

Ottawa Journal: have a happy and healthy New Year!

The Christmas and New Year's holiday season is a wonderful time of the year. Part of what makes the season special is the many festive foods. By the time New Year's Eve arrives at the end of the holiday season, a common resolution many of us make is to try to eat better and exercise more in the New Year. However, it can be difficult to stick to such resolutions when many of our favourite holiday foods are still available, coupled with the onset of winter which often tempts us to stay indoors and not be as physically active as we would like to be. The Healthy Canadians website can help each of us successfully maintain our better health resolutions throughout the year ahead with some helpful tips and guidance.

Healthy Canadians (<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca>) is our Government's website to provide Canadians with reliable, clear, and concise health and safety information. It's a resource which provides information on a wide spectrum of topics ranging from drugs, health, and consumer products to food and nutrition.

The Healthy Canadians website also offers five tips to help Canadians stick to our New Year's resolution of eating better and exercising more. The first tip is to take small steps. If we are realistic about what we want to change with our eating patterns and behaviours, we're more likely to succeed. The website also suggests becoming familiar with Canada's Food Guide (<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>) and to start out slowly by identifying three small goals for ourselves instead of one large goal which may be unattainable, leading to frustration and eventually surrendering to old eating habits.

The second tip from the Healthy Canadians website is to be specific. This means giving greater thought to healthier foods to add to our diet, rather than focusing on what we want to remove. It is suggested to write those down or use My Food Guide (<http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/food-guide-aliment/my-guide-mon-guide/index-eng.php>) to create a customized plan for healthy eating that's best-suited to our own needs. By making small changes over a period of time, tracking success becomes easier to do and we have a sense of achievement when we've reached those goals. It will also encourage us to stay on our path to better eating.

Another tip is to tap into our network. This means if we have the right support system in place while we're making these positive changes, we will be in a better position to maintain our New Year's resolution. We can do this by having our families become involved or inviting a friend or colleague to join us on our resolution for a healthier year ahead.

Fourthly, try and try again. It's natural to have setbacks when we're undertaking a resolution for better eating and living. However, the most important thing to keep in mind is to accept the setback and return to our healthy plan by trying again.

Lastly, the Healthy Canadians website suggests celebrating our success. When we've reached a goal, we can reward ourselves with an exciting family outing, enjoy some time with friends, or identify another way to celebrate reaching the milestone.

Another suggestion from the Healthy Canadians website for sticking to our New Year's resolutions is to shop and stock up for health. This means to plan ahead for the grocery store to ensure we make healthier choices, such as: planning ahead with a shopping list; keeping stock in our homes of foods we've bought and cooked ahead to ensure we always have a 'plan B' in the fridge, freezer, and pantry; and reading labels.

The Healthy Canadians website also suggests stepping our way to increased physical activity. It's a worthwhile investment that can help prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and depression. It can be as simple as walking the dog or climbing the stairs. The key thing to remember is to start slowly and progressively increase the activity. For more tips on becoming physically active, please visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/pa-ap/04paap-eng.php>.

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to make better food choices and increase your physical activity, I hope these tips and suggestions from the Healthy Canadians website prove to be helpful for a healthier year ahead. I also wish you and your loved ones a very Happy New Year and all the very best for 2015!

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