Six Tips for Setting New Year's Resolutions That Work

Like millions of other Americans, you probably made some New Year's resolutions regarding your health. Maybe you want to lose some weight, exercise more or quit smoking.

And like the vast majority of Americans who made such resolutions, you may have difficulty meeting your goal. Polls have found that by springtime, 68 percent of Americans who made a New Year's resolution have broken it. After one year, only 15 percent claim success. But don't despair. The secret to self-improvement is persistence, not perfection.

So, how can you be successful in setting New Year's resolutions that will benefit your health in 2009? Use these tips to help you make lasting changes in your life:

1. **Focus on one thing at a time.** Trying to change more than one behavior at a time is a classic mistake. Instead, try focusing on one goal at a time and when this behavior becomes a habit, move onto your next goal. If you have larger goals on your list, break them down into smaller more manageable steps.

2. **Choose things that are important to you.** Setting half-hearted goals can cause major motivation problems. The solution is to choose something important to you, and you alone. This way you'll be able to stick with your action plan despite any difficulties.

3. **Set specific goals.** Setting specific, time-bounded goals is a vital step. So, rather than saying, "I will eat healthier," say, "I will eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day" or, "I will swim for one hour each week." Describe precisely what you want to achieve and how you will get there. Also, writing down your goals helps you commit to them and recall what you wanted to achieve in the first place.

4. **Focus on the process.** If your goal is to lose five pounds, focus on how you will achieve this. Do you intend to exercise three times each week? When you focus your attention the process of achieving your goal, you’ll feel more positive. In this example, the result ultimately will be weight loss, but you’ll be focusing on simply doing your exercise three times a week.

5. **Educate yourself.** Learn as much as you can about your topic, whether it’s healthy eating, how to lower your cholesterol, or tips on exercise. You may also want to talk to friends or join an online support group. Advice from those who’ve “been there” can be a wonderful resource.
6. **Create accountability.** By telling someone about your intentions, you will increase your accountability because you are now liable to someone other than yourself. This will help you stay on track.

If you do fall short of your desired goals, don't give up. You can expect to have some difficult days, but when they come, try to think of them merely as part of your journey to better health.

*Source: WebMD and healthcentral.com*
Smart Foods Can Lead to a Healthier Brain

There’s no denying that as we age chronologically, our bodies and brain age right along with us. By listening to all the buzz about certain foods and dietary supplements, you may hear that they can do everything from sharpen focus and concentration, to enhance memory, attention span and brain function.

But what are the facts? The good news is you can increase your chances of maintaining a healthy brain – if you add “smart” foods and beverages to your diet.

**Caffeine can make you more alert**

There’s no magic bullet to boost IQ or make you smarter, but certain substances, like caffeine, can energize and help you focus and concentrate. Found in coffee, chocolate, energy drinks, and some medications, caffeine gives you that unmistakable wake-up buzz – though the effects are short term. But don’t overdo it on caffeine, or you may get jittery and uncomfortable.

**Sugar can enhance alertness**

Sugar is your brain’s preferred fuel source – not table sugar, but glucose, which your body metabolizes from the sugars and carbohydrates you eat, like fruit. That’s why a glass of something sweet to drink can offer a short-term boost to memory, thinking processes, and mental ability. Consume too much, however, and memory can be impaired – along with the rest of you. Go easy on the sugar so it can enhance memory, without packing on pounds.

**Protein can increase brain function**

A protein source associated with a great brain boost is fish – rich in omega 3 fatty acids, which are essential for brain function and development. These healthy fats have amazing brain power: higher dietary omega 3 fatty acids are linked to lower dementia and stroke risks, slower mental decline and may play a vital role in enhancing memory, especially as we get older. For brain and heart health, it’s recommended you eat two servings of fish weekly.

**A daily dose of nuts or chocolate can slow aging**

Nuts and seeds are good sources of the antioxidant vitamin E, which is associated with a slower cognitive decline as you age. Dark chocolate also has powerful antioxidant properties, and contains natural stimulants like caffeine, which can enhance focus and concentration. Enjoy up to an ounce a day of nuts and dark chocolate to get all the benefits you need without excess calories, fat or sugar.

**Avocados and whole grains are good for your heart**
Eating whole grains, like popcorn and whole wheat, and fruits, such as avocados, can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and enhance blood flow to the brain. Whole grains also contribute dietary fiber and vitamin E, while avocados have a healthy monounsaturated fat that contributes to healthy blood flow.

