

JANUARY 2009

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ONE STEP TO BETTER HEALTH: **EXERCISE**

Staying physically active is vital to staying well. Regular exercise helps protect the organs and strengthens the muscles, bones and blood flow as we age.

Most of us are not taking advantage of the many benefits of exercise. Do you get the recommended 30 to 60 minutes of moderate- or vigorous-intensity activity most days?

If the answer is *no*, you might find the latest evidence very motivating.

The past 12 years of research linking exercise to health protection. Some of the results: Physically active people have a lower risk for the most serious health threats – including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, colon and breast cancer, as well as death from all causes combined.

Walking, sports, gardening and all physical chores count toward the minimum goal of 30 minutes, even when performed in 10-minute increments. This routine can improve your most vital health signs: weight, muscle-to-fat ratio, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

Writing down what goes in your mouth can be a real eye-opener. Surveys have shown that people underestimate their daily diet by hundreds of calories, up to 800, according to one study. Record everything – even the little nibbles while preparing meals.

Helpful: Note where you eat (at work, in restaurants, in front of the TV), how hungry you are when you eat, and other thoughts or situations; these factors can reveal habits undermining your weight control goals.



Who benefits from exercise?

- *Overweight adults* improve their health, even without weight loss.
- *People with diabetes or heart disease* can prevent future complications.
- *Men* can get their weight down and their stress under control.
- *Women* build strong bones and reduce symptoms of menopause.
- *Children* grow healthier bodies while having fun.
- *Smokers* can reduce nicotine cravings and feelings of anxiety and depression.
- *Everybody* can generally feel better, age healthier and ward off chronic disease.

Use the opportunity of a fresh start this New Year to see where exercise fits into your daily life. Consult your provider before significantly increasing your level of physical activity. And step up to better health.

HEALTH notes

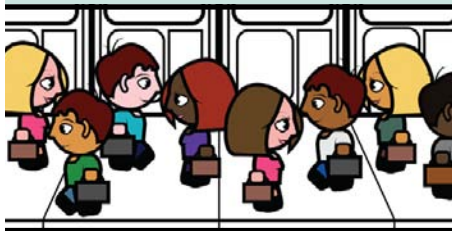
■ **How healthy can you get?** This month's issue (page 2) offers a guide to goal setting and the stages of change that can help you succeed with healthy habits in the new year. In this and future issues look for a monthly coaching message with motivational quick tips to keep you on target through the year. The newsletter staff has also set some goals for 2009: quizzes, self-assessments, and more mental health help (because we're watching out for your well-being).

■ **Add 14 years to your life with these 4 choices:** ❶ Don't smoke. ❷ Stay physically active, either on the job or in leisure time. ❸ Eat 4-10 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. ❹ Drink alcohol only in moderation. The top 4 findings were based on a study of 20,000 reasonably healthy men and women ages 45-79 living in the UK. Regardless of gender, social status or even body weight, those who followed none of the 4 choices listed above had 4 times the risk of dying during a decade than those who maintained all of them. Not smoking offered the greatest benefits in terms of survival.

■ **In contrast to the above study,** smoking, diabetes, obesity and hypertension significantly reduced the likelihood of a 90-year life span, while regular exercise substantially improved it. A study at Boston's Brigham & Women's Hospital found that a 70-year-old man who did not smoke and had normal blood pressure and weight, no diabetes and exercised 2 to 4 times a week had a 54% probability of living to age 90.

What choices are on your list of resolutions? HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Pedestrian Safety



Using streets without sidewalks, avoiding drivers who run red lights, or watching out for drivers who aren't watching for pedestrians ... Getting to and from your destination on foot can be a safety challenge sometimes.

Whether walking is part of your workday or your daily exercise routine, it's easy to forget that traveling on foot requires caution and your full attention – even on pedestrian-friendly streets.

Cross at designated street crossings. Entering a street mid-block or from between parked cars is risky.

Triple-check: Look left-right-left until no cars are approaching you.

Watch for right-turning cars with drivers focused on oncoming traffic; make eye contact with them before crossing.

Check for blind spots when moving around large vehicles; give them plenty of space.

