to bed at the same time to meet it—yes, even on weekends! Consistency is key when it comes to sleep.
- 5. Drink more water.** Many people choose other beverages over water to satisfy their thirst. While most beverages have hydrating properties, water is the healthiest option as it is free of caffeine, sugar, calories, fat and sodium!
- 6. Make you your number one priority.** We are often caught up in helping others and putting areas of our lives first that don't necessarily contribute to our well-being. It is vital for your health to put yourself first. Say "no" when you need to, and tend to your own needs first.

Are You Sabotaging Your Health?

Without knowing it, we all do things that stand in the way of achieving a better level of well-being. **Here are some ideas to help turn things around:**

 **Check your defeatist dialogue.** Do you tell yourself, "Just this one time won't hurt?" Or, "I'm just not in the mood for that activity?" If so, talk back to that voice! Try saying, "I can do something that helps rather than holds me back. I'll reset by taking a shower, stepping outside for fresh air, etc." Trade overthinking for action!

 **Identify your usual temptations.** For example, do you splurge on an item because it's on sale, only to suffer when the credit card bills roll in? Learn the difference between your true needs and your wants.

 **Recognize why you're putting things off.** Do you browse the catalog of classes, but never sign up for one? Feeling overwhelmed may be behind your hesitation. If so, break down the good thing you want to do for yourself into bite-size chunks or make a compromise. For instance, see if you can find a similar short workshop to attend.

 **Don't let slip-ups derail you.** Try adopting a simple phrase like "Baby steps" or the proverb, "Fall down seven times, get up eight." It can remind you to not give up hope, that you're headed in the right direction, and that small successes build on each other!

 **Get out of your comfort zone!** Sticking strictly with what's familiar can inhibit your growth and vitality. On the other hand, stretching yourself even in small everyday ways can help you gain confidence and feel more in control and empowered. So go ahead, try that exotic dish, take the scenic route, or chat up someone new at a gathering. The more you venture, the more you gain!

 **Spend less time with naysayers and more time with upbeat people.** Hang out with those who cheer you on when your nagging doubts or fears about staying the course are holding you back.



For more help, talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.

National Blood Donor Month

 Blood is needed every two seconds in the U.S. to help patients battling injury and illness. As COVID-19 cases continue to rise, The Red Cross is collecting convalescent plasma from those recovered from COVID-19 to help others going through COVID-19 treatment. They are also collecting plasma from whole blood donations from those who tested positive for COVID-19. **Find out more: RedCrossBlood.org**