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How to keep your New Year's resolution

While making a grand, sweeping New Year's resolution to lose weight, join a gym and never eat chocolate again may have seemed like a good idea at the time, experts at South Western Sydney Local Health District are encouraging people to make small changes first.

Danielle Weber from the Healthy Populations team at South West Sydney Local Health District's Health Promotion Unit advised that a slow and steady approach was more sustainable.

"Trying to make a lot of changes all at once is really hard," she said.

"Make smaller changes that you can incorporate into your usual routine, and build on them. For example, start by eating more vegetables at each meal and walking once a week and then gradually add in other healthy changes such as reducing soft drinks and exercising more frequently.

"There are a lot of fad diets that come and go and some of them can be bad for your health because you miss out on vital nutrients. You don't want to be on a diet; you want to make a permanent, healthy change that you can maintain.

"Little changes now will add up in the long run and can prevent diseases like diabetes, cancer and heart disease," Ms Weber said.

Some of Ms Weber's top tips for improving your health include:

Food:

- Consider your portion sizes. People tend to fill up larger plates, so put your meals on a smaller plate instead.
- Swap soft drinks for water.
- Fill up on vegetables and fruit rather than fried food.
- Put a lot of coloured vegetables on your plate. Colour is good because it gives a variety of vitamins and minerals. It's more appetising and appealing to eat.

Exercise:

- Walk the dog for a longer period. Try to increase your daily walk by five minutes each day and set yourself weekly goals.
- Turn the TV off. Go outside with the kids and fly a kite, or take a walk after dinner instead of reaching for the remote.
- Take the stairs instead of the lift at work, and rather than emailing someone, get up and tell them the message.

Ms Weber said there was help available for those who may be struggling to stick to their healthy New Year resolution.

“If you are having trouble staying motivated, the NSW Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service may be able to help,” Ms Weber said.

“The phone-based service puts you in touch with a health coach who provides support and motivation over six months to help you achieve your health goals. You can also ring the Get Healthy Service for information on healthy eating and exercise,” she said.

Contact the Get Healthy Service on 1300 806 258 (Monday to Friday, 8am-8pm) or visit their website: www.gethealthynsw.com.au

If you would like more information on the Australian Dietary guidelines, serving sizes, and ways to improve your health, you can also visit these websites:

Dietary Guidelines: <http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/food-essentials>

Shape Up Australia www.shapeup.gov.au

MEDIA: A video complementing this release, featuring Ms Weber, is available to be shared on your websites or social media channels at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QJRfM7HbCY>