

Naturopathic Tips for a Healthy New Year!

Many of us enter the month of January with a resolution or two paired with good intention to follow through on them! The key to being successful is to make realistic goals and to have a plan. High on the resolution list is the desire to lose a few pounds (usually courtesy of recent holiday festivities) and while some may find it easy to lose them, it's often a lot more challenging to keep them off. Dietary habits are not a fad. They are a lifestyle. Here are some guidelines for adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

1. **Stay Hydrated-** Sounds simple enough but is a struggle for many. Your body depends on water to carry vital substances and nutrients to your cells and waste (toxins) away from your cells. Aim for about 1.5L/day (more with increased activity). Like coffee? Be mindful that for every cup of coffee you consume, your body needs 2 cups of water to re-hydrate. Need help getting more water in? Try freezing little bits of peeled lemons, limes, and oranges and using them in place of ice cubes for flavour and refreshment. Also, carry a water bottle with you at all times and when you have juice, dilute it with water first.
2. **Hold the Sugar-** On top of weakening your immune system, sugar is full of empty calories and empty calories result in empty energy. While sugar may give you a brief 'pick me up', it will leave your body depleted and craving more and more sugar to reach the next level of desired energy. As you can imagine, the more you consume, the greater the craving. Sugar is a by-product of carbohydrates and white, refined flour products produce more sugar. Research has also shown that sugar cravings increase as sleep quality decreases. Getting adequate rest, avoiding refined carbohydrates and using alternatives such as honey, stevia, rice syrup, agave nectar, etc., curb the craving without leaving you wanting more.
3. **Plan Ahead and Be Prepared!** Meal planning can help reduce the temptation to grab quick, unhealthy convenient food when life gets busy. Take the time to shop for and prepare your meals using nutrient-rich foods. Seasonal vegetables, lean proteins, and fibre-rich carbohydrates help you stay fuller longer, maintain appropriate blood sugar levels between meals, prolong physical endurance, and keep insulin levels low to help you burn fat more efficiently. Ideally, you should be eating every 3-4 hours and never skip breakfast as it will determine your metabolic rate and blood sugar levels for the remainder of the day.
4. **Keep Moving!** No time like the present to get active!! This will not only make you stronger, but will help reduce injuries in the future and prevent illness. People with more lean muscle mass live longer so a combination of cardio for your heart and weight-training for your muscles is optimal. Colder temperatures and limited daylight make it challenging to be outside and continue certain activities but also provides a great opportunity to try something new. Grab a buddy and make a date! You'll be glad you did!
5. **Health is a Product of YOU** There is much to learn, much to do and much to improve upon for all of us. Like a well-balanced meal, emotional, mental and physical health all contribute to ones total wellness. Learn a new language, cross off another destination on your travel list, or start a new hobby. A healthy mind is just as important as a healthy body.

Start small with one or two changes and when successful with them, continue to add and grow. This will help root these changes and become part of your daily routine to ensure permanent lifestyle changes. Soon, you'll be well on your way to living your best life and being the best you. Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2010!