

In 2012, resolve to focus on health



For most people, good health - both physical and emotional - is at the top of your priorities list in the New Year. According to the US government's official website, USA.gov, getting fit, eating healthy food, weight loss, managing stress, and quitting smoking, are among top resolutions Americans make each year.

Good health is the basis of our overall quality of life, which is why it is so important to put it first. Whether you want to prevent the most common diseases or manage the ones you may already have, you should start focusing on these goals right away. Though this doesn't come as news to anyone, it is worth repeating that the best way to ensure good health and longevity is through regular physical activity and sensible eating habits. Here's why:

Prevent Obesity: Physical activity and weight control prevent obesity - a true national epidemic - and, subsequently, a slew of illnesses such as heart disease (the leading cause of death in the United States), diabetes, stroke, and several kinds of cancer.

Feel-Good Endorphins: exercise elevates the levels of serotonin, which improves our mood

and reduces stress, anxiety and depression.

Increased oxygen-rich blood flow: increased flow of oxygen to the brain, encourage the formation of new brain cells. Studies show that exercise reduces the risk of Alzheimer's, as well as other mental conditions like dementia.

Exercise Increases Muscle Mass: which is the basis for improved metabolism and strength.

Physical fitness strengthens the bones: improves mobility, relieves pains, aches and stiffness of arthritis, keeps joints and tendons more flexible and fights osteoporosis.

Calorie-restricted diet: based on whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy, and lean protein will keep your weight under control and be beneficial to health in general.

Now that you know WHY exercise is essential for a healthy body and mind, here's the HOW to improve your exercise routines:

- Brisk, vigorous activity that raises your heart rate and breathing for an extended period of

time. For example, interval training is the quickest way to get fit, burn lots of fat and calories, build cardiovascular endurance, and improve strength and agility. And since this form of exercise speeds up your metabolism and fat oxidation longer than traditional steady-state cardio, you will continue to burn calories and fat for hours after you finish your workout.

- Strength training can include workouts with weights, or use your own body for resistance by doing squats, lunges, push-ups, and planks, among other exercises.
- Flexibility and balance exercises will keep joints supple, relieve stiffness, and help prevent potentially serious fractures due to falls.

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