

## Making New Year's resolutions that stick

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It's the new year and companies that make money off resolutions for weight loss are spending their advertising budgets to get you to buy their supplement, join their diet program, add a gym membership or start a new drug.

A quick search through Google will provide you with a list of supplements that are touted to help with weight loss. Some of them might even seem to help a little. Some are stimulants that give you a little more energy and may temporarily boost your metabolism. Diuretics will help you lose a little water weight. Some might help with bloating or constipation. Others decrease appetite. Many supplements can result in short term weight loss, but most that are advertised in this way have little impact on your ongoing metabolism or body composition. Long term use of some supplements can be helpful in certain circumstances with blood sugar control, appetite regulation and weight loss.

A certain class of medications, called GLP-1 agonists, are especially popular for weight loss at the moment. They do result in weight loss and depending on the specific medication, this weight loss can be significant. These are currently indicated for type 2 diabetics or those who meet the criteria for obesity or overweight by BMI.

These are not indicated for those with just a little weight to lose, in part because these medications are not intended for short term use. In fact, discontinuing the medication typically results in re-gain of lost weight.

Additionally, the use of medications for weight loss is not without some risk. Side effects of GLP-1 agonists vary from mild to severe and can include headache, runny nose and sore throat, nausea, vomiting, constipation, pancreatitis and slowed digestive transit times. Healthy digestion is so important to our greater health that agents like these should be used with care to avoid causing problems with this most important body system. Whether supplement or medication, there is no magic pill for weight loss.

Like the use of supplements and medications, diet changes frequently result in short term weight changes. Sometimes these are short term because the diet change is not sustainable. Return to prior dietary habits may cause weight to return. However, many people find their weight loss plateaus or they regain their lost weight despite maintaining a specific diet. This is because our metabolism adapts to our diet. However, changes in diet can result in better health outcomes regardless of changes in body weight. Increasing intake of fruits and vegetables, even modestly, result in better health and lower mortality.

Scientific data suggests that exercise is helpful for reducing weight gain over the years, but not weight loss. Similar to diet, however, there is great evidence that exercise results in better health outcomes. Exercise is linked to stronger muscles, healthier bones, better mental health, improved digestion and increased cardiovascular health. Certain types of exercise can help us maintain and improve mobility as we age. Exercise also reduces perception of pain.

Given the above, you might consider looking at diet improvements and exercise before starting an expensive supplement or diet program or asking your doctor for a prescription. The most important element of any of these changes is sustainability - starting with very small changes and growing over time can help make changes stick. Walking for an hour a day might be your goal, but if you are starting from nothing, this might feel unachievable or be difficult to fit into your lifestyle. If you start with 5-15 minutes a day, that's probably something you can do regardless of the weather or your schedule. For diet, are you eating any fruit



or vegetables daily? Instead of overhauling your diet completely, maybe commit to one vegetable daily with dinner or an additional serving daily. Some people lose weight more easily than others, but regardless of the impact of these on your weight, these small changes can make an impact on your health which multiplies over time.



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