

How to Keep Your Healthy New Year's Resolutions

Six keys to staying committed to a healthy lifestyle

Every January, many Americans make well-intentioned resolutions — such as eating healthier, exercising more, getting more sleep and losing weight — but research reveals that only about 8 percent stick with them.

“Making lifestyle changes can be challenging, even daunting, depending on the goals we set and how realistic they are,” says [Mitch Biermann, MD](#), an [internal medicine physician](#) at [Scripps Clinic Carmel Valley](#).

“When it comes to making New Year’s resolutions, set small and measurable goals that are not only achievable but sustainable and good for your health and well-being year-round.”

To beat the odds, try implementing these smart strategies, whether your resolution is losing weight, reducing stress, increasing your exercise or getting more sleep.

1. Choose one or two goals

Making too many resolutions can set you up for failure.

“Unhealthy behaviors develop over time, so replacing those behaviors also takes time,” says Dr. Biermann. “You don’t have to reassess and change everything all at once.”

Instead, pick a realistic goal and be specific. If your goal is to get in shape, what does that look like for you? Do you want to be able to run three miles, get to the gym three days a week, or decrease your body-fat percentage?

2. Write it down

Write each goal or resolution down and post in a visible spot — next to the computer, on the fridge or even on a mirror.

Writing your resolution down helps you clarify what you want to achieve and helps motivate you to take action and keep track of your progress.

If your goal is to increase your exercise, write down a reasonable workout plan for the week ahead. If you want to reduce stress, plot out 15 minutes a day when you practice meditation.

3. Start small

Keep it simple and focus on one step at a time toward your goal.

“When changes are too drastic, they can be overwhelming,” says Dr. Biermann. “Take small steps and you’ll feel like you are in control of the situation and more likely to stick to your plan.”

For instance, [if your goal is to lose weight](#), there are many easy strategies that you can use.

For example, try throwing out one processed food every week, such as chips or cookies, and replacing it with a fruit or vegetable. If you want to exercise more, schedule workout time three or four days a week, not seven.

4. Share your resolutions

Sharing your resolutions with people you trust helps keep you accountable and can give you an added push to stick to your plans. Tell your family, friends or coworkers about your goals so they can support you.

5. Schedule time

Make your new goals a priority and schedule them into your calendar. Form good habits that get you closer to your goal by planning ahead. Eventually, your workouts, healthy cooking, or meditation will become second nature, and you will feel uncomfortable if you don't do it.

6. Expect setbacks

Slip ups inevitably occur, but don't let mishaps and setbacks cause you to give up for the rest of the year. If you didn't get to the gym one day, plan to go the next day, or substitute a few minutes of stretching or a quick walk. [Avoid making excuses for not exercising](#), especially if your goal is to make exercise a routine part of your day.

Developing the resilience to continue or get back on track right away after a setback will keep you positive, and any effort toward your goal is a step forward.

With these simple strategies and some patience, this can be the year you succeed in achieving your goals.

Remember to keep it positive and enjoy your accomplishments.