

Resolution or No Resolution – Healthy Eating Tips for Success!

There are two types of people, those who make New Year's resolutions and those who do not. For those who make resolutions, the first page on a new calendar symbolizes a fresh change in their life. Those who do not make resolutions may see every day as the first day of the rest of their life and another opportunity to make a healthy change. Whichever philosophy you follow, making healthy lifestyle changes is always good.

The most common health resolutions are to eat healthy, be more active and reduce smoking or alcohol use. While my tips focus on eating healthy these suggestions can also apply to other lifestyle changes.

Before embarking on any lifestyle change, do a check in. Ask yourself what factors contribute to your current lifestyle? Without addressing these, healthy changes are harder to maintain over the long haul. For example, if you lack time to prepare healthy food or rely on ready-made entrees provided by a meal program, what will happen when you are pinched for time or when the program is over?

Look for ways to include food you like with healthier options. If you like pizza, try one with whole grain crust, lots of extra vegetables, and chicken or shrimp rather than deli sausages. Try a smaller size pizza and add a ready-made green salad or a hearty vegetable soup to complement the meal.

Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal. S.M.A.R.T. stands for specific, measureable, attainable, realistic and timely. Rephrase your goals from "lose weight" to "increase my vegetable and fruit intake to at least seven servings per day by the end of January." This S.M.A.R.T. goal is positive, measureable and focuses on what you can do.

Check in with a professional. Registered dietitians are qualified specialists who can help ensure your meal plan is balanced and fits your lifestyle. Be cautious of meal plans that avoid food groups or are too low in calories. They are hard to stick to and can result in "yo-yo dieting" (taking off and regaining weight over and over again) which is detrimental to good health.

Have a friend or family member be your support person. Find someone who knows your goals and is willing to listen and encourage you with words and actions like joining you for a walk or celebrating with you. A good support person can help you reach your goals.

Remember, our habits form over months, if not years, and expecting to overcome them quickly is not realistic. Change takes time. Thomas Edison was not successful with his first light bulb, it took him over 100 tries but he took what he learned and used it to keep improving. Making healthy choices also takes practice and trial and error but it can be done and you can do it.

Author: Rose Soneff is a registered dietitian with Interior Health.

Date: January 20, 2015