



Make 2010 the Start of a *Healthier You*

It's well known that unhealthy lifestyle habits can lead to a host of chronic conditions, diseases and life-threatening illnesses. We instinctively understand that using tobacco products, eating foods that are not good for us, being sedentary, drinking too much alcohol, and running around stressed out all the time can't be good for our health. But how (and where) to begin? Let us help!

Ten changes you can make for better health in 2010

- 1. Stop smoking or using other tobacco products.** Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. Smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes, and using other tobacco products like chewing tobacco or snuff, put you at a significantly higher risk for all kinds of cancers, heart and lung disease, stroke, asthma and even infertility. Remember that secondhand smoke is extremely dangerous too, so quitting will also benefit your loved ones.
- 2. Maintain a healthy body weight.** When you maintain a healthy body weight, you decrease your risk of developing high blood pressure, high total cholesterol and triglycerides, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and some cancers. Focus on making small changes that you can maintain for a lifetime. Keep a food journal to help identify the kinds of foods you eat, and how much, each day. We naturally tend to underestimate how much we actually eat.
- 3. Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes.** Each day, strive to eat a minimum of five servings of colorful fruits and vegetables such as red apples, berries, carrots, broccoli and

sweet potatoes. Increase your grain intake with at least three servings of whole-grains by choosing foods with whole grain, pumpernickel, rye or oatmeal listed first on the ingredient label (not enriched wheat flour). Also, aim for one serving of legumes like chick peas, black beans and black-eyed peas each day.

- 4. Limit your saturated fat and trans-fatty acid intake.** Saturated fats and trans-fatty acids, or trans-fats, raise your LDL (or "bad") cholesterol which can block your arteries and increase your risk for heart disease. Saturated fats are found in animal fats, some vegetable oils (coconut, palm, palm kernel), and whole dairy products like cream, butter, milk and cheese. Foods and sauces that are creamy, cheesy, fried or contain fatty meats are high in saturated fat. Trans-fats are found in processed and fast foods made with hydrogenated vegetable oil like packaged baked goods, margarine, crackers, doughnuts and even microwavable popcorn.
- 5. Get active.** Make a goal of engaging in moderate to vigorous activity (walking briskly, swimming, dancing or bicycling) for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Physical activity increases your heart and breathing rate, and reduces your risk for chronic conditions like heart and lung disease, high cholesterol and even depression. If it's easier for you, work in three or more short bouts of activity in 10-minute intervals throughout the day for the same results.

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For more information about these and other health-related topics, you can access "**Living Healthy with WebMD**" by logging into **MyBlueService**. Here you can browse valuable medical information and access personal health tools like health trackers, assessments and more. Visit www.bcbsfl.com to get started.

Changing Ways: Vow to become physically active in 2010

If starting a physical activity program is on your list of health improvements for 2010, you've made a great choice. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that regular, moderate physical activity can improve your overall health and well being, and the activity doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial. The CDC goes on to say that incorporating physical activity most days of the week can reduce your risk for developing – or dying from – one of the leading causes of death in the U.S., like heart disease, cancer, stroke and others.

Regular physical activity helps you control your weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and reduces feelings of depression and anxiety. The American Heart Association recommends getting 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. If you're trying to lose weight or maintain weight loss, make it an hour.

Begin your regular routine slowly and gradually increase the time, intensity and frequency to avoid soreness or injury. Many people don't achieve their goal because they start off too hard and can't keep it up, so they stop all together. Take your time and you will see greater health results.

If you don't have 30 minutes to an hour a day, try exercising in 10 to 15-minute intervals to accumulate your total. Here are some tips to help you along the way:

- Pick activities you like and will be more likely to do.
- Wear comfortable clothes and sneakers.
- Ask a friend or family member to join you.

- Schedule physical activity on your calendar as a reminder.

Examples of moderate exercise include:

- Walking two miles in 30 minutes
- Bicycling five miles in 30 minutes
- Dancing fast for 30 minutes
- Doing water aerobics for 30 minutes
- Swimming laps for 20 minutes
- Stair walking for 15 minutes
- Jumping rope for 15 minutes



Please note, before starting or increasing physical activity, check with your doctor for recommendations and guidelines.

For additional information and support on getting started, call or email our Next Steps team at 1-800-477-3736, ext. 54837, or NextSteps@bcbsfl.com.