**Blueberries are super nutritious**

Research in animals shows that blueberries help protect the brain from oxidative stress and may reduce the effects of age-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Studies, though not complete in humans, show that diets rich in blueberries significantly improved both the learning capacity and motor skills of aging rats, making them mentally equivalent to much younger rats.

**Benefits of a Healthy Diet**

It may sound trite, but it’s true: If your diet lacks essential nutrients, it can decrease your ability to concentrate. Eating too much or too little can also interfere with your ability to focus. A heavy meal may make you feel lethargic, while too few calories can result in distracting hunger pangs. Strive for a well-balanced diet chock full of a wide variety of healthy, wholesome foods.

**A Note on Vitamins, Minerals, Supplements...**

Store shelves groan with supplements claiming to boost health. Although many reports on the brain-boosting power of supplements like vitamins B, C, E, beta-carotene, and magnesium are promising, they’re inconclusive. Researchers are cautiously optimistic about ginseng, gingko, or vitamin, mineral, and herb combinations and their impact on the brain. A daily multivitamin is okay, but always check with your doctor before taking supplements.

**Get Ready for a Big Day**

Want to power up your ability to concentrate? Start with a meal of 100 percent fruit juice, a whole-grain bagel with salmon, and a cup of coffee. In addition to eating a well-balanced meal, experts also advise: Get a good night’s sleep, exercise to help sharpen thinking, and meditate to clear thinking and relax.

Source: WebMD
Coping with SAD

You can take action to help cope with seasonal affective disorder. Here are tips to help you manage the condition, in conjunction with your doctor or mental health provider:

- **Stick to your treatment plan.** Take medications as directed and attend therapy appointments as scheduled.
- **Let there be light.** Make your home sunnier and brighter. Open blinds, add skylights and trim tree branches that block sunlight.
- **Get out.** Get outdoors on sunny days, even during winter. Take a long walk, eat lunch at a nearby park, or simply sit peacefully on a bench and soak up the sun.

Winter Could Leave You SAD

As the cold of winter settles in and the darkness falls earlier, like many people you may find yourself eating or sleeping more. You may even start feeling a little bit depressed.

While these are common and normal reactions to the changing seasons, people with seasonal affective disorder (SAD) experience a much more serious reaction when summer shifts to fall and on to winter. With seasonal affective disorder, the short days and long nights may trigger feelings of depression, lethargy, fatigue and other problems.

If this happens to you, don't brush it off as simply a case of the “winter blues.” SAD is a type of depression, and it can severely impair your daily life. But with treatment — such as light box therapy — you can successfully manage SAD and won't have to dread the arrival of each fall or winter.

What is SAD?

Seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression that is triggered by the seasons. The most common type of SAD is called winter-onset depression. Symptoms usually begin in late fall or early winter and go away by summer. A much less common type of SAD, known as summer-onset depression, usually begins in the late spring or early summer and goes away by winter. SAD may be related to changes in the amount of daylight during different times of the year. In either case, problems may start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses.

What are the Symptoms?

Not everyone who has SAD experiences the same symptoms. Common symptoms of winter-onset SAD include a change in appetite, especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods, weight gain, a drop in energy level, fatigue, a tendency to oversleep,
difficulty concentrating, irritability and anxiety, increased sensitivity to social rejection, and avoidance of social situations and a loss of interest in the activities you used to enjoy.

What Causes SAD?
The specific cause of SAD remains unknown. It’s likely, as with many mental health conditions, that genetics, age and perhaps most importantly, your body’s natural chemical makeup, all play a role in developing seasonal affective disorder.

Specific culprits may include your circadian rhythm – the physiological process that helps regulate your body’s internal clock letting you know when to sleep or wake; an excess of melatonin, a sleep-related hormone that, in turn, has been linked to depression; and a lack of serotonin, a natural brain chemical that affects mood.

How Common is SAD?
As many as half a million people in the U.S. may have winter-onset depression. Another 10 percent to 20 percent may experience mild SAD. SAD is more common in women than in men. Although some children and teenagers get SAD, it usually doesn’t occur in people younger than 20 years of age. For adults, the risk of SAD decreases as they get older. Winter-onset SAD is more common in northern regions, where the winter season is typically longer and harsher.

When to seek medical advice
Most people experience some days when they feel down. But if you feel down for days at a time and you can’t seem to get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy, see your doctor. This is particularly important if you notice that your sleep patterns and appetite have changed — and certainly if you feel hopeless, think about suicide, or find yourself turning to alcohol for comfort or relaxation.

