

4 Steps To A Healthy New Year!

Ease yourself into better lifestyle habits that you'll never want to give up

Healthy diet, meditation, giving up alcohol and keeping fit – make 2019 the year you take them all up!

Whatever your plans for a healthier new you, they're bound to involve tweaking your diet. But where to start?

With so much conflicting advice, it's tempting to ignore it all and just eat whatever you fancy. In fact, studies have shown that it is possible to eat your normal diet but still lose weight and improve a raft of health problems by simply changing the time-span within which you eat your meals. The research shows that consuming all your day's food within an eight or ten hour window, then fasting for the remaining 14 or 16 hours, has numerous benefits – and ones you'll love.

"It can help you manage type 2 diabetes and also has anti-ageing effects by giving your cells a restorative break," says Dr Campbell Murdoch, a GP, Chief Medical Officer of Diabetes.co.uk, and Clinical Advisor to the NHS England Sustainable Improvement Team.

Within this plan, if you're sticking to an eight hour

window, you may start breakfast at 9.30am and finish supper at 5.30pm. For a 10 hour window, you could eat breakfast at 9.30 and finish supper by 7.30pm. After this, you must eschew all snacks, alcohol, and sweet or milky drinks until your next day's eating window starts.

In theory you can then eat what you like. But in reality you should stick within healthy eating guidelines, points out Kirsty Bamping of the British Dietetic Association. "That means eating from all the food groups and including at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, along with high fibre and wholegrain foods, protein (pulses, meat and at least two portions of fish in a week, one of which should be oily), as well as some dairy."

For Dr Murdoch, you can get all the benefits and your necessary food and calories if, within your eating window, you have one or two decent sized meals

and no snacks, instead of the typical three meals and two snacks a day that a lot of us still live by.

You may also need to look at your portion sizes. That's because our calorie needs decline with age. By your 50s you may only need 1,600 or 1,800 calories a day to maintain your current weight.

Changing what and when you eat is never easy, but it becomes a whole lot more appealing once you start seeing pay-offs like increased energy, a trimmer waistline, and glowing skin.

Using a food diary to monitor your eating habits will make you stop and think before reaching for that biscuit



Aileen

I've Stopped Drinking!

"I was never a big drinker, but most nights started with a 6pm aperitif followed by a glass of wine with dinner. And most mornings I felt lousy when I walked our Border Terrier," says Aileen Anderson, 57, who started the OYNB (oneyearnobeer.com) challenge in 2017.

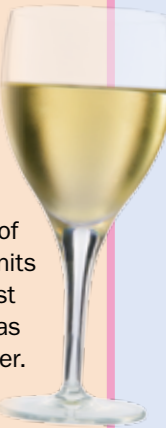
"Despite an emotionally turbulent year, I still managed 365 days without a drink and the thought of alcohol is now alien to me.

"I've swapped the 6pm aperitif for meditation. I've taken up yoga, and my morning dog walks are now a complete joy. My previously high blood pressure and cholesterol are now normal. I've lost weight, gained energy, and my skin looks amazing!"

3 Habits Worth Tweaking

♦ Alcohol

You may think it helps you relax, but alcohol is a stimulant and can tamper with your sleep. It also raises your risk of breast cancer. To stick below the recommended maximum of 14 units a week, remember that a large 250ml glass of white wine is 3.2 units and contains almost the same calories as a McDonald's burger. Try swapping over to lime and soda.



♦ Sugar

If you can't tame your sweet tooth, try swapping sugar in your drinks for a healthier sweetener such as granulated Hermesetas. "It could save you 28,000 calories in a year!" says dietician Dr Carrie Ruxton. "You can also use it to bake lower calorie cakes."

♦ Meat

Stick to small portions of lean, preferably grass fed, meats – but cut down on bacon and salami because the processing they've gone through makes them a potential health hazard. →



Get Moving Feel Fabulous!

Make this the year that you set yourself the goal of getting fitter – and stick to it

Start off by managing your expectations – this is really important and will prevent you from sabotaging your efforts before you even begin! Don't attempt to write yourself an exercise programme that you'll never have enough time for. Instead look for activities that you'll love to do – they'll be so much easier to fit into your life.

"As well as looking at the reality of the amount of spare time you have, you need to be absolutely honest with yourself about the kind of person you are," says Behaviour Change Psychologist Dr Aria Campbell-Danesh (dr-aria.com). "Don't get hung up on the newest, trendiest thing to do, and don't try to keep up with the Jones's either. Just because your best friend swears by yoga, or your neighbour is doing awesomely with her Couch to 5k programme, doesn't mean you have to do the same – or that you're a failure if you can't!"

"If you know you're gregarious and motivated by being around other people, then think about joining a running club or signing up for a team sport.

"However, if you're more reserved and like your own company, why not borrow a dog to take for regular walks? Or check out local classes that won't involve too much interacting with the other participants.

"If you know you have a creative and enquiring mind, and you're also quite co-ordinated, you're likely to get a lot out of a dance class or a martial art, such as tai chi, which will challenge both body and mind," says Dr Aria.

Physical exercise is not only good for your body, but has pay-offs for your mental health too. Not only do you benefit from the "me time" that exercise affords you, but getting physical also triggers the release of endorphins that pep you up, helping you think more clearly and creatively.

Build on that feel-good factor by getting more mindful and learning to meditate, says meditation teacher Jo de Rosa. "It gives you a different perspective on life, helping you step away from stress, and make clearer decisions. It helps you sleep better, wake up refreshed, and feel more in control of your life." Find Jo's guided meditations at www.quantumsuperpowers.com/product/meditations.

I Love My Morning Walks

"After leaving an unhealthy relationship three years ago, I needed to prioritise my physical and mental wellbeing with new healthy habits. I started getting up at 6am for a run or walk with my greyhound. Getting out in all weathers really sets me up for the day, boosting my energy and positivity," says Rebecca Lees, 43, who blogs at girlonthetrail.co.uk. "It's amazing how many problems I solve while walking – especially when I'm not trying to!"



Rebecca

How I Keep Calm And Carry On

"A few years ago I was exhausted with depression. I found most days difficult and I struggled to cope. I thought meditation could help – but getting into it was a challenge because I was in such a bad place," says Laurie Lee, 57. "I tried a few meditation apps but the one that really helped was Calm.com (£35.99 for a year). It's a five to seven minute daily guided meditation that quietens my thinking, helping me breathe and be mindful."



Laurie

Ask yourself, "Am I leading an active life, or am I just busy?" Use a pedometer to monitor your movement



Make Time Work For You

◆ Love Your Morning Shower

Focusing on the sensation of the water on your skin is a simple way to practise mindfulness without setting any special time aside.

◆ Use The Stairs

Studies show that climbing the stairs is as good as a game of squash for reducing the inflammation that causes age-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis and dementia.



◆ Stand And Deliver

Sitting is now said to be the new smoking, because inactive muscles produce inflammatory hormones that endanger your health. Aim to stand up every time you make a phone call.

◆ Mindful Mouthfuls

Focusing on the taste, texture and appearance of your food will distract you from the hurly-burly of your usual busy thought processes.