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- 6. Only drink alcohol in moderation.** That means no more than one standard drink per day for women, and two for men. A standard measure of alcohol is 12 oz of regular beer or wine cooler, 8 oz of malt liquor, 5 oz of wine or 1.5 oz of 80-proof distilled spirits or "liquor" (gin, rum, vodka, whiskey, tequila). Binge drinking is defined as indulging in four or more drinks in a single occasion for women, and five or more drinks for men. In the long-term, alcohol abuse can cause irreversible damage to your heart, brain, stomach and liver.
- 7. Protect your skin from the sun.** Try to stay out of the sun as much as you can between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest. If you must go out during peak times, make sure you put on a shirt, use sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher), wear a hat and sunglasses for the best protection.
- 8. Manage your stress.** Stress, a natural part of life, stems from recent past or upcoming circumstances (a deadline or traffic) or recurring circumstances (a hostile workplace or relationship). Regardless of the source, stress weakens your immune system,

making you susceptible to a variety of ailments like colds, backaches, and heart disease, to name a few. Manage your stress by recognizing your stressors and eliminating the ones you can, and taking time to do enjoyable activities each day like taking a walk, listening to your favorite music or reading a good book.

- 9. Visit your doctor annually.** Even if you consider yourself healthy, make sure you select a primary care physician and schedule an annual appointment once a year. Regular visits ensure you get the recommended preventive screenings and exams, which is important in maintaining your good health.
- 10. Take care of yourself.** Give yourself permission to take care of you for a change. It's never selfish to spend time rejuvenating your mind and body. When you're well and well-energized, you can manage your responsibilities with less stress – and that's good for everyone!

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The first wealth is health". Take charge of your health and make 2010 the wealthiest year ever!

Fresh & Healthy

Recipe of the Month

Pickled Black-Eyed Peas

In the South, it's a New Year's Day tradition to eat black-eyed peas for luck and greens for prosperity. Here's a tasty variation on a Southern tradition.

- 2 cans (16 oz each) black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 small onion, chopped
- ¼ cup chopped green pepper
- ¼ cup chopped red pepper
- ¼ cup chopped dark purple pepper
- 1 Tbsp. minced garlic
- ½ cup Italian dressing
- 1 head Boston lettuce, separated into 8 leaves

Toss peas, onions, peppers, and garlic in medium bowl. Add dressing and mix lightly. Cover and refrigerate several hours or overnight, stirring occasionally. Serve on lettuce-covered salad plates.



Ask the Health Coach

Q I have limited time to exercise each day, so is it better to do strength training or aerobic-type exercise?

A This is a great question and one that many people ask. Ideally, you should get both strength training and cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise at least several times per week.

We lose about 1% of our muscle tissue each year, starting in our mid-twenties and regular physical activity can prevent it. Quite often we think in terms of cardio versus strength training, but the two can be done simultaneously in what is called interval training. Interval training can take lots of forms such as alternating a few minutes lifting weights, using bands, or performing body-weight exercise (pushups, lunges, squats, dips), with a few minutes of cardio (walking on treadmill, jumping rope, stationary cycling) for specific intervals of time. Walking and running paths that include exercise stations is also an example of interval training.

Summed up, it's best to get both cardio and strength training in each week. But if you're struggling to get one or the other in daily, choose the activity you enjoy the most. The best exercise is the one you'll actually do.

January 4 to 8 is *National Folic Acid Awareness Week*

Here's a new idea for a New Year's resolution: be good to yourself. We don't mean treat yourself to a daily white chocolate Mochachino; we mean being good to your body by getting enough folic acid every day.

Folic acid is an essential B vitamin that helps build DNA. Our body uses folic acid for cell growth and reproduction, building block processes, and the production of genetic materials. Folic acid also has protective benefits, like reducing the risk of certain cancers; cardiovascular diseases including coronary heart disease and stroke; and cognitive diseases and mental conditions such as Alzheimer's, age-related dementia, or decline in cognitive processes and depression.

Folic acid is the synthetic (man-made) form of naturally occurring folate. Folate is found in leafy green vegetables, beans and citrus fruits, but it's water soluble, which means it passes through your body quickly. Folic acid is found in enriched foods like breakfast cereal, pasta and bread, and is easier for the body to absorb. The recommended dietary intake is 400 micrograms each day for both women and men. Because it's difficult to get enough folic acid from foods alone, a multivitamin can help fill the gap.


Folic acid deficiencies are caused by an increase need for folate that is unmatched by your body's intake. Medical conditions that cause deficiencies are pregnancy, alcohol abuse, kidney dialysis, liver disease and some kinds of anemias. In women who are pregnant, folic acid prevents neural tube defects in fetuses that causes Spina Bifida. Because of this, it's especially important that women of childbearing age get the recommended amount of folic acid before they get pregnant, whether they're planning to or not.

Pregnant or planning to become pregnant? Learn more about our Healthy Addition Prenatal Program by calling 1-800-955-7635 (option 6), Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST. You can also email us at healthyaddition@bcbsfl.com.



Resources:

www.americanheart.org
www.cancer.org
www.cdc.gov
www.mypyramid
www.folicacidinfo.org

Are you interested in making healthy changes to your diet but need some guidance? 

The Next Steps team has Health Coaches who will work with you one-on-one developing goals and helping you to learn more about good nutrition — free of charge. Email us at NextSteps@bcbsfl.com or call 1-800-477-3736, ext. 54837.



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