No sidewalk? Travel on the left side of the street facing traffic.

Stand out. Wear brightly coloured clothing. If it's dark or stormy, use reflective material on shoes, cap or jacket to help drivers see you. Allow extra time and distance for vehicles to stop.

Walk defensively. Even if you're signaled to walk, drivers may not see you or give you the right of way. Always check the traffic flow.

Avoid walking when drunk or drowsy from medication. Many pedestrian injuries involve alcohol use – by the driver and the pedestrian.

Hold young children by the hand when crossing traffic.

Pay attention. If you're on a cell phone or listening to music, you may not spot similarly distracted drivers.

Top 10 Reasons to QUIT SMOKING

There are many good things that happen when you kick tobacco. Here are 10 of them:

- 1. Feel better.** After quitting, you'll lose fewer days to colds, flu and smoking-related illness. *Added bonus:* Your long-lost sense of smell returns and food tastes better.
- 2. Move easier.** Simple tasks, like climbing stairs, no longer take your breath away. Exercise won't leave you gasping for air.
- 3. Look (and smell) good.** Say goodbye to stained teeth, stinky clothes and hair, bad breath and premature wrinkling.
- 4. Save money.** One pack of cigarettes averages \$9.50, or about \$255 a month for a pack-a-day habit. What else could you spend that on?
- 5. Worry less.** You won't have to stress about how tobacco hurts you or how your secondhand smoke affects the nonsmokers around you.
- 6. Sleep better.** Getting rest is easier without nicotine stimulating your nervous system and disrupting your *zzzzz's*.

Ready, Set, Goal!

The most important parts of change are knowing why you want to make it and having the desire to make it. If you want to lose weight, for example, your approach and your success in reaching that end goal may rely on recognizing its impact on your life (awareness) and the value of changing it (motivation).

The next step is convincing yourself that you can do it, and finally being ready to do it. Understanding this transition can help transform your New Year's resolutions into permanent, positive behaviour.

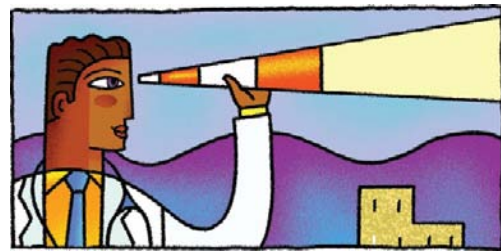
Once you understand change – and that it can challenge you – you can more easily proceed with a practical plan that guides you through your probable ups and downs.

Here are some strategies often used when setting goals:

Be specific. Write down how you will reach your goals step by step. *Example:* Instead of setting

JANUARY'S GOAL

Many people try to lose weight this time of year. Rather than choosing a fad diet with short-term results, simply eating less is usually the most effective and painless method.



LOOK TO A FUTURE OF BETTER HEALTH.

**National Non-Smoking Week
is January 18-24.**

**Mark your calendar for Weedless
Wednesday on January 21 to quit
smoking for good!**

- 7. Set an example.** If you don't smoke, your kids are less likely to light up.
- 8. Add years.** If you quit before age 50, you lower your risk of dying in the next 15 years by 50%, compared to people who keep smoking.
- 9. Socialize more.** Think of all the good times and people you'll enjoy in nonsmoking hangouts without having to frequently duck out to smoke.
- 10. Gain freedom.** You can stop arranging your life around smoke breaks – when you're finally tobacco-free!

a goal of losing weight by eating less, record the actions you will take to trim 5 pounds/ 2.27 kilograms in 2 months, such as walking 10 miles/16 kilometres a week.

Be realistic. That means attainable actions, not easy ones. Identify those within your reach *with effort*. Consider your time, budget and personal preferences. *Example:* You may want to stop all desserts all at once. But it's probably more realistic to cut back gradually on desserts.

Be watchful. Record your progress in a journal so you can track your success. It builds confidence and reinforces what you're working toward.

Be patient. For most people, change takes time and perseverance. Acknowledge and respect the gradual progress – it's better than no progress at all!

Be flexible. Setbacks or relapses when building new habits are to be expected. They're part of change. Always keep trying.

