

WELLNESS MINUTE

JANUARY 2019

Are your goals SMART?

10 WAYS THAT
**STRENGTH
TRAINING**
BENEFITS YOUR
WEIGHT, HEALTH
& FITNESS

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BUTTERNUT
SQUASH AND
KALE SALAD
WITH TAHINI
DRESSING



Are your goals SMART?

Happy New Year! We hope you had a happy holiday season and feel excited about 2019!

Do you make New Year's resolutions?
Or have you gotten disenchanted because they do not seem to stick?

Whether or not you make resolutions, the New Year is a good time to reflect on what you would like to accomplish in the coming year...and, there is an effective way to reach your goals!

What can make the difference is how you approach it. If you set a goal that is vague and/or doesn't have a specific action plan, then it's not likely to happen.

It's common for people to make a New Year's resolution or goal, such as "I'm going to lose weight." Even if you add the specific amount, such as 40 lbs. and the method, like "eating healthy and exercising more", this is still too general, doesn't include a plan, and may not be realistic.

Have you heard of SMART goals? SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. Let's take a closer look at some examples and the reasons why SMART goals are more effective.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW WE CAN MAKE THIS A SMART GOAL.

SPECIFIC – How much weight do you want to lose and what action steps will you take in order to reach your goal weight? To arrive at this, you will need to take into consideration what is achievable. We will look at that in **ACHIEVABLE**. When it comes to the specific actions or habits, consider what you may need to change.

Do you need to be more active?
Can you eat more home cooked meals?
Do you need to reduce or eliminate sweetened beverages?
Are you willing to reduce empty calories (sugar, refined carbs)?
Do you need to reduce portion size?

After reflecting on your current habits, decide what specific actions you are willing to take. Some examples could be increasing your physical activity, eliminating soda from your diet, and eating more home-cooked meals instead of going out to eat most of the time.

MEASURABLE – In order to track, you need to know where you are now then identify a system or method for keeping track of your progress. In the case of weight loss, this is pretty straightforward, but you do have a few options: Weighing yourself on a scale, tracking your measurements, and calculating your percentage of body fat. More on this in the next article. If increasing physical activity is part of your goal, there are lots of apps and devices to help you measure this. The Wellness-Connect portal is designed to support you with this since it allows you to either sync your device, such as a smartphone, Fitbit or other wearable device, or manually enter your steps and other physical activity.




ACHIEVABLE – Setting a goal that is achievable is crucial. You want it to be something that will motivate you without being unrealistic. If you make your goal too big and don't reach it, you're likely to get discouraged. Research shows that a 5-10% weight loss is attainable for those who are overweight. So, a 200 lb. person may want to shoot for losing 10-20 lbs.

RELEVANT – Take into account how important this is for you right now, given your current life circumstances. If you are experiencing major life challenges or have several other work or life priorities, it may not be the ideal time since stress will make it that much more difficult to change your habits. This doesn't mean you have to give up on your desire, but simply delay it until a time that when you're able to focus on it a bit more. Or, you can give yourself a longer timeframe and time is what the T stands for in SMART.

TIMEBOUND – An end-point is needed so you can measure and because deadlines can be motivating. Sticking with the weight loss example, it's important to keep in mind that a realistic expectation for safe and sustainable weight loss is 1-2 lbs. per week. So, if your goal is to lose 20 lbs., you may want to allow yourself 4 months to reach your goal weight. However, as mentioned earlier, the level of priority should factor into this too, as well as the specific action steps you've decided to take since some strategies work faster than others.

Putting this all together, a SMART goal could be:

I will lose 20 lbs. in the next 4 months by:

-  • Working out for 45 minutes 4x/week (alternating between cardio and strength training).
-  • Drinking at least 8 glasses of water each day and eliminating all sweetened beverages.
-  • Limiting restaurant food to 2-3 meals per week.

Doesn't that sound more doable? Whether your plan is weight loss, healthy eating, fitness, better sleep, tobacco cessation, stress management, or any other wellness goals, Wellness-Connect is here to support you! We've recently improved our goal setting feature to allow you to create SMART goals within various areas of health and wellness, as well as track them more effectively. This will not only motivate you to reach your goals, but you also receive points for creating and tracking them.

For some of our members, we also have Wellness Coaches available to help you get where you want to be. If this is a benefit available to you, don't hesitate to schedule a session with one of our highly experienced coaches! The new year is a great time to make a SMART goal and we can help you reach it!

What's the best way to measure progress with weight loss?



As mentioned in the previous article, an important way to achieve a goal, such as weight loss, is to measure progress. Most people do this by weighing themselves, which is the simplest method, but is it the best?

In this article we compare different ways to track your progress:

Scale weight – This can give you useful information and is probably the easiest and most common way to measure. It's important to keep in mind that a scale will measure everything in your body, including muscle, fat, bones, organs, water and food. Since the goal is to lose fat, not muscle or anything else, then it provides an incomplete picture, especially since muscle weighs more than fat. In fact, body builders appear to be overweight according to a scale even though they have more muscle and little fat. Even if you're not a bodybuilder, it's possible that the number on the scale may not change much if you're losing fat and gaining muscle. Another downside is that some people feel emotionally triggered by weighing themselves since the number on the scale can affect how they feel about themselves. Having said all this, it doesn't mean there's no value to knowing how much you weigh. It just means that it's not the whole picture and can be combined with other measures to get a more complete picture.

