

Be realistic: 5 ways to get healthier in the new year



Your Turn

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Guest columnist

Once again, people are making their annual commitments to reforming their lifestyle in the coming year. However, most new year's resolutions are doomed to fail before the end of January.

Breaking resolutions down into simple, routine-altering behaviors will make a far greater, longer-lasting difference than pledging to do cardio five times each week and quitting in Week Three. Making small, realistic changes can help you stay on track all year long and achieve larger goals. Here are some great places to start:

Prevention is the key to long-term health. Preventive health care is the key to avoiding some of the most common health conditions. However, too many ignore basic preventive care.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that Americans neglect their preventive services 50 percent of the time. Schedule your annual checkups and supplementary appointments — as the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Schedule your bloodwork and studies. According to the Preventive Services Task Force, some of the most important tests, depending on age, include:

- Colonoscopy to identify and remove any polyps or growths before they can develop into colon cancer (men and women) — age 50 for most, unless there are family risk factors.

- Bloodwork to monitor cholesterol levels and assess risk for heart disease, stroke and other health conditions (men and women) — age 35-45 or sooner, depending on risk factors.

- Pap tests to detect abnormal cells that could indicate cervical cancer (women) — age 21-65.

- Mammogram to detect breast cancer early in a very treatable phase (women) — age 50-75 or sooner, depending on risk factors.

Eat more veggies. One of the top resolutions is to lose weight and get health-



Apps can help you remember to drink more water. GETTY IMAGES

ier. Vegetables are a great choice — low in carbohydrates, fats and calories, plus many contain vitamin C, which can reduce fatigue and fortify your immune system. A strong immune system is especially important during flu season.

Use technology. Kick off the new year by checking out some of the top-trending health and fitness apps and online resources. You'll be surprised by the range of help that's freely available.

From online support forums to calendars, to apps like HabitMinder, which tracks daily progress and exercise statistics, to Drink Water Reminder, a daily hydration monitor and tracker, setting up simple reminders can help you stick to your goals. Just remember, some of these apps are not HIPPA-compliant, so be careful of the information you share.

Break your goals into manageable parts. Many people set unattainable new year's resolutions. Instead of hitting the ground running, set small fitness goals and gradually step them up each week. Nine-to-five employees can set an hourly reminder to get up stretch throughout the day, while students can opt to walk or bike to school.

By incrementally building up to your fitness and overall health goals, you can be sure to see results all throughout 2019.

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