

## Start fresh in the new year

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The holidays are over and you've gained your typical five to seven pounds. You want to get healthy in the new year but have no idea what to do or where to start.

To think "healthy," don't think "diet." Diets don't work long term, but permanent changes in behavior will. And even little changes can affect your health significantly.

Here are 10 simple things you can do to start fresh in the new year. Remember: Every day and every meal are new opportunities to make better choices. Perhaps this will finally be your year!

1. Eat three meals a day. Skipping meals is a common denominator among my clients with weight issues. When you skip meals, your metabolism slows down and the next meal "sticks" to you. Eating three meals a day at regular times will regulate your digestion, hormones and blood sugar.

2. Eat at the dinner table, not in front of the TV. When we eat while doing other things, eating becomes mechanical and we eat more. At dinner we should gather as a family and share in each other's day. You will be amazed at what your kids tell you. So turn off the TV and eat together.

3. Put down your fork between bites and eat slowly. It takes 20 minutes for your body to know whether it is full. Putting down your fork between bites will slow you down and help you feel full. You do not have to eat for the entire 20 minutes, but taking this time will help you feel more satisfied with your meal and help prevent snacking.

4. Choose brown rice and whole-wheat pasta over white rice and refined pasta. Eating grains in their whole form - such as brown rice, barley and millet - will add nutrients and fiber to your diet. Switching to whole-wheat pasta and bread will help, too. The added fiber moves fat and toxins out of your body more quickly. I wish more restaurants in Twin Falls offered brown rice. To date, I know of only Crowley's and Rock Creek. If there are others, please let me know.

5. Substitute beans for meat one meal a week. This reduces the amount of saturated fat in your diet. Beans are a wonderful (and tasty) source of protein and fiber. Toro Viejo, La Fiesta, Chili's and New York Burrito are some local restaurants offering healthy bean dishes and sides. Try them, and perhaps you will add more beans to meals.

6. Choose organic whenever possible. It is important to nourish ourselves with the best-quality products available. One way is to buy organic food whenever possible. It is free of hormones, antibiotics, additives, colorings and synthetic chemicals and fertilizers. Fred Meyer, Plum Natural and Mercia's Natural Foods carry the widest selections of organic produce and products. The benefits are worth the little extra it might cost.

7. Eat real food instead of low-fat, no-fat food. If you choose to eat ice cream, cookies or candy, eat the real thing instead of a low-fat or no-fat version. Your body knows how to deal with eggs, milk and sugar but has no idea what to do with additives and preservatives. If you need a science degree to read the label, perhaps you shouldn't eat that food.

8. Park farther away in the parking lot. If you don't have time to take a walk or go to the gym, you can still benefit by making your life more active in little ways. Parking farther away in the

lot will help. Walking a total of 30 minutes a day, not consecutively, still has a positive effect on your body.

9. Chew your food well and do not drink with your meals. The contributing factor to not chewing well is drinking with meals. People use their drinks to wash down their food. The more we chew, the more nutrients we receive from our food and the stronger our intestines will be. So, drink either before or after your meal and chew, chew, chew!

10. Weigh yourself once a month instead of daily. I am not a fan of scales. Weighing daily can really do a "number" on our psyches. If it is a "good" number, we often eat more or binge. If it is a "bad" number, it ruins our day. Weight can fluctuate daily for many reasons. We know by the fit of our clothes how well we are doing. So free yourself and put your scale away.

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