SAVE MORE, SPEND LESS

Flex Your Financial Muscle



It seems that everything – from groceries to gas – is getting more expensive. So how can you manage to save your hard-earned cash? Follow this advice to stretch your dollars.

Habits such as smoking are expensive, not to mention bad for your health. You'll feel better and boost your savings by quitting.

Having a get-together? Have a potluck so everyone shares in the expenses.

Tempted to buy on impulse? Enforce a cooling-off period of 1 week; then see if you're still interested. Can you live without it? If you can, don't buy it and bank the money instead.

Shop only when necessary and use a planned list. Try to use up what's in your pantry first. Frequent shopping trips may tempt you to buy items you don't need. *Tip:* Don't grocery shop when you are hungry.

Enjoy your area's free recreational and entertainment resources. Try hiking, biking, or walking in a local park. Go to free museums and exhibits. Attend free concerts.

Close doors and vents to unused rooms to save on heating and cooling costs.

Learn how to do simple home repair jobs. Home improvement centers often offer free workshops for projects.

Do you have a talent or special skill? Consider making gifts when possible.

Use your public library often, rather than buying new books and magazines.

Final thought: Learning to save more and spend less puts you more in control over your money. Start saving more today.

QUIZ: Headache Relief Naturally

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAPF

Most headaches involve abnormal nerve activity within your brain. Common triggers are stress, alcohol, lack of sleep and a variety of foods and environmental factors.

Test your knowledge:

1. Which is not a common headache trigger?

- a. Bright lights
- b. Strong odors
- c. Walking or jogging
- d. Stress and worry

2. What self-care technique may relieve a headache once it's started?

- a. Sit quietly or lie down
- b. Relax your body from head to toe
- c. Take slow, deep breaths
- d. All of the above

3. Stress management is effective for tension headaches. True False

4. Which alternative technique has not been shown to help headaches?

- a. Chelation therapy
- b. Biofeedback
- c. Guided imagery
- d. Hypnosis

5. Where is the best place to start for headache relief?

- a. Yellow pages
- b. Primary care provider
- c. Neurologist
- d. Occupational therapist

6. When headaches occur, they are typically severe or frequent. True False

Answers:

1. *c.* Regular exercise can reduce headache frequency. Physical activity stimulates the release of natural brain hormones called endorphins, which may also ease early headache pain.
2. *d.* Taking a warm shower, applying a warm or cool compress, or massaging your scalp or neck muscles may also help. The key is to ease the muscle tension causing the pain.
3. *True.* If you can reduce or control emotional stress before it causes muscle tension, you can reduce the frequency of your headaches.
4. *a.* Additional alternative approaches that may help include meditation, relaxation training, and cognitive behaviour therapy (counselling).
5. *b.* Talk to your provider about your treatment options. With the right guidance, self-care techniques and mind-body therapies may be just as beneficial for chronic headaches as taking medications. *American Family Physician, 11/15/07*
6. *False.* Most headaches are not frequent or severe; if they are, it's time to consult your provider. Also call if your headaches persist, are unusual or new, or you develop fever, visual problems, or other symptoms.

Q: Latest on vitamin D?

A: Vitamin D has recently made headlines. Research shows that many people may be at risk for a D deficiency. Vitamin D is vital to health with some potential benefits being studied, including:

Bones – The chief function of vitamin D is to maintain normal blood levels of calcium and phosphorus by promoting the absorption of these minerals from your intestinal tract. Once absorbed, your body uses the minerals to form and maintain strong bones. A vitamin D shortage may lead to bone diseases such as osteoporosis.

Cardiovascular system – Scientists have linked insufficient vitamin D to heart disease and high blood pressure.

Autoimmune disease – Vitamin D helps regulate your immune system. Lower blood levels have been linked to type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

Cancer – Preliminary research suggests low levels of D may be related to higher rates of cancer of the colon, breast, ovaries and prostate.

How can one nutrient have so many roles? Vitamin D does something no other vitamin does. It acts like a hormone, helping relay chemical messages around the body. This makes vitamin D indispensable in a wide range of health-related tasks.

How common is a shortage of the vitamin? Growing evidence suggests almost everyone is at risk for vitamin D deficiency. Indoor jobs or northern climates may elevate the risk because the skin produces D when exposed to sunlight.

