

Family and Community Health “Connections” in Tom Green County

MAKING NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS

It's the time of year again when people make New Year's resolutions, many of which are health related. [Losing weight](#), eating healthier, exercising and quitting smoking are popular choices. Losing weight usually leads the group, but also is the most difficult to accomplish. By the time the new year rolls around, many people are well-versed with the classic promise: "I will start my diet on Monday." In fact, by the end of December, many people have made that promise to themselves 52 times.

Discover the secret to success

New Year's resolutions are easy to make, but not so easy to achieve. To make the resolution into an actual solution, you need to spend time preparing and planning. There is no magic button for keeping a resolution. The first step toward success is developing a structured health plan.

Your health plan should include:

- Where you're headed
- Why you want to get there
- What challenges you may face along the way
- How you plan to work through the challenges

Create a health vision

The second step is to visualize your goals. Think about a what a healthy future might look like to **you**. **Convert those** thoughts into a short, clear statement: your health vision. While there are many ways to write a health vision, one popular format is: "I want to _____, so _____."



Examples of a health vision may be:

- "I want to lose weight, so I have more energy to enjoy life."
- "I want to be physically fit, so I am no longer out of breath playing with my grandkids."
- "I want to have better balance between my work and personal life, so I have more quality time for myself and my family."

Set SMART goals

Goals help keep you focused after you record your health vision. Achieving identified goals produces a feeling of accomplishment and much-needed motivation to fuel your health journey.

When setting your goals, remember the SMART acronym:

- **Specific — What am I going to do?** You need to have a specific plan in place to start. Take the time to design and research.
- **Measurable — How will I track my progress?** You may say, "I would like to lose some weight." But it would be better if you said, "I want to lose 50 pounds in four months."
- **Achievable — What steps will I take to make this happen?** Set a realistic goal. With the right weight-loss program, 50 pounds may be realistic. Ask the program you're considering what the average weight loss among participants is after one year. Depending on the program and its weight loss approach, you may need to set a smaller, more attainable goal.

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•Relevant — Is this important enough to me to want to do it?

Think positively. Behavior only changes from the positive. Remember there are programs to help you accomplish your goal.

•Time-framed — When will I do this?

•Set a specific target date. There is nothing magical about Jan. 1 as a start date. It is better to pick a date when you have a plan in place. Your SMART goals should consist of long-term and short-term goals. Establish your long-term goal first. An example of a long-term goal is: "I will walk briskly for 30 minutes each day at least five days a week."

However, if you haven't been exercising on a regular basis, there often is a need for intermediary, short-term goals. For example: "I will walk 15 minutes during my lunch hour at least three days each week for the next month." After reaching your short-term goal, extend your efforts gradually, until you ultimately accomplish your long-term goal.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/making-new-years-resolutions-that-stick>



Accept challenges, and don't give up

Nearly everyone will face challenges during their health journey. Perhaps it's a busy family life, work, school, medical issues or peer pressure to continue bad habits. It's important to identify potential challenges and envision strategies to address them as part of an effective health plan. A network of family and friends can encourage and partner with you. Consider keeping a health journal to record your activities and achievements, adding to your motivation and accountability.

Source: <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/making-new-years->

Six Strategies for Beating the Winter Blues

By Laura Scholz

Feeling sluggish and sad during dark, dreary winter days?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) could be to blame. According to Cherokee County counselor Rachel Fisher, symptoms of SAD mirror those of regular depression: social withdrawal, changes in appetite and weight, low energy, and difficulty sleeping. Why? Shorter days and a lack of sunlight cause a dramatic dip in serotonin, the body's natural mood stabilizer. And while you can't simulate a perfect 80 degree summer day in January, there are ways to beat those winter blues.

Opt outside

During daylight hours, take the dog for a walk, meet a friend in the park, or bundle up to drink your morning coffee outdoors to "boost mood and the body's vitamin D stores," says Fisher.

Try light therapy

For those days when you're stuck indoors, Georgia Tech psychology professor Dr. Paul Verhaeghen recommends the next best thing: a light box or lamp with 2,500 to 10,000 lux. Use it for up to one hour per day—preferably first thing in the morning—to simulate natural sunlight and increase energy.

Get social

Whether it's joining a book club, signing up for a class, or making dinner reservations at a new restaurant, having concrete plans on the calendar can make you feel less isolated and hold you accountable for getting out of the house, says Atlanta therapist Cameron McIntosh.

Work up a sweat

Even if done indoors, 20 minutes a day of moderate exercise like yoga or strength training is enough to increase endorphins, which can make you feel happier and more energetic for several hours, says Fisher.

Talk it out

Reach out to a friend to let them know you're struggling or consider making an appointment with a licensed therapist or counselor. "The right professional can help you develop coping mechanisms and get ahead of your symptoms before they become debilitating," says McIntosh.