Body fat percentage – Again, the goal of losing weight is not just losing pounds, but losing fat. So, tracking your percentage of body fat can be even more useful. There are several ways to do this, including using calipers, body composition scales, and other devices. However, you can also keep it simple (and no cost) by using an online calculator and enter certain body measurements, which brings us to the next way to track your progress.

Measurements – Tracking your measurements does not require any fancy equipment. A simple measuring tape will do. Taking your measurements in various places allows you to know where you're losing fat or possibly gaining muscle. With tight fitting clothes or undressed, measure the following:

- Bust – around the chest at the nipple line
- Chest – just under the bust
- Waist – around the smallest part
- Hips – around the biggest part
- Thighs – around the biggest part of each
- Calves – around the biggest part of each
- Arms – around the biggest part of the upper arm

We've established that losing fat is the goal of losing weight. Where we lose the fat can also make a difference. Research shows that excess abdominal fat increases the risk for disease. In other words, it's riskier to gain fat in our midsection than other parts of the body. This makes it important to know that the risk for heart disease and diabetes goes up if your waist is larger than 35 inches if you're a woman and larger than 40 inches if you're a man.

The bottom line is that having more information is better than less. Of course, it also depends on your individual goals and how much you want to track and how often. The most important thing is to measure and track consistently in order to reach your goal!

10 WAYS THAT STRENGTH TRAINING BENEFITS YOUR WEIGHT, HEALTH & FITNESS

If you belong to a gym or fitness center, you've probably noticed that attendance greatly increases in January. Many people feel motivated to start exercising or get back on track with their previous routine in the new year.

Whether you exercise at the gym, walk or run in your neighborhood, attend Zumba, yoga or other classes, it's also very important to include strength training into your routine at least twice per week.

What exactly is strength training?

Strength training is also called weight training or resistance training and is the use of resistance to build muscle and strength. It can be done with free weights, weight machines, resistance bands or your own weight. Free weights don't have to be the super heavy dumbbells that you see bodybuilders using. They can be as light as 3-5 lb. weights if you're a beginner. Kettlebells are another option. There are many types of resistance bands and they, as well as their benefits, were highlighted in the December issue. Examples of strength training using your own weight and no equipment include squats, push-ups, pull-ups, planks, etc.

What are the benefits of strength training?

There are so many, but we will focus on the top 10 ways that strength training benefits not just your fitness, but also your physical and mental health. Strength training may help to:

- Improve muscle strength and tone, which not only looks good, but it also protects your joints from injury
- Improve flexibility and balance, which helps you stay independent as you age
- Manage weight since it burns calories and can increase metabolism
- Prevent cognitive decline as you age
- Improves stamina so you don't feel tired as easily
- Prevent the development of chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, etc.
- Prevent depression
- Improve posture
- Increase or maintain bone density
- Strengthen tendons and ligaments

If you're not already doing some form of strength training, it's worth your while to start. It doesn't have to be a long workout. Even 10-15 minutes sessions can offer benefits and you can always build up from there.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Roasted Butternut Squash and Kale Salad with Tahini Dressing

This delicious salad is hearty, making it perfect for cold winter days and can be substantial enough as a main dish if you pair it with a rustic bread and/or soup.

Salad ingredients:

- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cubes
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- A pinch of sea salt
- A pinch of black pepper
- 2 bunches of kale

Dressing ingredients:

- 3-4 Tbsp tahini (sesame paste)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- A pinch of sea salt
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Directions

FOR THE SALAD:

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.

On a large baking sheet toss together the squash, onion, olive oil, salt, and pepper and spread into an even layer.

Roast until tender, about 30 minutes.

Allow to cool for about one hour.

Strip the kale leaves off the stalks and discard stalks.

Sprinkle the kale leaves with salt and massage the leaves to soften them slightly.

Add the squash mixture to the kale leaves and toss.

Drizzle the tahini dressing over the salad and sprinkle the pine nuts on top.

FOR THE DRESSING:

Put the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and salt into a jar with a lid and shake vigorously.

Add the olive oil and shake again. Thin the dressing with a few drops of water, if needed to get a pourable consistency.



**Wellness-Connect
powered by Allura Health**

4445 Eastgate Mall #200
San Diego, California 92121
www.Wellness-Connect.net
support@Wellness-Connect.net
(877) 931-8005

*Happy New
Year from
Allura Health!*

HEAR
from our
MEMBERS

“In the past year, I’ve been an active participant in the Wellness program at work. I’ve spoken to wellness coaches, who’ve given me tips from more useful exercises to including more protein in my diet. The past year was a big year for me, which meant a lot of stress. My husband and I bought our first home and in moving, we both put on a few pounds due to eating out or getting fried deli food from the grocery store; since our kitchen was in boxes or it was just too inconvenient to cook at home.

In the past seven months, I’ve lost about six of the fifteen pounds I gained and am hoping to lose the rest by the end of this year, to resume my pre-move weight. The next year is shaping up to be just as big as the last, as my husband and I are talking about starting a family. So, for this next wellness year, it is my goal to maintain healthy choices and a healthy weight, for my health and the health of anyone else that may come along.

I plan to do this through regular exercise, as I’ve bought an elliptical to work out from home and through healthy eating. In accordance with the advice of my wellness coach, I’ve started to eat more protein at meals, in order to remain full. I’ve also begun to minimize simple carbohydrates and artificial sweeteners. I drink far less soda than I did a year ago.

Hopefully, by following this plan, I can accomplish my 2019 fitness goal and be healthy throughout a possible pregnancy.”

Kara R. | OKLAHOMA CITY, OK