Treatments
Because increased sunlight improves symptoms, light therapy is often a main treatment for many people with SAD. Light therapy mimics outdoor light and causes a biochemical change in your brain that lifts your mood, relieving symptoms of seasonal affective disorder.

**Caution:** Tanning beds should not be used to treat SAD. The light sources in tanning beds are high in ultraviolet (UV) rays, which harm both your eyes and your skin.

Your doctor may also want you to try medicine or behavior therapy to treat your SAD. If light therapy or medicine alone doesn’t work, you doctor may want you to use them together.

Source: Mayo Clinic and American Academy of Family Physicians
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Save Money with Generics, On the Mark

Trustmark encourages you to take advantage of Generics, on the ‘Mark’ – a unique program that helps members save money on prescriptions. Trustmark will waive your initial out-of-pocket cost when you fill your first prescription with one of the Generics, on the ‘Mark’ drugs listed below.

Additionally, you can better control your out-of-pocket prescription drug costs by selecting highly respected and widely used generic drugs as appropriate substitutes for brand-name drugs, when medically appropriate, as determined by you and your provider.

Rigorous analysis by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has shown that generic drugs are equal to their brand-name counterparts in strength, quality and performance. Generic drugs provide an effective and less-expensive alternative for most people.

To use Generics, on the ‘Mark’:

- **Talk to your provider** or pharmacist about which generic drug(s) from the list may be medically appropriate for you.

- **Fill your prescription**, when your provider considers it medically appropriate to prescribe one of these generic drugs, and take advantage of an effective and generally lower-cost alternative to brand name.

- **Present your ID card** and your first prescription for one of the Generics, on the ‘Mark’ drugs at a network pharmacy, and the out-of-the-pocket cost waiver will apply automatically to your first prescription. Best of all, since your cost for generic drugs is generally lower than for brand-name drugs under your healthcare plan, you save even more money.

For more information about Trustmark’s Generics, on the ‘Mark’ program, please call the Eligibility/Benefits Information number on the back of your identification card.

### Generics, On the Mark Drug List

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<th>Eligible Generic Drugs</th>
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<td>Other Brand Alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omeprazole*</td>
<td>Aciphex, Nexium*, Pravad*, Protonix, Zegerid</td>
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<td>Ranitidine Tablets*</td>
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FDA Issues Recommendation for Children's Cough and Cold Products

After completing its review of information about the safety of over-the-counter (OTC) cough and cold medicines in 2008, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommended that these drugs not be used to treat infants and children under two years of age because serious and potentially life-threatening side effects can occur.

As a result, the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA), an association that represents most of the makers of nonprescription over-the-counter cough and cold medicines in children, recently announced that it was modifying the product labels for OTC cough and cold medicines to state “do not use” in children under four years of age. The manufacturers also introduced new child-resistant packaging and new measuring devices for use with the products.

The FDA says it supports the voluntary actions of the CHPA to help prevent and reduce misuse and to better inform consumers about the safe and effective use of these products for children. The FDA said it will continue to assess the safety and efficacy of these products and to revise its OTC monograph (list of approved ingredients and amounts) for these medicines. The agency said although the CHPA’s new labeling is inconsistent with its current monograph, it does not object to the new label modification, which reflects a more restrictive use of the drugs in children.

The agency said the steps taken by the CHPA won’t affect the availability of the medicines, but the voluntary action will result in a transition period where the instructions for use of some OTC cough and cold medicines in children will be different from others.

Some medicines will have the new recommendation “do not use” for children under four year of age, while others will instruct that they not be used for children under two years of age. If parents or caregivers have or purchase a product that does not have the voluntarily-modified labeling, the FDA recommends that they should adhere to

Do not give children medications labeled only for adults. Talk to your healthcare professional if you have any questions about using cough or cold medicines in children.

Choose OTC cough and cold medicines with child-resistant safety caps, when available.

To understand what symptoms the medicine are intended to treat, check the
labeling, the FDA recommends that they should adhere to the dosage instructions and warnings on the label that accompanies the medication.

Do not, under any circumstances, give adult medications to children. If you are unsure or have questions about how to use a product, consult your child’s doctor or a pharmacist.

Source: Food and Drug Administration

DRUG FACTS section of the label. Cough and cold medicines often have more than one active ingredient.

If you give more than one medicine to a child make sure that they do not have the same type of “active ingredients.” If you use two medicines that have the same or similar active ingredients, a child could get too much of an ingredient and that may hurt your child. Check with your doctor if you are uncertain.

