

# Your Health



# Healthy Resolutions

This year, consider your health and commit to making better decisions that boost your wellness.

Finding a support group who has the same mindset is a great way to keep yourself motivated throughout the year. Keep reading to learn more about these popular New Year's resolutions.

## QUIT SMOKING

Committing to quitting smoking now will reduce your chances of getting cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Don't be discouraged if you don't completely kick cigarettes on your first try; it can be challenging to rid your body of nicotine addiction.

Here are some motivational facts about how your body reacts after your last cigarette, according to the American Cancer Society.

**12 hours:** Carbon monoxide levels in your blood return to normal.

**2 weeks-3 months:** Circulation improves and lung function increases.

**1-9 months:** Coughing and shortness of breath decreases.

**1 year:** Excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of someone who still smokes.

## GET ACTIVE

Whether you decide to invest in a gym membership or commit to an at-home



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workout, increasing your activity is a way to improve physical and mental health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends adults participate in moderate-intensity activity for three to five hours per

week. Being active helps fight chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and numerous types of cancers.

## EATING HEALTHY

Resolve to enjoy more

nutritious meals in order to boost your mood and take control of your health. When shopping, try to buy most of your foods around the perimeter of a grocery store. Typically, that's where you'll find the freshest foods in the

produce, meat, dairy and deli departments. If you're unsure about building a new diet to give you benefits, consider sitting down with a nutritionist who can create a strategy based on your family history and lifestyle.

# Take Vitamins Seriously

Without eating a balanced, healthy diet, chances are your body may be lacking at least some of the nutrients it needs to operate efficiently. You can find out which vitamins you need to consume more of after simple tests at your doctor's office.

You may be tempted to substitute a healthy diet with one of the many multivitamins you find at your grocery store. However, the American Heart Association doesn't recommend solely relying on them for nutrition.

Instead, studies show that healthy people benefit by taking certain vitamin or mineral supplements above the daily recommended allowance. Test have been shown to lower rates of cardiovascular disease or the risk factors associated with it.

Here are some nutrients you should add to your diet on the road to getting healthy, from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. They are efficient in naturally boosting your vitamin intake.

## CALCIUM

This mineral is key to building strong bones and promot-



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ing better function for your heart, muscles and nerves. The Mayo Clinic states that reports even show calcium as a reinforcement to protect against cancers, diabetes and high blood pressure. Incorporate low-fat milk; plant-fortified milk, like almond or soy; and yogurt or cheese to give your body the calcium it needs. Greens like broccoli and beans are also high in the mineral.

## IRON

Being efficient in iron preserves numerous vital functions our bodies rely on, including general focus and energy, gastrointestinal health and enhancing the immune system.

Foods that are packed with iron include fortified-breakfast cereals, eggs and beans. A deficiency can sometimes lead to anemia which results

in being tired or having shortness of breath.

## VITAMIN D

This super mineral is efficient in maintaining bones and teeth health, regulating insulin levels, supporting lung and cardiovascular function and promoting health of the immune, brain and nervous system.

Unfortunately, the U.S.

National Library of Medicine estimates that over a billion people worldwide are deficient in vitamin D. To add more to your life, spend more time in the sunlight as it helps your body naturally produce it.

Foods you can add are seafood like salmon, shrimp, and oysters, or eat mushrooms and egg yolks if you're not a fan of fish.

# Motivation for Better Health

If you have been feeling down lately, the key to getting out of the slump may be health related. According to the Harvard Medical School, one in 10 adults in the United States struggle with depression. Research shows that exercise is an effective way to treat the condition and can even work as well or better than antidepressants.

Common symptoms of depression include reduced energy, appetite changes and increased pain perception.

So, how do you find the motivation to get into a new routine and change your mental mindset? Experts at Harvard suggest starting slowly to get your body used to being active before increasing your level of physical activity.

Here is some motivation to get started and keep the momentum going, there is a happier version of you waiting to get active.

