

YOUR HEALTH CHECKLIST FOR THE NEW YEAR

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The New Year is quickly approaching and it is time to start thinking about all the changes or “resolutions” we would like to commit too. The purpose of this article is to give you a head start on planning to act on those resolutions that pertain to health and wellness. Instead of focusing on one topic in particular, this article is an amalgamation of familiar topics I have written about over the past two years. Regular readers will be able to identify familiar themes and messages that pertain to health and wellness. Use this article as a personal checklist or guideline for yourself and experience first hand the power of putting thoughts and intentions into action!

EXERCISE: Exercise is like free medicine. The health merits of regular exercise have been scientifically well documented. Exercise has the ability to positively affect every organ and structure in the body. “Getting more exercise” is always a popular promise many individuals make to themselves going into a New Year. Unfortunately, many fail to engage in or sustain a meaningful exercise program. Exercise should be viewed as an investment into one’s health that pays off immediately and for years down the road. There are several keys to making exercise work for you. Regular exercise must be prioritized which may require routinely scheduling exercise into daily activities and making it as convenient as possible. Choosing activities that you enjoy will make you more likely to be consistent with those activities. Exercise does not need to be time consuming. Health benefits can be realized in as little as 45 minutes, three times per week. Starting off slowly and easing into activity will help prevent injuries. Be sure to incorporate components of aerobic, resistance, and flexibility training to ensure you are getting the full benefits of exercise.



NUTRITIONAL BALANCE: The nutrients you put into your body can have a profound impact on the way you look and feel, and decrease your risk of contracting certain diseases and illnesses. Poor nutritional habits can be a significant contributor to your structural pain and overall energy levels. Going on a “diet” is another common promise people make going into the New Year. Fad “diets” too often bring forth images of eating bland food, along with excessive and inappropriate calorie restriction. Sensible eating should consist of nutritional balance. Eating fresh fruits and vegetables, keeping well hydrated by increasing water intake, and generally eating a macro-balanced diet with the correct proportion of carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats is a basic must. Significant and positive changes can be made to your eating habits by cutting down serving sizes, eliminating unhealthy snacking, and minimizing foods that can be detrimental to your health such as trans-fats. Your body is the engine that gives you life, and it only functions as well as the fuel you put into it.

STRESS MANAGEMENT: Stress refers to any reaction to a physical, mental, social, or emotional stimulus that requires a response or alteration to the way we perform, think, or feel. Stress triggers a complex set of responses in our body that prepare us to “fight” or combat the stresses we face. Unresolved stresses can lead to many health problems if left unchecked. Almost everybody encounters stresses on a daily basis but we are not always good at dealing with them. Stress management is an essential tool for healthy living. If medical science could miraculously

invent a magic pill or cure for stress, we would see many chronic health ailments disappear. Unfortunately there is no magic bullet when dealing with stress, but changing the way we think about stress can be the first step toward better health. Some stresses can be avoided while others can be confronted and resolved. There are certain stresses that we cannot do anything about, so don't fret about things beyond your control. Rely on close friends to help you through times of stress. The New Year is a time of starting fresh, and letting go of things that weigh you down from living life.

SLEEP: The average adult requires six to eight hours of restful sleep each night. This is the time of day when our bodies recharge, recover, and recuperate. There are numerous important biological mechanisms that are regulated in our bodies during times of sleep. In our busy lifestyles today, we ironically shortchange ourselves on the amount of sleep we get. As little as three days of sleep deprivation has been shown to significantly compromise productivity, create problems in relationships, and contribute to other health problems. When we are tired from a lack of quality sleep, the rigors of everyday life feel like they are exponentially more difficult than they really should be! Restful sleep is essential for good health and its importance should not be underestimated.

ELIMINATING BAD HABITS: We all have them because nobody is perfect! From a health perspective, some of these may include quitting smoking, limiting alcohol or caffeine intake, watching less T.V., not brushing or flossing our teeth regularly, or being ornery towards others. In reality, a list of bad health habits may be longer for some than others. Commit to eliminating three of your worst health habits and see how much better they make you feel.

The categories above should not be viewed in isolation of each other. They are all intricately related and work together in keeping you healthy. For additional detailed information on any of the above categories, visit our website at www.nhwc.ca. From all of us at the New Hamburg Wellness Centre, good luck and Season's Greetings!

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