

Make a Healthy Start in 2024 with Tips from Atrium Health Navicent

Experts offer tips for eating healthy, increasing exercise and quitting smoking

MACON, Ga., Jan. 11, 2024 – New Year’s Day has come and gone. If you made a New Year’s resolution or two, you’re in good company. Studies show 141 million Americans do so annually. Chances are, things have been going pretty well so far, but trouble may be on the horizon. A Forbes survey found that the average resolution lasts only four months and only 9 percent of people made their resolve last all year.

Year after year, the most popular resolutions deal with improving health. Physicians at Atrium Health Navicent advise that eating healthy, increasing exercise and quitting smoking are all popular resolutions, and that sticking with them can reap life-long rewards.

“All of us can benefit from good health. The start of a new year offers the chance for a clean slate and a fresh start,” said Millie Smith, a registered dietitian at Atrium Health Navicent.

Here are some tips from Atrium Health Navicent experts about how to keep your New Year’s resolutions:

Eating healthy

When changing your diet, it’s all about having a plan. Meal planning, snack planning and planning for when you are bored, hurried or tired are key. Also, know your limits for foods that can trigger overeating — such as sweets, chips or alcohol. Late night eating, eating on the run or skipping meals and then overeating at the next meal are all pitfalls that can be avoided by meal planning.

Start with small changes in your food. For example, take fast food out of your diet most of the time, and then progress to keeping fast food at a minimum, if at all. Use the same strategy for sweets and sugary drinks. Daily increase your water intake until you reach 64 ounces a day or more.

Increasing exercise

When starting an exercise program, it’s important to think S.M.A.R.T. Set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based. Write them down to help you visualize them every day.

A key to maintaining an exercise program is to find something you enjoy doing, whether that’s at a gym, outside with friends or an at-home program. Another key is to have an accountability partner who can keep you motivated when times get tough.

Short-term benefits of increased exercise include more energy, better sleep and more self-confidence. Long-term benefits include improved blood pressure, less anxiety and depression, a decrease in body fat, more muscle and improved cardiovascular fitness. Other health benefits include improved bone density, improved metabolism and better diabetes management.

Quitting smoking

When making the decision to quit smoking, the first step is to set a quit date. Before that date, clean your house and car to get rid of the smells from smoking. For help with accountability, tell the people in your inner circle that you are starting a smoking cessation program.

Strategies for quitting include nicotine replacement therapy, avoiding triggers, replacing smoking with an immediate healthy habit such as gum and starting a workout regimen such as walking. Allowing a doctor or counselor to assist you with smoking cessation will increase your chances of success.

There is a lengthy list of long-term health benefits for people who have quit smoking. Within a year, shortness of breath and coughing will decrease and the risk of heart disease becomes half that of a person who is a smoker. Within five years, your risk of heart attack, coronary artery disease and stroke is reduced to that of a nonsmoker; and risk of cancer of the mouth, esophagus, throat and bladder is cut in half. In 10 years, the lung cancer death rate is half that of a smoker's risk, as is the risk for kidney disease or pancreatic cancer. After 15 years, the risk of heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker.

For more details about exercise and wellness services available at Atrium Health Navicent Wellness Center, call 478-477-2300. For help quitting smoking, call Atrium Health Navicent Peyton Anderson Cancer Center at 478-633-2614. To find a doctor, visit www.NavicentHealth.org and click "Find A Doctor."

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](http://www.AdvocateHealth.org), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](http://www.AdvocateHealth.org) is the third-largest nonprofit integrated health system in the United States – created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and [Atrium Health](http://www.AtriumHealth.org). Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](http://www.AdvocateHealthCare.org) in Illinois, Atrium Health in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama, and [Aurora Health Care](http://www.AuroraHealthCare.org) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](http://www.WakeForestUniversitySchoolofMedicine.org) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health serves nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies. It is nationally recognized for its expertise in cardiology, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs nearly 155,000 team members across 68 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to equitable care for all, Advocate Health provides nearly \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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