



5 New Year's resolutions that are easy to make — and KEEP

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Looking for some quick and easy ways to be healthier in 2018? Here's some advice from experts around the country.



Every year, millions of Americans make New Year's resolutions and, by February, approximately 80 percent of them have already failed.[1] Whether it's a lack of motivation to keep a resolution or simply setting unrealistic expectations, failing to achieve a goal can negatively affect your self-esteem and mental health. The key is to set several small, simple goals and watch your tiny victories add up to big wins.

We talked with some of the country's leading health experts to identify five easy resolutions to make — and keep! — in 2018. Here's what they had to say.

1. Floss daily



Flossing is important to your oral health, but also your overall health. (Photo: Getty Images)

Flossing is vital to maintaining a healthy mouth, but did you know it can help prevent other health issues, too?

“The oral cavity is a gateway to your body. Being proactive with preventive dental care is absolutely linked to preventing other diseases and sicknesses — and flossing your teeth is your easiest first line of defense,” says Dr. Michael Tischler, DDS.[2]

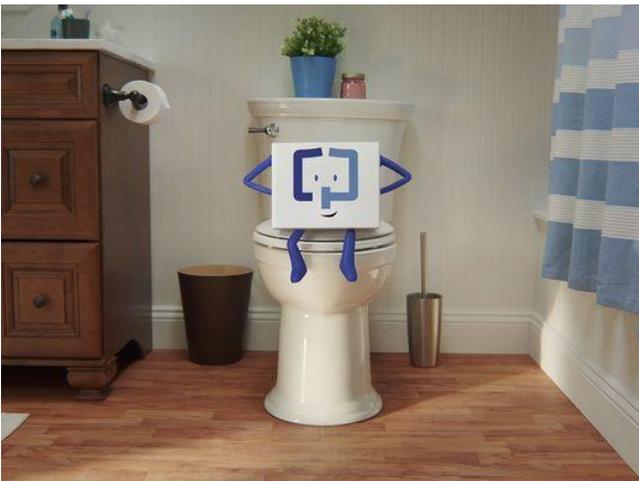
The bacteria that lead to periodontal disease and tooth loss, Dr. Tischler explains, can travel to other parts of the body.

“There have been many studies linking the loss of teeth to an increased risk in suffering from heart disease,” he says. “Missing teeth will also impact digestion, getting proper nutrition, and, of course, self-esteem. Flossing is the first step in avoiding these potential risks.”

Dr. Joel L. Strom, of Beverly Hills-based Dr. Strom & Associates, admits that flossing is mundane — but it’s not a reason to avoid flossing.[3]

“Proper flossing should take a minute, maybe 90 seconds,” he says. “But you only have to floss the teeth you want to keep. [My] best tip is to leave your floss alongside your toothbrush. You will have to willfully *not* pick it up.”

2. Call your doctor to schedule a physical



Talk with your doctor about simple, in-home preventative options like Cologuard. (Photo: Cologuard)

With so many other obligations — work, kids, your family, etc. — it’s easy to put your own health on the back burner. But the few minutes it takes to schedule a check-up with your primary care physician is worth the effort. During the visit, ask your doctor about any preventative screenings and tests that may apply to you, such as checking your blood pressure, prostate exam, mammogram, skin cancer screening, pap smear or colorectal cancer screening.

For colorectal cancer, “Early detection is crucial,” says Kevin Conroy, CEO and president of Wisconsin-based Exact Sciences. The company developed a convenient, non-invasive colorectal cancer screening test called [Cologuard](#), the first and only stool DNA test approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. “Through early detection of colorectal cancer, for example, 90 percent of people survive. If caught in the latest stage, the survival rate drops drastically to only one in 10.”

Cologuard is meant for people 50 years and older, and at average risk for colorectal cancer. It doesn’t require advance prep and can be used in the privacy of your home.[4] To better understand if Cologuard is right for you and understand all your options, [download this discussion guide](#) to help you talk to your health care provider.

3. Stop juicing your fruits and vegetables



You may be missing out on important vitamins and nutrients if this is how you consume most of your fruits and vegetables. (Photo: Getty Images)

A change in consumer preferences has led to the growth of the juicing trend, and a sharp rise in the number of juice and smoothie shops nationwide — now a \$2 billion industry.[5] But if you want to be healthier in 2018, set a goal to choose whole fruits and veggies over juices.

“Juicing is rich in nutrients, but once the pulp and fiber are removed, the sugar from the juice enters the bloodstream more quickly than if you were eating an actual fruit or vegetable in its whole form,” explains Danielle Pashko, a New York-based nutritionist.[6] Pashko also says juicing contains more calories and eliminates the fiber and antioxidant-rich flavonoids available in whole fruits and vegetables, so you don’t stay as full.

Brittany Stucklen, a nutritionist and weight loss consultant at Medifast Weight Control Centers of California, advises eating pears, raspberries, blackberries, kale, carrots, and beets in their whole form versus juicing them.[7] Eating whole beets, she says, can improve heart health and give you an energy boost.

4. Eat slowly and chew your food 10-30 times



Take time to enjoy your food – a benefit to your physical and mental health. (Photo: Getty Images)

Eating slowly has myriad of benefits aside from allowing you to savor the flavor a little longer. But most importantly, it keeps you from overeating.

“When you eat slowly, you may end up pushing half of your food to the side and saving it for another meal,” explain Pashko, adding that this simple change can aid in weight loss.

You also should be mindful of how much you are chewing your food. While you don’t need to count your bites, Pashko says a good guideline is up to 10 chews for soft foods like fruits and vegetables and up to 30 for harder-to-digest foods, like tough meats.

“Chewing your food thoroughly will help to produce sufficient stomach acid to aid in digestion and also breaks down larger particles of food to smaller particles that are more easily absorbed by the intestines,” she says.

5. Go to bed 15 minutes earlier



A simple change to your sleep routine can have a big impact on your wellbeing. (Photo: Getty Images/iStockphoto)

We are a sleep-deprived society, says Dr. Marc Milstein, whose work focuses on the science of sleep. “Getting more sleep is a fantastic and critical goal.”[8]

The amount of sleep you need varies by person, but Dr. Millstein says you should keep adding minutes of sleep until you are waking up feeling mentally and physically refreshed. Fifteen minutes is a simple, attainable goal with which to start. You can increase or decrease the time from there.

“A great goal is to wake up naturally without an alarm clock,” he advises. “This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t use an alarm clock, it just means we want to get enough sleep so that we wake up naturally before the alarm goes off. Think of your alarm clock as a safety net, but you want to wake up naturally, when your brain and body have had enough sleep. Waking up naturally can drastically improve how you feel throughout the day.”

Science also has shown that ample sleep preserves our memory and brain, and can help fight off colds and viruses — and not getting enough of it can be devastating.

“Physical benefits of sleep are enormous,” says Dr. Adam Splaver, a South Florida-based cardiologist.[9] “Sleep deprivation can cause blood pressure problems, heart rhythm disturbances; it can increase your risk of stroke and heart attack and can cause hormonal imbalances such as cortisol, thyroid, and insulin. Lack of sleep will affect your memory, your sex drive, mental clarity, your focus and your mood.”

Footnotes

[1] U.S. News & World Report. Why 80 Percent of New Year’s Resolutions Fail.

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