

# 2020 – The Year for Healthy and Sustainable Weight Loss

It's the time of year for resolutions, big and small. Some of the [most common](#) new year's resolutions this year are to adopt healthy habits such as eating healthier, being more active and losing weight. Unfortunately, the statistics for following through and accomplishing new year's resolutions isn't great. A 2015 article by [U.S News](#) states that 80% of resolution makers will fail by the first week of February. Yikes!

One of the main reasons for this grim success rate is likely that resolutions are simply too vague. This year I encourage you to make goals, not resolutions, and even better yet a [SMART goal](#). SMART goals are Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

For example, a common new year's resolution may simply be: "weight loss". While a SMART goal would be: "Lose 1-2lb per week for the first three months of 2020 by reducing my sugar intake and going for 45min walks 3-4x per week". This structured goal helps create some clarity around how it will be accomplished, and what exactly success looks like. SMART goals also provide a reasonable and measurable way to monitor progress, while allowing space to reassess and change the plan accordingly.



Another important piece to setting a successful goal is understanding the motivation behind it and why it is worth accomplishing this goal. Motivations are unique to each individual, but the more personal and specific the more power they have. Some motivations for weight loss might include: to increase self-confidence, to improve overall health and energy, to feel more vibrant, to relieve pressure from aching joints, or even to prevent chronic health disease.

For some people, it can be valuable to have a partner to hold you accountable to your goal. The accountability partner could be a friend with a similar goal, a health care provider, or a family member. Their role is to gently support challenges and to enthusiastically celebrate successes with you.

Before making your new year's plan to lose weight I encourage you to set a SMART goal, dig into your motivations and find an accountability partner. Having clear goals and motivations are essential for healthy and sustainable weight loss.

## 7 Tips to help reach and maintain your weight loss goal this year!



- 1. Limit the junk and sugar.** One of the simplest ways to lose weight is to reduce sugar in your diet, not carbohydrates or fruits necessarily, but simple added sugar. In 2016 the [World Health Organization](#) released a new guideline on added sugar intake. They recommend that there is a reduction of added sugars in the average diet with only 5-10% of total calories coming from added sugar. This works out to only 25-50g of sugar per day if you're eating an average 2000kcal diet. We know foods such as baked goods and sweets contain a lot of sugar but sugar is also hidden in many different processed foods such as condiments, juices, beverages, soups, dairy products, granola bars, nut milks and sauces. Did you know that per the [USDA](#) the average blueberry muffin contains ~30g of sugar, whoa! I encourage you to check the labels of foods in your fridge and pantry and try finding options with less sugar next time you're out grocery shopping.
- 2. "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants."** This idea comes from [Michael Pollan's Food Rules](#) and is just as simple as it sounds. Eat real food, that contains only ingredients you recognize the names of. Not too much, meaning being conscious of portion sizes and stopping before getting that over-filled feeling. Finally, mostly plants because we know the vegetarian/vegan diet doesn't work for everyone but [research](#) shows us time and time again that several markers of overall health can benefit from a more plant-based diet.
- 3. Drink water.** A [2010 study](#) suggests that drinking water (~500mL) before each meal can help to reduce the number of calories consumed at that meal, and over time aid with weight loss. By drinking more water there is often a reduced desire for other beverages such as juice, soda, or coffee drinks containing many calories but limited nutritional value.
- 4. Keep your body moving.** It goes without saying that exercise and physical activity are fundamental to weight loss. Sometimes exercise habits can be difficult to get started for a wide variety of reasons, but you don't have to be in the gym every day of the week if you don't want to. The [WHO](#) and most public health guidelines suggest a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity daily, but as little as a 10 minute walk following meals has been proven to be beneficial for [blood sugar regulation](#) and [weight loss](#).



- 5. Monitor stress and develop healthy coping strategies.** Stress is an inevitable part of life and can be constant or can come and go in waves. How everyone perceives and manages stress is going to be different, but we know that stress and our stress hormone, cortisol, have big impacts on our physiology. Cortisol affects how our body regulates sugar and insulin, which can lead to abdominal weight gain. Some stress management strategies to try include breathing, practicing mindful meditation, walking in the forest, and journaling.
- 6. Moderation.** Truly the best tool to sustainable and healthy weight loss is moderation. Often we subscribe to this idea of all-or-nothing or that we have to do it perfectly. I often hear, “if I’m not doing it perfectly what is the point of doing it at all?”, and my answer is always the same, “any step small or large in the right direction is better than not taking a step at all”. There are always going to be busy weeks, social functions, and holidays that make sticking to health goals a little more challenging, but that’s okay! Use the 80/20 rule of moderation: keep an eye on your goals and try your best to stick to the plan 80% of the time and give yourself some slack the other 20% of the time.
- 7. Assess for underlying barriers and consider booking an appointment** at the clinic for a [weight loss initial assessment](#). Together we can work on goal setting, nutrition, and tackling any underlying barriers that may be hindering your weight loss. Some possible underlying causes may be hormone imbalances, thyroid issues, adrenal dysregulation, or improper blood sugar regulation.

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