## HOW DOES EXERCISE IMPROVE MOODS?

Physical activity is an important contributor to pos-



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itive mental health. The JED Foundation, an emotional health nonprofit for teens and young adults, offers these benefits of becoming active.

- Improves mood and mental health by releasing endorphins through your body to reduce anxiety and depressed moods while enhancing self-esteem.

- Boosts energy and brainpower by delivering oxygen and nutrients to the brain and various tissues.

- Prevents illnesses like high blood pressure, strokes and

heart disease.

- Improves your quality of sleep and helps you fall asleep faster.

## CLEAN DIET

Along with an active lifestyle, taking your diet seriously can provide you with a more positive mindset. Experts at the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research have found that a healthy diet protects us from risk factors associated with depression and anxiety.

By loading up with healthy nutrients, vitamins can become the protein-building blocks and neurotransmitters that transfer information and signals between various parts of the brain and body.

Gut health is another area that is growing in finding a relationship between food and moods. Increase the number of probiotics in your diet to maintain a healthy gut environment and decrease inflammation in the body, which ultimately affects our cognition. Foods rich with

probiotics include sauerkraut, olives, pickles and coconut.

## IMPROVED SELF-PERCEPTION

Taking control of your health also promotes more self-esteem by improving the perception you have of yourself. Overcome the obstacles of becoming active and maintaining a healthy diet by logging your journey with pictures or diary entries. Looking back on the process can keep you motivated once you see how far you have come.

# Join a Sports Team

Working to improve yourself without companions cheering you on can make it hard to stay motivated. If you feel comfortable with your physical ability or you just need help getting over a plateau, joining a team sport or event can give you the drive you need to take your health to the next level.

Being on a sports team or committing to an event like a 5K holds you responsible to train and perform your best.

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF DIFFERENT SPORTS

When choosing a type of sport to pursue, consider the benefits you desire most. Are you looking for mostly physical gains, social enhancements or something to strengthen your brainpower? Here are a few common team sports or groups you can look for and how participation can contribute to your health.

**Softball:** Joining a league with your peers, provides total human body conditioning. You will promote positive anaerobic benefits, flexibility, self-esteem and cardiovascular strength.

**Basketball:** This can be played indoors or out, so cold

weather won't get in the way of improved motor skills, strength and condition and reducing stress.

**Golf:** If rigorous physical activity is not in the cards, golf offers a way to reduce stress or anxiety, problem solve and participate in a low-intensity cardio activity on the links.

## BREAKING OUT OF YOUR SHELL

Social and performance anxiety may be triggered by team sports, but a study by the Journal of Clinical Sports Psychology shows that children who took part in team sports had far fewer anxiety symptoms. A way to overcome the

fear of participating is to meet with a team in a low-pressure setting. This can make you feel more comfortable once the games begin and may even create lifelong friendships.

## RECRUIT OTHERS WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING

If you know someone who

is struggling with social anxiety or becoming more active, invite them to join your team. It may be the invitation they have been waiting for to take control of their health. Together, you can give each other advice and support each other through a new journey.



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# Stay Healthy While Traveling

For many, a New Year's resolution includes exploring new locations and embracing different cultures. If you are planning to leave your comfortable routine and embark on the lifestyle of travel, you should be cautious of falling ill in unfamiliar territory.

Before traveling, talk to your doctor about the locations you intend to visit. They can recommend immunizations for common ailments you may be exposed to and recommend specific instructions about staying well.

While traveling it can be difficult to stick to the healthy lifestyle you are accustomed to at home. Since your routine will be vastly different, it's incredibly important to take care of yourself while you're embarking on brand-new experiences. Here are some ways to keep yourself safe while traveling abroad.

## STAY HYDRATED

According to the American Heart Association, staying hydrated helps the heart more easily pump blood through the vessels to our muscles. This can take a great strain off the organ which has to work harder when dehydration sets in.

The amount of water you require can differ based on climatic conditions, the clothing you're wearing, and how much you're moving. Keep in mind, thirst is not a good indicator of being dehydrated; if you're thirsty, it's already happening.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Dark-colored or strong-smelling urine.
- Passing urine less often than usual.
- Intense thirst and dry mouth.
- Tiredness or feeling lightheaded.

