

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU...?

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As January rolls around again the Christmas adverts are swiftly replaced by holidays, gym memberships and diets as part of the New Year New You process that occurs annually. Gyms are packed and weight loss groups see an increase in memberships as we all try to undo the effects of the festive period.

Unfortunately for many, by the time we reach February (mid-January...) the gym is a just a memory, the diet has been ditched and we have returned to hibernation until springtime. Of course there are those who didn't let Christmas interrupt the diet and fitness regime and also those who start in January and keep going but they are in the minority.

We are all so aware of the effects of exercise and healthy eating but it remains a struggle for many to put the information and knowledge into action and even more of a struggle to maintain it long term.

Regular physical activity is associated with;

- up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
 - up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes
 - up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer
 - a 30% lower risk of early death
 - up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis
 - up to a 30% lower risk of depression
 - up to a 30% lower risk of dementia
- (NHS Choices)

The message couldn't be clearer, exercise and activity combined with eating well are consistently shown to be excellent in the management and prevention of many short and long term health conditions.

Despite this only 53% of people in Northern Ireland meet the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week. 60% of the Northern Irish population are classed as overweight or obese and only 36% of adults reach their target of eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day (*Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency*).

New Year is a great time to try to make some positive changes to become healthier or more active. However, according to the NHS, only 1 in 10 people stick to their New Year resolution! How can you make it more likely that you will succeed?



Top Tips to keep up the New Year's resolutions

1) Think about why you want to make the changes. Is it for a specific health reason, to prevent an illness, to be able to be more active with children or grandchildren? Concentrating on the reason can help you maintain changes even when temptation hits.

2) Consider the barriers to your changes and think about how to overcome them. What will you do if it is pouring with rain and you are meant to go for a walk or a run? What happens if you are out for dinner and there are no healthy options? Having a plan for how to deal with the barriers will help stop any of the potential excuses.

3) Set a goal. Having a goal often makes a huge difference. Goals should be SMART

- Specific - Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Make the goal as clear as possible.

- Measurable – how much or how often? Will you walk for 30minutes 3 times a week? Will you eat 5 pieces of fruit or veg 5 days a week? How will you know when you have achieved the goal?

- Achievable – can you fit it in, can you manage it physically?

- Realistic – is it possible?

- Timed – when will you aim to achieve the goal?

4) Make a plan (and stick to it). Often writing a plan down and filling in details as you go helps

5) Be accountable, tell people what you are doing and why. Often this is a huge help, if walking is your goal then ask a friend, partner or neighbour to join you.

6) Get started!

Whatever your resolution is good luck and keep going!

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