

## New Year's Resolutions: How to Get Healthy without getting hurt

With the end of the year approaching, now comes the time many people aim to exercise more, eat better, and overall live a healthier life. This pursuit is fantastic and encouraged by all healthcare providers. With it however, can come some common pitfalls that do more harm than good. Here are a few examples of what to avoid when trying to achieve those New Year resolutions.

### **Start out slow!**

Many times when people vow to exercise more, they do too much too soon. This can cause you to feel burned out and quit the activity altogether or even worse, cause an injury. Your body is used to the day-to-day stresses it encounters with daily life. When you drastically change this routine, such as going to the gym for an hour five days a week when previously you did not attend, your body will in turn pay the price. For some, this means you may feel sore or “achey” for several days and for others this can cause pain.

Rather than jumping into the deep end, try to change one aspect of your routine and then expand from there. If exercising more is your goal, start out with two days a week for a half hour and see how your body reacts. This goes for people trying to lose weight as well as for folks trying to get that “beach body” back. Your body will thank you greatly and you will avoid seeing us a few months later due to not changing too much too soon.

## **Seek out help from a medical professional before starting**

For all the goals mentioned above, there is a specialist for each that can start you on a plan or even work with you for a while to achieve your goals and make sure you are set up for long term success. These specialists could include a nutritionist, personal trainer, or a physical therapist.

You might ask “how can a physical therapist help me with these goals?” Well the answer is simple, physical therapists are movement experts, as well as being well versed on exercise prescription. A visit with a physical therapist prior to starting a new exercise routine could prevent an injury as well as initiate a program to start with based off of your fitness goals. A thorough evaluation from a physical therapist can identify possible movement dysfunctions or areas of your body that are not working optimally. Knowing this information can allow you to have a tailored program, and avoid certain tasks that may produce pain as well as working on improving these deficiencies.

## **Work with a buddy**

Having a friend, family member, or wellness specialist (personal trainer, nutritionist, or PT) along for the ride while you try and achieve your goal makes things much easier. This way you always have a cheerleader in your corner motivating you to keep on track, as well as someone to keep you honest when it would be easier to grab fast food instead of a healthy meal or skipping the gym because you just don't feel like going. Consistency is the key to achieve wellness goals such as losing weight or having a healthier looking body. Having a partner in this journey makes it much easier to achieve and safer to avoid injury.

As touched on in the first point, it is a marathon not a sprint. Many New Year resolutions require a full lifestyle change and this is something that does not happen overnight. Do not get discouraged early on. Stay the course!