Carefully follow the directions for how to use the medicine. If you have a question about how to use the medicine, ask your pharmacist or your doctor. Overuse or misuse of cold and cold products can lead to serious and potentially life threatening side effects.

Do not use common household spoons to measure medicines for children because household spoons come in different sizes are and not meant for measuring medicines. Only use the measuring device that comes with the medicine or one made specially for measuring drugs.

Using cough and cold medicines does not cure a cold or cough. These medicines are used only to treat your child’s symptom(s) and do not shorten the length of time your child is sick.
Winter Weather Safety Tips

Whether winter brings severe snowstorms, light dustings or just cold temperatures, children love to get out and play. But along with winter weather comes added danger. The American Academy of Pediatrics offers these valuable tips on how to keep your children safe and warm while enjoying these winter activities:

Ice Skating

- Allow children to skate only on approved surfaces. Check for signs posted by local police or recreation departments, or call your local police department to find out which areas have been approved.
- Advise your child to skate in the same direction as the crowd, avoid darting across the ice, and never skate alone, chew gum or eat candy while skating.
- Consider having your child wear a helmet while ice skating.

Sledding

- Keep sledgers away from motor vehicles.
- Children should be supervised while sledding.
- Keep young children separated from older children.
- Sledding feet first or sitting up, instead of lying down head-first, may prevent head injuries.
- Consider having your child wear a helmet while sledding.
- Use steerable sleds, not snow disks or inner tubes.
- Sleds should be structurally sound and free of sharp edges and splinters, and the steering mechanism should be well lubricated.
- Sled slopes should be free of obstructions like trees or fences, be covered in snow not ice, not be too steep (slope of less than 30º), and end with a flat runoff.
- Avoid sledding in crowded areas.

Source: The American Academy of Pediatrics
Protect the Skin

Set reasonable time limits on outdoor play to prevent frostbite. Have children come inside periodically to warm up. And don’t forget sun protection; the sun’s rays can still cause sunburn in the winter, especially when they reflect off snow.
Important Winter Driving Advice from AAA

As much of the country settles in for cold winter weather, the AAA Chicago reminds motorists of some important winter driving and survival tips.

- Clear snow and ice from vehicle to improve visibility. That includes the hood, roof, trunk, turn signals, taillights and headlights.
- Slow down when visibility and road conditions are impaired, and increase the following distance between vehicles.
- Anticipate dangers including ice on bridges, hidden lane markings, stalled cars and poor visibility.
- Use proper winter braking techniques. For cars without anti-lock brakes, use "squeeze" or "threshold" braking by applying the brakes just short of lock-up, then easing off the brake pedal slightly. For vehicles with anti-lock brakes, continuous, firm braking is necessary.
- Avoid skids by easing off the accelerator and not locking up the brakes. In a skid, carefully steer in the direction you want your vehicle to go and straighten the wheel as soon as the car begins to go in the desired direction.

SURVIVAL GEAR

- Cell phone
- Ice scraper and brush
- Boots, gloves, hat, blanket
- Tools and flashlight
- Tire traction material such as sand or cat litter

- Shovel
- Jumper cables
- Flares or reflective triangle
- Food
- Coffee can furnace
- First aid kit

During the winter months, it’s important for everyone to monitor the weather forecasts that may affect driving plans. If you become stranded in the winter, AAA advises that it is usually best to
stay with your vehicle rather than risk exposure or becoming lost while seeking help. In these cases, a winter survival kit could save your life. AAA recommends all motorists carry the following items in their vehicles during the winter months.

More safe winter driving information is available through your local AAA office or online at: www.AAA.com.
That's a Stretch

A stretch is a stretch, right? Well, turns out not all stretching is equal.

For the past 25 years, so-called static or gradual stretching has been considered the right way to stretch. This is a slow, gradual stretch that you hold for 15 to 30 seconds. You can choose from dozens of static stretches, for almost every major muscle group; some of the stretches are almost instinctive, like the arms-reaching-for-the-sky stretch that many of us do when we first wake up in the morning.

But recently, a new form of stretching called active isolated stretching (AIS) has gained popularity, especially among athletes, massage therapists, personal trainers, and other professionals. AIS allows the body to repair itself and to prepare for daily activity.

Prolonged static stretching actually decreases the blood flow within the tissue creating localized ischemia, or insufficient blood supply, and lactic acid buildup. This can potentially cause irritation or injury, similar to the effects and consequences of trauma and overuse.

What is active isolated stretching?