If you're traveling abroad in an area without clean drinking water, it's crucial to find a source for purified drinks immediately.

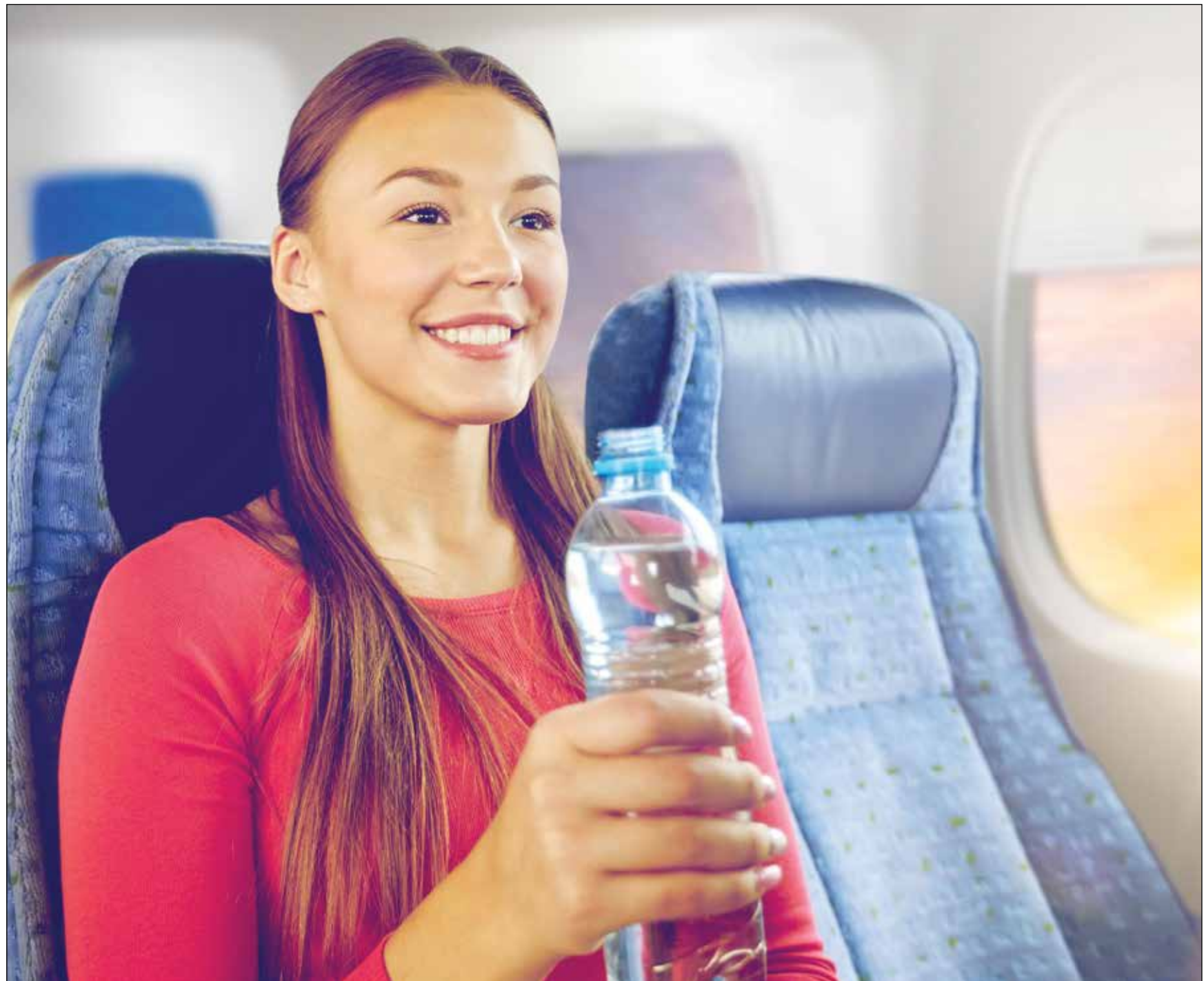
## PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY

Your body is efficient in alerting you when something is wrong. Whether you're suffering from stomach pains, irritability or tiredness, it's a good idea to seek a doctor. The solution may be as easy as eating better, taking medication or getting more sleep. If you're in an unfamiliar location, familiarize yourself with medical professionals upon arrival.

