

It's 2009: A Fine Time to Get Started

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The beginning of a new year is a perfect time to assess your lifestyle and to make the choice for health and

fitness. Most people choose to live a healthier lifestyle in order to feel good and look better, or when they reach a certain milestone such as birthdays, dress size, or medical illness.

The medical benefits to living a healthier lifestyle far outweigh a sedentary and obese way of living. The medical reasons include the following: decreasing the risk of death from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and cancer; decreasing the likelihood of illness due to complications of obesity such as degenerative joint disease, and decreasing the high cost of medical care required to treat the subsequent health problems.

A change in diet can include more fruits and vegetables and less dependence on animal products is one way to start a healthier lifestyle. Begin by thinking of your food as medicine and not just meeting the needs of hunger. Start by adding one new fruit or vegetable to your routine

diet every week. Also, plan your meals, to see if you are meeting the daily requirements of vitamins and nutrients, and if not add those missing foods. If you generally skip breakfast, start with a fruit smoothie that you make in the morning with a blender of fresh or frozen fruit, water, ice cubes, and protein powder or peanut/nut butter. This is a refreshing and healthy start for the day. Remember, any healthy changes you make for yourself will likely benefit all members of the family.

As one is making changes in their diet, one cannot leave out the changes in their physical activity either. To get started, choose an activity that you like such as walking, swimming, dancing, etc. Commit to a scheduled time at least 4-5x/week for 15 minutes and gradually increase to 30 minutes. Exercise has many benefits in that it burns calories and fat, and overall makes you feel better. If you haven't exercised for some period of time, or have multiple health conditions, you should consult your physician before starting an exercise routine.

A plan for life may include making better food choices and daily exercise which will ensure a healthier way of life.