

5 simple but healthy habits to start this January*



Making simple lifestyle changes such as walking to work and getting enough sunlight could help boost your health in 2019. Photo taken from AFP Relaxnews

If you want to boost your health in 2020 but resolutions seem too daunting, then read on for five easy ways to improve well-being each day and throughout the new year.

Cut out soda

Even making small diet changes can boost health, and cutting out soda and other sweetened beverages is one of the biggest small changes you can make, reducing both calorie intake and sugar consumption. A high intake of sugary drinks has been linked with a variety of health problems including increased risk of diabetes, chronic kidney disease, lower chance of getting pregnant, an increase in visceral fat (the type of fat that wraps around internal organs such as the liver, pancreas, and intestines) and even an increased risk of death.

Walk more

If the thought of a gym membership or marathon training is too big a fitness goal, simply walking more will still bring benefits for health. One study found that walking at least four hours a week, or just 35 minutes a day, may reduce the severity of a stroke, and walking to work has been linked with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and death, with an even lower risk for those who also walk in their leisure time. Picking up the pace can also bring extra benefits, with walking at an average pace linked to a 20 percent lower risk for all-cause mortality compared with walking at a slow pace, and walking at a brisk or fast pace reducing the risk even further, by 24 percent.

Get some daylight

Getting enough natural daylight has previously been linked with a lower risk of depression, a lower risk of postnatal depression in women, and more recently with improved eye health. Previous research has suggested that getting outdoors in the morning is most beneficial; those who struggle to get outside are advised to open the curtains at home and sit by windows in offices to try to maximize the amount of light, or use light therapy lamps to help fight depression in winter months.

Enjoy a massage

A massage is a great way to help you de-stress, which is important for health, but recent research is suggesting the benefits may go further than simply helping us to relax. A recent study also linked regular massages with improved arthritis symptoms, while a study published back in 2014 also suggested that shiatsu massage could aid sleep. So, if you choose just one way to improve health this year, booking yourself in for a massage might be the most enjoyable one.

Visit blue and green spaces

If you live in the countryside this one is easier, but even in a city most of us have access to blue spaces, such as lakes and rivers, and green spaces, including parks and nearby forests. Taking in these locations can not only help you also get more active through walking, but many recent studies are uncovering a variety of benefits of being near nature and natural space, including fewer respiratory problems, reduced risk of breast cancer in women, improved mental health and a lower risk of depression, and improved overall well-being.

*<https://www.thedailystar.net/health/health-tips/news/5-simple-healthy-habits-start-january-1683694>