

# Getting fit is sum total of healthy living

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A new year, a fresh start. What better time than now to jump start exercise and healthy eating?

Whether you've pledged for the first time to eat better and exercise more or you're determined to build upon an already healthy lifestyle, experts say there are a number of ways to ensure you reach your goal — and yes, actually stick with them.

"If you want to be successful, you have to resolve to make permanent lifestyle changes, not make a quick fix," said Wendy Weckstein, a Traverse City physical therapist and wellness consultant. "I try to get people off the idea of 'I have to lose 10 pounds for my sister's wedding.' What I work on with them is changing their whole frame of mind — we're doing this forever and you're going to be able to make good choices with your diet and you're going to want to stay with your exercise program consistently."

Sure, this can prove easier said than done, which is why Weckstein and other health enthusiasts believe that understanding the rewards of a healthier lifestyle is key.

"I teach my clients about the benefits of exercise and eating well because I really feel if they understand the benefits, they are more likely to comply with doing these things for the rest of their lives," said Weckstein, who runs her own consultant business, Complete Fitness for the Complete Woman.

A healthy lifestyle, she said, contributes to decreased risks of diseases, certain cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis as well as symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. Even everyday tasks, like lifting grocery bags into our car and keeping up with children, are easier with a healthy lifestyle.

"It helps us live longer, hopefully, and helps us stay independent with aging," Weckstein said.

Suzanne Blodgett is living a more active, healthy life thanks to Weckstein. She and



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**At Oryana Natural Foods Market in Traverse City, Sandi McArthur, above, suggests whole foods like greens, vegetables, fruits and grains over processed foods whenever possible.**

five of her co-workers began an exercise and eating program last year after receiving personal consultations with Weckstein as a present from their boss, Dr. Diane Donley.

"We all had different goals and we all were given a personal diet for our weight and for our goal," said Blodgett, 47, who wanted to eat better and lose weight. "At the time, I was on two oral diabetic medications. My goal was to get off of medication. I knew with exercise and diet, if you lose the weight, non-insulin diabetics can reduce or come off their diabetic medication." Blodgett did just that. "I was able to get off of one



medication and I was able to reduce the amount of the second medication," she said.

Blodgett, who was happy to say good riddance to a low-carb diet and begin eating well-balanced and nutritious meals, can't imagine going back to her previous habits.

"Just as you breathe, you exercise and eat healthy," she said.

#### Eating well, feeling well

Sandi McArthur is convinced that health woes are directly related to a person's diet.

"It directly stems back to food choices, and of all the things we have control of in our life, food is a huge one," said McArthur, the education

outreach coordinator for Oryana Natural Foods Market in Traverse City. "Food is such a key point in helping people get back to good health and well being. I believe that fundamentally the food we choose to eat really does influence how we feel on different levels — our energy, vibrancy, emotional stability, intellect." "Unfortunately, in today's world," she added, "many, many people are choosing to eat the standard American diet."

The good news, McArthur said, is it's easy to substitute nutritious foods for not-so-great ones, such as those that have an abundance of sugars

and preservatives. A diet rich in whole foods rather than processed ones is a step in the right direction, she said.

So instead of grabbing that bag of cookies, become a label reader and select a treat that doesn't have the unhealthy ingredient of hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil, McArthur said. And rather than a glass of sugar-laden fruit juice, opt for a piece of fresh fruit.

"The more you can stay with the "whole food" group, the further ahead you're going to come out."

Other small, quick steps on the road to better eating:

- Incorporating, once or twice a week, one vegetable that is dark green or dark orange: collards, spinach, carrots, kale, sweet potatoes. The deeper and richer the color, the better.

- Switching to whole grain bread (make sure it's 100 percent whole grains)

- Reducing soft drinks. "Unfortunately, soft drinks, be it diet or otherwise, are not good," McArthur said. "Cut back, at the very least, and replace it with water or herbal tea."

- Incorporating, once or twice a week, beans, peas or lentils. These are loaded with protein, fiber, good fats and vitamins.

#### Get Moving

Physical activity is equally important and not as hard as you might think to include in your everyday activity. Even the smallest pockets of time spent exercising are beneficial.

Start by finding an exercise program you'll enjoy. Walk with a friend or try taking a class, such as Pilates or indoor cycling. Want to try a gym? First meet with a trainer — many gyms offer the first session with one for free — says Linda Schaub, a certified trainer who owns The Sweat Shop with husband Greg.

"There's so many people who walk into a gym and try to do it on their own when they should have assistance for safety reasons as well as for well being, to get the most out of their workouts," Schaub said.