



HOW TO MAKE HEALTHY *Habits Stick*

Healthy choices can have a dramatic effect on your life. Indeed, healthy habits like eating fruits and vegetables and getting regular exercise not only makes you feel better, but they can also reduce your risk for the most common and preventable health problems—such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.

Maybe you've already tried to eat better, get more exercise or sleep, quit smoking, or reduce stress. It's not always easy. However, research shows that change is possible, and there are proven strategies you can use to set yourself up for success.

STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Create a plan. Make a plan that includes small, reasonable goals and specific actions you'll take to move toward them. For example, if you want to walk more, set

a goal to walk at least 10 minutes every day. Then, do specific things that will help you get there, like parking farther away from the entrance at your office or at a grocery store.



Identify what you'll need to be successful.

How can you change things around you to support your goals? You might need to stock up on healthy foods, remove temptations, or find a special spot to relax.

Get friends and loved ones

involved. Research shows that people's health behaviors tend to mirror those of their family and friends. Invite them to join you, support you, and help you stay on track.

Plan for obstacles. Doing positive things for yourself can feel exciting and rewarding. But there will also be times when you wonder if you can stick with it. So, think about what might derail your best efforts to live

healthier. How can you still make healthy choices during unexpected situations, in stressful times, or when tempted by old habits?

Track your progress and pitfalls. You can use a paper journal, computer program, or mobile app to note things like your diet, exercise, stress levels, or sleep patterns. Some studies show that people have more success with diet and exercise when they closely track their progress and habits. This also includes recording your setbacks. To be sure, it's important to document

everything, even when you think you're about to "fall off the wagon." Continue to track your behavior. Sometimes when you feel like you're failing, you can learn the most.

REMEMBER THAT IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

You're never too out of shape, too overweight, or too old to make healthy changes. Try different strategies until you find what works best for you. Things may not go as planned, and that's okay. Change is a process. What's most important is to keep moving forward.

HOW TO CREATE HEALTHY HABITS

- » **Plan.** Identify unhealthy patterns and triggers. Set realistic goals. Write down steps to help you achieve them.
- » **Change your surroundings.** Find ways to make healthier choices easy choices. Remove temptations. Work for changes in your community, like safe places to walk.
- » **Ask for support.** Find friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, or groups for support or ask people to join you.
- » **Fill your time with healthy activities.** Try exercise, a favorite hobby, or spending time with family and friends.
- » **Track your progress.** Record how things are going to help you stay focused and catch slip-ups.
- » **Imagine the future.** Think about future benefits to stay on track.
- » **Reward yourself.** Give yourself a healthy reward when you've achieved a small goal or milestone, like a massage or personal time.
- » **Be patient.** Improvement takes time, and setbacks happen. Focus on progress, not perfection.

