

Tips Can Make Healthy Resolutions a Reality

New Year's resolutions frequently include weight loss, eating more health-promoting fruits and vegetables or reducing fat.

A laundry list of to-dos can, however, erode even the most positive resolve, said Sandy Proctor, Kansas State University Research and Extension nutrition specialist, who encourages incorporating change gradually to build on good intentions.

To trim calories and fat, take stock by asking yourself: How has my weight changed in the last year? The last five years? And, why? Proctor said.

Then, to track eating habits, keep a food – or eating – journal for two typical weekdays and a weekend day, said Proctor, who is a registered dietitian and Kansas' coordinator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

“Be honest,” she said. “If you add cream and sugar to your coffee, write it down. Note whether food eaten is part of a meal or snack, eaten alone or with others, eaten because you are hungry or simply because it's time to eat.”

Aim for an attainable goal, such as losing a pound or two a month that, in a year's time, will yield a weight loss of 12 to 24 pounds, said Proctor who offered tips to help manage weight and improve health.

- * Eat a breakfast that includes whole grains, complex carbohydrates that break down slowly to provide lasting energy. Eating satisfying complex carbohydrates early in the day also can reduce the tendency to overeat later in the day.

- * Read food labels to learn about ingredients in foods you choose.

- * Measure portions to become more familiar with standard, recommended serving sizes.

- * Bring family or friends together for meals, and focus on people, rather than food.

Can't do dinner? Try breakfast together on weekdays or a more leisurely brunch on weekends.

- * Take time to eat and savor the food. Eating lunch at your desk or supper while watching television may increase calorie consumption because it is easy to eat more when we are not focusing on the meal itself.

- * Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and maintain body function. Remember also that water can serve as a healthy substitute for other beverages that add unnecessary calories.

- * Be active. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park at the end of the block and walk or walk around the block several times a day to help keep the appetite in check, boost energy and reduce stress.

- * Strive to maintain a consistent sleep schedule. Too much – or too little – sleep can upset the body's rhythm.

- * Resolve to eat a variety of foods that are key to managing weight and health.