

Your quick and simple guide to a healthier 2019 ~ Cassie Richardson

If your New Year's resolutions to adopt healthier habits rarely last past mid-February, you may need to make better ones.

The inability to stick with a new fitness routine or eating plan could mean your goals are neither realistic nor right for you, says Dr. Katina Hope, a family practice physician at Advocate Trinity Hospital in Chicago.

"You are more likely to stick with lifestyle changes when they are made in small increments and when you enjoy the new behavior you're adopting," Dr. Hope explains. "After all, who says living a healthy lifestyle has to be all hard work with no fun?"

Many people believe losing weight or getting into shape means saying goodbye to much of what we enjoy in life, Dr. Hope says. She suggests moving away from restrictive resolutions and instead focusing on life's joys to achieve your 2019 healthy goals. She offers the following four mantras to help:

1. **Eat more healthy fat:** Over the long haul, low-carb, low-fat diets can not only become boring; they are also less effective at burning fat. Research shows eating healthy fats can significantly boost your heart health, reduce insulin levels and manage body weight more effectively.
2. **Limit your cardio:** Over exercising can increase the amount of stress on your heart. Getting 30 minutes of moderate-intensity cardio with a few additional minutes of strength training most days is sufficient to lose or maintain a healthy weight.
3. **Work less:** It's important to make time for breaks and healthy activities, during your workday.
4. **Sleep more:** Getting seven to nine hours of sleep every night can give your brain the power it needs to balance appetite-controlling hormones and make it easier to make wise food choices.

Dr. Hope says the key to lifestyle change is to avoid feeling deprived. She recommends substituting junk food for healthy snacks and meal selections you enjoy. Likewise, she recommends overcoming gym aversion by trading treadmills and other exercise machines for activities that better suit your interests, including walking, dancing, swimming or playing tennis.

Advocate Health Enews, January 10, 2019

Wishing you joy and good health,
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