

A New Year's Challenge or Two

These 10 simple things – that you already know you can do—can help you feel good and improve your quality of life this New Year. Think it through. Choose one, or two, or all and enjoy the benefits of a healthier lifestyle in 2004! If you complete ALL the challenges, you may have to develop some bad habits next year just to stay humble!

1. Walk, bike, jog, swim, dance, or play for 30 minutes every day.

You know that physical activity stimulates the body and mind—*this year actually do it.*

2. Drink water in place of a soft drink or a beer.

You will save about 150 calories each time you do. If you did this every day for a year you would save over 50,000 calories or the equivalent of 15 pounds of body fat. Just imagine how good you'd look by NEXT New Year!

3. Choose more unrefined plant based foods...
...and fewer animal foods high in cholesterol and saturated fat. Plant based foods can help you save calories, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level, and improve your health. Fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and whole grains form the basis of healthy eating. Think green.

4. Choose healthy carbohydrates.

You don't have to eliminate all carbohydrates to maintain a healthy weight, just choose healthy ones. **Replace** white bread, white rice, sweets, and snack foods **with** whole wheat bread, brown rice, fresh fruits, berries, melons, oranges, green salads, broccoli, tomatoes, green onions, peppers, peas, lentils, beans, and soy. Yum!

5. Limit entertainment time in front of the TV...

...to an hour a day during work/school days and to 2 hours on weekends. Look for other fun physical activities, hobbies, and learning opportunities that strengthen your body and mind.

6. Strengthen relationships

(Be a better spouse, parent, grandparent, and friend.) Plan something special every month so you can spend quality time with family members or friends. Organize a weekend outing, a special date, a trip, eating out, or helping someone accomplish a life goal they choose. If far apart, keep in contact by email or phone. Enjoy the time together.

7. Relax. Have fun every day.

Enjoy healthy pleasures—a warm bath, listening to relaxing music, enjoying nature, developing a new hobby, or playing with your kids, grandkids, or dog.

8. Do something special for someone each day.

Surprise somebody! Give a deserved compliment. Help someone who needs assistance. Congratulate a friend. Give a gift. Be generous with your time. Make someone else's life better and see what it does for your own life.

9. See your doctor and ask for help...
...in meeting health needs (maintaining a healthy weight, lowering cholesterol, or achieving a healthy blood pressure), and getting preventive checks. Asking for help, when needed, is a sign of strength, not weakness. Get a benefit for all that health insurance you pay!

10. Plan a quiet time each day.

Read a good book, meditate, pray, plan you life. Stay in touch with your inner needs. Set personal goals. Keep a journal of your progress. Celebrate small achievements. Keep your life open to new insights and experiences.

Have a healthy, fun-filled year in 2004!

Don Hall, DrPH, CHES, and Wellsource Staff, Jan. 1, 2004