The AIS technique involves holding each stretch for only two seconds. This method of stretching is also known to work with the body’s natural physiological makeup to improve circulation and increase the elasticity of muscle joints and fascia, the strong connective tissue binding muscles, organs, and other soft structures of the body. AIS involves brief contractions of the agonist muscle to help stretch the opposite, or antagonist, muscle (the quadriceps versus the hamstrings, for example).

AIS, created by Aaron Mattes, can help alleviate problems associated with many overuse injuries such as carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, lower back problems, and other ailments resulting from a lack of flexibility.

Performing an active isolated stretch of no longer than two seconds allows the target muscles to optimally lengthen without triggering the protective stretch reflex and subsequent reciprocal antagonistic muscle contraction as the isolated muscle achieves a state of relaxation. These stretches provide maximum benefit and can be accomplished without opposing tension or resulting trauma.

How AIS benefits the body

One of the greatest benefits of active isolated stretching is that it can improve muscle
effectiveness. As we age, our muscles become increasingly inelastic. AIS can make substantial improvements in muscle elasticity, adding renewed life and spring to tired out old muscles.

AIS also can help prevent injury. It reduces the workload in most sports by removing tightness so you can swing your limbs more freely. It transports oxygen to sore muscles and quickly removes toxins from the muscles, so recovery is faster. AIS works as a deep tissue massage technique because it activates muscle fibers during stretching.

Proper stretching should allow muscles to increase blood flow and oxygenation to flush out waste products such as lactic acid. Even if you are an avid stretcher, you will be amazed by how specifically you stretch exactly where you need it most. It is critical to stretch one muscle at a time, and active isolated stretching does just that because it is isolated.

Source: Stretchingusa.com and Lifefitness.com
Government Issues New Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released new Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. According to the guidelines, adults gain substantial health benefits from two and a half hours a week of moderate aerobic physical activity, and children benefit from an hour or more of physical activity a day.

The comprehensive guidelines for people of all ages and physical conditions are designed so people can easily fit physical activity into their daily plan and incorporate activities they enjoy. Physical activity benefits children and adolescents, young and middle-aged adults, older adults, and those in every studied racial and ethnic group, the report said.

“It’s important for all Americans to be active, and the guidelines are a roadmap to include physical activity in their daily routine,” said HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt. “The evidence is clear, regular physical activity over months and years produces long-term health benefits and reduces the risk of many diseases. The more physically active you are, the more health benefits you gain.”

According to the HHS, regular physical activity in adults reduces the risk of early death, coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, colon and breast cancer, and depression. It also can improve thinking ability in older adults and the ability to engage in activities needed for daily living.

The recommended amount of physical activity in children and adolescents improves cardio respiratory and muscular fitness as well as bone health, and contributes to favorable body composition.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans are based on the first thorough review of scientific research about physical activity and health in more than a decade. For more information about the “Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans,” including information for women who are pregnant, adults with disabilities, and people with chronic medical conditions, visit www.hhs.gov or www.health.gov/paguidelines.

Key Guidelines by Group

Children and Adolescents
Adults
Older adults

Children and Adolescents
One hour or more of moderate or vigorous aerobic physical activity a day, including vigorous intensity physical activity at least three days a week. Examples of moderate intensity aerobic activities include hiking, skateboarding, bicycle riding and brisk walking. Vigorous intensity aerobic activities include bicycle riding, jumping rope, running and sports such as soccer, basketball and ice or field hockey. Children and adolescents should incorporate muscle-strengthening activities, such as rope climbing, sit-ups, and tug-of-war, three days a week. Bone-strengthening activities, such as jumping rope, running and skipping, are recommended three days a week.

Adults
Two and a half hours a week of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity, or one hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity a day.
activity. Walking briskly, water aerobics, ballroom dancing and general gardening are examples of moderate intensity aerobic activities. Vigorous intensity aerobic activities include race walking, jogging or running, swimming laps, jumping rope and hiking uphill or with a heavy backpack. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes. For more extensive health benefits, adults should increase their aerobic physical activity to five hours a week moderate-intensity or two and a half hours a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Adults should incorporate muscle strengthening activities, such as weight training, push-ups, sit-ups and carrying heavy loads or heavy gardening, at least two days a week.

Older adults
Older adults should follow the guidelines for other adults when it is within their physical capacity. If a chronic condition prohibits their ability to follow those guidelines, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow. If they are at risk of falling, they should also do exercises that maintain or improve balance.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Kick the Habit to Brighten Your Future

It’s a new year. What better time is there to quit smoking?

