

Shed Pounds, Get Healthy in 2009

Posted by [petehurrey](#) On 12/30/2008

It's that time of year again — the time when we look back over the past year and wonder what we can change in the upcoming year. The biggest New Year's resolutions made every year have to do with health, weight loss and exercise. Here are five tips from Jennifer Drury, health educator at St. Mary's Hospital, to help start an exercise program or revive and keep your current exercise program on the track to success.

Start slow: We all know that come January the gyms are packed with new members and exercise DVDs are flying off the shelves. According to the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, only about 25 percent of adults in the United States exercise the recommended amount, which is about 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity during five or more days a week or 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity during three or more days a week. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends all adults should accumulate at least 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity physical activity, preferably every day of the week, but the activity does not have to be continuous.

The biggest mistake most people make when starting an exercise program is starting out with too much too soon. Make sure you work exercise into your schedule. Don't push yourself too hard in the beginning because this will lead to frustration and ultimately a resentment of exercise altogether. Progress takes time so allow enough time to reach the next fitness level. Also, if you are not sure what exercises you should be doing, seek help from a professional. Join an exercise class or hire a personal trainer. This way you can learn exactly what exercises will help you reach your specific goals.

Set realistic goals: Goal setting is extremely important in maintaining your motivation and sticking with your exercise program. Set goals from a positive perspective. Everyone has an idea of what they want to accomplish from their exercise program, such as weight loss, toning up or increasing flexibility. Be sure to set short-term and long-term goals and give yourself plenty of time to reach your goals. Short-term goals are a great way to measure progress.

Monitor your progress: Keep an exercise log or journal so you can track changes to your routine. Also, if you are striving for weight loss, chart your measurements along with weight. This way, even if the scale doesn't change, you may see the inches peeling away.

Reward yourself: As you reach new accomplishments, make sure you are rewarding yourself. This will reinforce positive habits and help you feel good about your progress. Buy yourself a new outfit or treat yourself to a massage.

Be creative: Choose activities you will enjoy and make exercise convenient. Try something new and don't be afraid to challenge yourself. Exercising with a friend or a group can also help make it fun and you can hold each other accountable.

So now you have your plan and it's time to get started. Remember, you don't have to love exercise, you just need some physical activity. Keep it simple and fun. Strive for good quality weeks full of activity. Don't stress if you miss a day, just get back on track the next day. Take every day as it comes and get active!

Beginning your health plan

If you need help getting started on your health plan, St. Mary's Hospital offers Body Composition Analysis

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