To ensure you're getting enough vitamin D, know the sources:

- Salmon, mackerel, tuna and sardines; fortified milk, soy milk and orange juice; and some breads and cereals.
- Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) supplement; consult your provider about the amount.
- Sunlight exposure limited to 10-15 minutes twice a week to your face, arms, legs or back. (Apply sunscreen afterwards.)

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Cost-Saving Healthy Meals

Canadians are now facing spikes in basic grocery items. Statistics Canada reported in 2008 that prices of flour and pasta rose 44% and 36% respectively in the past year, while baked goods increased 12.3%. In the past 18 months, some regions are seeing double-digit percentage increases for eggs, flour, fryer chickens and milk.

With higher prices many consumers wonder if it's possible to still eat healthy. Some families opt for fast food meals, which offer cheap menu items – but they tend to be low in nutritive value and high in calories.

With a little planning, kitchen know-how and smart shopping, affordable and nutritious meals are just a shopping list away. Here's how to get the most from staples that are relatively inexpensive yet loaded with nutrition.

Beans and lentils: Use these powerhouse foods in place of expensive meat, poultry, or fish; they cost less, are low in fat and provide many of the same nutrients. Combine them with fresh vegetables and rice or pasta for a main course.



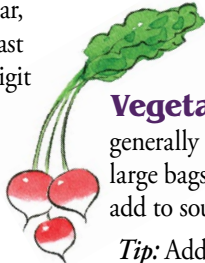
Tip: Canned or dried, legumes make nutritious, hearty soups. Start with our Incredibly Easy Split-Pea Soup recipe at right.



Brown rice and whole-grain pasta: These are affordable crowd pleasers when added to leftover meat and veggies.

Tip: Use them in stir-fries or to create main course salads.

Soups: Nutritious, satisfying and convenient, make extra for multiple meals. Save your vegetable trimmings and bones to make your own stock, and then add what's handy – veggies, pasta, rice or leftover meats or poultry.

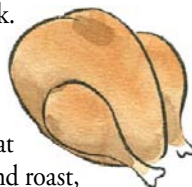


Vegetables and fruit: They are generally cheaper when bought in season. Stock large bags of frozen vegetables you can quickly add to soups, casseroles or dinner menus.

Tip: Add frozen fruit to blender drinks made with cost-saving nonfat dry milk.

Meats, poultry, fish:

Look for specials that can bring big savings. Try less expensive meat cuts such as chuck or bottom round roast, which work well in stews and casseroles. Buy cheaper whole chickens and cut them into serving size pieces.



Tip: Limit meat consumption; add extra vegetables and beans to make the meal go further. Enjoy more vegetarian fare.

HUNT FOR SPECIALS:

Shop stores that offer discounted or bulk items, such as poultry, meats, fish, breakfast cereals, and grains; you can repackage these foods into portions for your pantry or freezer. Take advantage of your grocer's day old bread and bakery products or discount bakeries that sell bread near its expiration date. Buy no name and value brand foods.



Recipe of the Month

Incredibly easy SPLIT-PEA SOUP

This soup makes a great lunch or dinner that is hearty and filling.

- 2 cups/474ml dried split peas, rinsed and drained
- 8 cups/1.9 litres low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, roughly chopped
- 3 stalks celery, roughly chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp/.52g pepper
- 1 ham bone or 1 cup/454g diced ham (optional)

- 1 Combine peas and broth and heat to boiling; boil uncovered 2 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 1 hour.
- 2 Stir in onion, celery and garlic. Add ham bone (if using).
- 3 Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 1½ hours or until peas are tender.
- 4 Remove ham bone and separate ham from bone. Trim excess fat from ham, then cut ham into ½-inch/1.27cm pieces.
- 5 Stir ham and carrots into soup.
- 6 Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 30 minutes or until carrots are tender and soup is desired consistency.

Nutrition Facts

Makes 11 cups/2.6 litres.

Amount Per Cup/238ml	Calories	165
	Protein	12.5g
	Total Fat	1.5g
	Total Carb	25.6g
	Fibre	10g
	Sodium	232mg