The U.S. Surgeon General has said that smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives.

Quitting smoking is not easy, but you can do it. To have the best chance of success in quitting, you need to know what you’re up against, what your options are, and where to go for help.

Why Quit Now?

No matter how old you are or how long you’ve smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half, compared with those who continue smoking. Ex-smokers enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu viruses, better self-reported health, and reduced rates of bronchitis and pneumonia.

For decades the Surgeon General has reported the health risks linked to smoking. In 1990, the Surgeon General concluded that quitting smoking has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages. These benefits apply to people who already have smoking-related disease and those who don’t.

The health of others

Smoking not only harms your health but it hurts the health of those around you. Exposure to secondhand smoke (also called environmental tobacco smoke or passive smoking) includes exhaled smoke as well as smoke from burning cigarettes. Studies have shown that secondhand smoke causes thousands of deaths each year from lung cancer and heart disease in otherwise healthy non-smokers.

Ex-smokers live longer than people who keep smoking.

Quitting smoking lowers the risk of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attack, stroke, and chronic lung disease.
Women who stop smoking before pregnancy or during the first three to four months of pregnancy reduce their risk of having a low birth-weight baby to that of women who never smoked.

The health benefits of quitting smoking are far greater than any risks from the small weight gain (usually less than 10 pounds) or any emotional or psychological problems that may follow quitting.

Preparing to Quit

Just thinking about quitting may make you anxious. But your chances will be better if you get ready first. Quitting works best when you’re prepared. Before you quit, START by taking these five important steps:

- **S** = Set a quit date.
- **T** = Tell family, friends, and coworkers that you plan to quit.
- **A** = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you’ll face while quitting.
- **R** = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car and work.
- **T** = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

Dealing with Withdrawal

Many people just can’t handle how they feel when they’re trying to quit. They start smoking again to feel better. Most people slip up in the first week after quitting. This is when feelings of withdrawal are strongest. But there are medicines that can help with feelings of withdrawal, including: nicotine gum, nicotine inhaler, nicotine lozenge, nicotine nasal spray, nicotine patch, bupropion SR pills and varenicline pills.

Using these medicines can double your chances of quitting for good. Ask your doctor for advice. But remember: Medicine alone can’t do all the work. It can help with cravings and withdrawal, but quitting will still be hard at times.

The Benefits of Quitting Smoking Over Time

- **20 minutes after quitting**: Your heart rate and blood pressure drops.
- **12 hours after quitting**: The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- **2 weeks to 3 months after quitting**: Your circulation improves and your lung function increases.
- **1 to 9 months after quitting**: Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce the risk of infection.
- **1 year after quitting**: The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker’s.
- **5 years after quitting**: Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker 5 to 15 years after quitting.
- **10 years after quitting**: The lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker’s. The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix, and pancreas decrease, too.

- **15 years after quitting**: The risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a non-smoker’s.

*Source: American Cancer Society and SmokeFree.gov*
Tips for Dealing with Winter Dry Skin

The weather outside may be frightful, but your skin doesn’t have to be. Banish dry skin and give your winter skin care regimen a boost with these tips:

“Dry skin is due to lack of water, not oil. Apply moisturizers immediately after bathing or showering to trap water in the skin,” Dr. Diane Berson, a dermatologist at the Iris Cantor Women’s Health Center of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, said in a prepared statement.

Here are a few tips on how to avoid dry skin and winter itch:

- Moisturize daily. Cream moisturizers are best for normal to dry skin. A moisturizer without perfume or lanolin is best for people with sensitive skin.

- Don’t overdo skin cleansing. Once a day is sufficient to wash your face, feet and between the folds of your skin. You can rinse your trunk, arms and legs daily, but don’t use cleanser or soap on these areas every day. Too much cleansing removes the skin’s natural moisturizers.

- If you have winter itch, take short, lukewarm showers or baths and use non-irritating, non-detergent-based cleansers. Immediately after your shower or bath, apply a water-in-oil-type moisturizer and gently pat your skin dry.

- Household humidifiers can help prevent dry skin.

- Protect yourself from the wind by covering your face and using a petroleum-based lip balm.

- Try to avoid exposure to extreme cold, which can cause frostbite or skin disorders in some people.

- Protect your skin from the sun. Winter sun can be as dangerous as summer sun. Use a sunscreen of SPF 15 or greater.

- Twenty to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week can give your skin a healthy glow.

- If you have persistent dry skin, itching or scaling, see your dermatologist.

Source: HealthDay News