

Daily Union Article
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Title: Steps for Healthy living

Research indicates that about 60 percent of us make New Year's resolutions but only about 8% are successful in achieving them. Many don't even make it until February 1. In a recent poll, over half the people responding said they didn't make it past January 31 with last year's resolution. In 2017, the number one most common New Year's Resolution was to lose weight and consume a healthy diet. So what about 2019? A poll of 2,000 people indicated we are creatures of habit with the most common resolution (71% of those polled) identified as dieting and eating healthier in 2019.

If you set a similar resolution, how are you doing? Certainly change is hard for many people, but if you take small steps toward your goal of healthy eating, you have a much higher chance of making it well past January 31 if not to the end of 2019!

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute shares 4 cornerstones to a healthy eating plan:

- 1) Emphasize vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products.
- 2) Include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- 3) Limit your consumption of saturated and *trans* fats, sodium, and added sugars.
- 4) Control portion sizes.

A healthy eating plan gives your body the nutrients it needs to give you energy, keep your bones and muscles strong, maintain a good immune system and so much more. It lowers your risk for heart disease and other health conditions, as well.

The challenge for some may be, "Where do I start?" The cornerstones listed above are a good start, but they are broad in nature. When a person decides to make a lifestyle change as personal as their eating habits, it's helpful to have solid ideas to get you started on your path. Here are some approaches that you should find helpful.

"Next Steps" for a healthier you:

No one, including myself, should dive into a new physical activity plan without having a check-up from their doctor and doing a little reading to help them get started in a way that is both healthy and research-based. Make sure you have the doctor visit before you make any significant lifestyle changes! Here are some reminders about healthy living through the Dietary Guidelines for Americans provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Look at any additional changes you might want to make before you get started with the Walk Kansas program.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating and physical activity patterns that promote overall health. While the guidelines are based on the most current research, these

recommendations also reflect food preferences, cultural traditions, and customs of the many and diverse groups living in the United States. Here are the highlights.

Balancing Calories

Enjoy your food, but eat less. Most Americans eat more calories (energy) than they use through daily activities and movement. Start by being aware of what, and how much, you are eating and begin to replace foods higher in calories with nutrient-dense foods and beverages. Nutrient-dense foods offer a high amount of nutrient content to the calories they contain. Think of nutrient-dense foods as being opposite of empty-calorie foods. Skim milk, for example, is a nutrient-dense beverage — rich in calcium and 8 ounces contains 90 calories. Soda is an empty calorie beverage — 105 calories in 8 ounces and no nutrients. Avoid oversized portions. Research shows that we eat and drink more when given larger portions. Start to downsize servings by eating off a smaller plate, and stick with regular size meals when eating out. Say “no” to offers to supersize your meal.

Foods to Increase

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Go for variety and color when choosing these foods. Divide the other half of your plate between a protein and grain source. Switch to fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. If this is a challenge for you, make the switch gradually.

Foods to Reduce

Compare sodium in foods such as soup, bread, and frozen meals — choose foods with lower numbers. Most Americans are consuming too much sodium and the guidelines get specific on numbers. The average American has a daily sodium intake of 3,400 mg. The recommendation is 1,500 mg for most people, and not more than 2,300 mg.

Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

A major source of added sugars in the diets of Americans is soda, energy drinks, and sports drinks — up to 36 percent of added sugar.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services jointly create each edition of the dietary guidelines. They are revised and published every five years. For more information, visit: www.dietaryguidelines.gov

Now that you have the information, you can make a plan that will improve the likelihood that you will meet your 2019 New Year’s Resolution. Start now by taking steps toward a healthier lifestyle. Check with your doctor, learn what you need to adjust, and get moving! For more information on healthy lifestyle patterns, contact me at the Geary County Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!