## STAY ACTIVE

When you're on a lavish vacation or traveling abroad, it's important to maintain your physical activity. Take advantage of attractive hiking trails or free gyms in the hotel you are staying in.

By staying active, your body will be prepared when you return home and get back to your normal routine.



# Think Positive

When things aren't going your way, it's easy to shut yourself off from the world and assume everything will get worse. Practicing positive thinking can remove the invisible rain cloud and let in the sunshine.

An encouraging report from John Hopkins Medicine says that people with a family history of heart disease who also had a positive outlook were one-third less likely to have a heart attack within five to 25 years than those with a negative outlook.

If you feel like your attempts at overcoming depression or anxiety are falling short, it's crucial to visit a doctor. They can determine the complexity of the issue and strategize a solution or refer you to an expert who excels in mental health. Here are some ways a positive outlook can improve your life.

## IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS

Once you begin working on changing your perspective to include positive thinking, you should analyze the types of people you associate with. Of course, your improved attitude will attract those with a similar mindset and help you flourish with new relationships. So, how do you manage



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friendships with those who may challenge your happier lifestyle?

While it may be tough to completely cut people out of your life, you can try to influence their attitude by showing them compassion and explaining the difference you

feel through positive thinking.

## REWARDING YOURSELF

When you begin improving the way your mind works, be sure to congratulate yourself with small rewards. Take account of negative situations

and how positive thinking changes the outcome you may have created previously. Little treats like a cheat meal while dieting or buying yourself satisfying items from your rainy day fund are great ways to keep positive thinking at the forefront of your mind.

## WORK PERFORMANCE

Another benefit you will experience by changing your perspective is a heightened performance at work. When your mind is clear from negative thoughts, you are free to problem solve and brainstorm without distractions.

# Body Weight Training

Not every fit body is made in the gym. In fact, you can gain the shape of your dreams by using one piece of equipment — your body. A strict training regimen combined with a nutrient-heavy diet can give you swimsuit season confidence.

Calisthenics is a form of exercise that works a variety of movements to encourage the growth of large muscle groups. This form of activity is great for those who prefer to work out in the comfort of their home rather than traveling to a gym.

Getting started takes strict motivation to stick with a new routine but can produce incredible gains when done properly. Here are some efficient exercises you can add to your home workout. Be sure you document the results to motivate your family and friends.

## **PUSHUPS**

A staple in a calisthenics workout, the pushup is an exercise used to strengthen your core muscles and inspire proper bench-pressing form once you're around equipment. Once you master a traditional pushup, try some of the more challenging types like



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one-handed and explosive pushups or use a resistance band.

## **ABDOMINAL WORKOUT**

You have surely seen exercise programs that promise six-minute abs. Unfortunately, building a six-pack is more involved than a few gimmicky

workouts. Strengthen your abdominal core with crunches, left-, right- and front planks and back extensions. You should also pay attention to your eating habits as every belly has a six-pack just waiting to become prominent. Losing body fat can increase the visibility of the abs you are toning.

## **JUMPING JACKS**

The tried-and-true method you probably learned in grade-school gym class is still valuable in your adult years. Jumping jacks are an awesome way to improve endurance levels, enhance circulation and increase your metabolic rate.

Plan to add this activity to

your regular calisthenics routine. They provide movement that encourages growth in our calves, glutes and hamstrings. Try to practice the workout with different intensities, sets and reps to change up the program and add new challenges for yourself.

For more ideas, check in with your local trainer or fitness specialist. They will be able to customize a plan for your particular goals and exercise abilities.