Consider medication

If SAD symptoms persist for more than a few weeks and none of these strategies offer relief, Fisher recommends making an appointment with a general practitioner or a psychiatrist who can prescribe the appropriate medication and treatment plan.

Source: <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/health/six-strategies-for-beating-the-winter-blues/>

7 Simple Exercises You Can Do at Home



It's no secret that exercise is good for you. But it's not always easy to know where to begin — or how to avoid injury-causing exercise mistakes. Whether your neck and back are sore from working from home or you're simply spending too much time on the couch, it's important to find an exercise routine that keeps your body safe.

One great way to stay active and help prevent pain and injury is with functional fitness — or simple exercises that use many muscle groups at once.

What makes functional fitness special

While exercises like weightlifting and cardio target specific health needs, functional fitness is meant to reduce your chance of injury while doing everyday things.

“Think in terms of your daily routine,” says Kaiser Permanente Director of Employee Wellness and certified functional strength coach Andy Gallardo. “From crouching down in the garden to reaching high while shopping for groceries, you move in all sorts of ways every day. Functional fitness helps you stay strong and flexible as you go about your life.” Simply put: It's about preparing your body for everyday life.

Like most exercise, functional fitness is good for your mental health too. Plus, Gallardo adds, it works well for all ages.

“Even though younger people tend to be more flexible and avoid injury easier, functional fitness can benefit everyone. And it's especially good for people in their 40s and older,” he says.

7 simple functional fitness exercises

1. Squats for your legs, stomach, and lower back.

2. Lunges for your upper legs and glutes.

3. Planks for your core, back, and shoulders.

4. Push-ups for your chest, shoulders, triceps, and core.

5. Pull-ups for your biceps, triceps, forearms, wrists, shoulders, and core.

6. Shoulder presses for your core, shoulders, and back. Tip: To help prevent injury, try sand-filled weights instead of dumbbells.

7. Stackers for your whole body. Not familiar with stackers? Here's what to do:

- Stand with your feet a little more than shoulder's width apart and pretend to hold a basketball straight out in front of you.
- Bend at the waist to reach and tap the outside of your left heel.
- Then reach back up and across your body to the right, as if you're stacking a box on a shelf right above your shoulder.
- As you twist across your body, your left heel may come off the ground as you pivot your hips to the right.

Whichever exercises you do, remember that form is key. If you're working out at home, you can always search online for videos and step-by-step graphics that show how to do these exercises correctly. Make sure to go with a source you trust, and if something hurts, always stop and find help.

Tips for a successful fitness routine

To get the most from functional fitness, like with any exercise, you should make it part of your regular routine. “Move every day,” says Gallardo — it's his number one tip. But also remember to:

• **Warm up and cool down** Always start with a warmup to get your heart pumping blood to your muscles. Some jogging in place and light stretching are great ways to get your body ready for action,” says Gallardo. “And after your workout, go for a walk and do more light stretching or yoga to help your body cool down.”

• **Pay attention to posture** — To prevent injury, keep your back straight and avoid hunching your shoulders or straining your neck.

• **Mix it up** — Variety is key. Mix and match exercises each day to keep your workout fresh and give different muscles time to rest.

• **Know your limits** — Check with your doctor before you start your new training program so you can discuss your needs. Everyone is different, so take it slow and listen to your body as you create a workout that works well for you.

Source:
<https://thrive.kaiserpermanente.org/thrive-together/stay-active/7-simple-exercises-you-can-do-at-home>



Lemon-Thyme Sheet-Pan Chicken and Potatoes

Ingredients

- 1/3 c. olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. roughly chopped fresh thyme
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon, plus 1 lemon cut into wedges
- 3 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 10 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (4 to 4½ pounds)
- 2 lb. red potatoes (6 medium), cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley



Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425°. Whisk the olive oil, thyme, garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt and pepper in a large bowl.
2. Add the chicken, potatoes and lemon wedges to the bowl. Toss well.
3. Dump the mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet. Turn the chicken skin-side up and space the pieces evenly apart.
4. Roast on the middle oven rack, rotating the pan halfway through, until the chicken is golden brown and registers 165° on an instant-read thermometer, about 50 minutes. Remove to a platter and sprinkle with the parsley. Drizzle with any juices from the baking sheet and squeeze the roasted lemon wedges on the chicken.

Yields: 4-6 Servings
Prep Time: 15 minutes
Total Time: 1 hr 5 minutes

Source: <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/food-cooking/recipes/a35916631/lemon-thyme-sheet-pan-chicken-and-potatoes-recipe/>

Tom Green EEA News

Veribest Club Meeting

January 10, 2023

9:30 AM

@ County Extension Office

Hostess: June Helwig

Program:

Comfort Keepers

By: Milissa

Family & Community Health “Connections” is provided by these Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Family and Community Health Agents:

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