

health matters

New Year's Resolutions

Make Them Work for You

A new year, a fresh start. This year you may be ready to make some changes for your health.

But if you are afraid that New Year's resolutions are only for dreamers, take a new approach. Try these tips to help make this year's resolutions work.

Get focused. It is better to make one or two changes at a time. Do not try to change your

whole lifestyle at once. Come up with simple, clear steps to take. For example, you might try to:

- Eat one more serving of fruit each day. Or maybe you can replace one meat serving per day with a serving of whole grains, veggies or beans.
- Quit smoking—and do not give up. Are you afraid you

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5 Tips for Better Sleep

Good sleep is important for good health. But getting good sleep is not always easy.

You can help yourself get more rest by developing good sleep habits. Here are five ways to get started:

1. Get up and go to bed at the same times every day. Our bodies are controlled by an

internal clock. It helps us know when it is time to sleep and be awake. Getting up at the same time each day helps train your body to be ready for sleep at night. That means you should aim for a set sleep schedule—even on weekends.

2. Have a relaxing bedtime

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Have a Problem? File a Complaint

Health Plan of San Mateo (HPSM) wants you to have the best care and service possible. We want to hear from you if you are not happy with the services you are getting from your doctor or HPSM. The information you share with us will help us improve.

Filing a complaint is your right. Your doctor cannot treat you differently for filing a complaint. Neither can HPSM. There are two types of complaints: grievances and appeals.

Grievances

You can file a grievance any time you have a bad experience. Here are two examples of grievances:

- My doctor does not listen to my concerns. I do not feel respected.
- I called HPSM, and the person I spoke with was not helpful.

Appeals

You can file an appeal if HPSM denied your doctor's request for a service or drug. For example, your doctor may have asked HPSM to approve a medicine for you and we denied it. If you file an appeal, we will review our decision again.

If you file an appeal, please provide as much information as possible. You can also ask

your doctor to send us more information about your medical conditions. Your request may have been denied because we did not have enough medical information about you to approve the service.

How do I file a complaint?

By phone:

- Call the Grievance and Appeals Unit at **888-576-7227**.
- Call the Member Services department at **800-750-4776**—for members of Medi-Cal, HealthWorx, ACE, or Healthy Kids.
- Call the CareAdvantage Unit at **866-880-0606**—for members of CareAdvantage Cal MediConnect Plan (Medicare-Medicaid Plan) or CareAdvantage (HMO SNP).

By fax or mail: You can also write your complaint. Please include your name, HPSM ID number, and a detailed description of your complaint.

- Fax your written complaint to the Grievance and Appeals Unit at **650-829-2002**.

- Mail it to Health Plan of San Mateo, Attn: Grievance and Appeals Unit, 701 Gateway Blvd., Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080.



When do I need to file my complaint?

Medi-Cal, HealthWorx, ACE, or Healthy Kids members must file the complaint within 6 months of the negative experience or denial.

CareAdvantage (HMO SNP) and CareAdvantage CMC members must file the complaint within 2 months of the negative experience or denial.

Bad things happen, and we want to know about them. We look forward to hearing from you and having the chance to help you. ■

Better Sleep

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routine. It helps to wind down before heading to bed. So try to do something calming that will help you relax. Try reading or taking a warm bath.

3. Set the stage for sleep.

People tend to sleep best in a room that is dark, quiet and cool. It might be helpful to get rid of a noisy clock or to hang dark

curtains that block outside light.

4. Avoid habits that can keep you awake. Tobacco, caffeine or alcohol too close to bedtime can keep you up and lead to poor sleep.

5. Time your workouts. Regular exercise improves sleep. But try to exercise at least 3 hours before going to bed. Being active too close to bedtime may make it harder to sleep. ■

Source: National Sleep Foundation



Your Back at Work: Keep It Healthy

When you are hard at work, make sure you are taking care of your back too. After all, the most common workplace injuries are back injuries.

Protect your back at work with these tips:

Lift with care. Bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting heavy things. Tighten your stomach muscles and use your legs to lift. If you need to turn, move your feet—do not twist your back.

Get a good seat. Make sure your chair is the right height. Your feet should be flat on the

floor, with your knees sitting a bit higher than your hips. Use a footstool if needed. Check that the backrest supports your lower back.

Check your posture. Be sure to sit up straight with your back against the back of your chair. When you stand, hold your head up and your shoulders back.

Organize your space. Arrange your work area so you don't have to reach or twist to get the items you need every day.

Give it a rest. If you sit

at a desk all day, take short breaks to get up, stretch and move.

Stay flexible and fit. If you move all day, try a few simple back stretches each morning before work.

To help keep your back in good shape, make it a goal to do crunches (partial sit-ups) or other back-strengthening exercises at least 2 or 3 times a week. ■

Sources: National Institutes of Health; North American Spine Society

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Sex and Your Health: Protect Yourself from STIs

In a perfect world, sex would be 100 percent safe. But that is not the reality.

Millions of people every year get a sexually transmitted infection, or STI. Sometimes they have sores or other symptoms. But many show no signs that they have an infection.

STIs can be passed when skin touches skin or when body fluids are shared.

You can get an STI from any kind of sex. That includes oral, vaginal and anal sex.

The only sure way to avoid an STI is to not have any kind of sex.

But if you are having sex, or plan to, these steps can help lower risks for both you and your partner:

1. Get tested. This is the only way to know for sure if you or your partner is infected. Anyone who has ever had sex should be tested.

Be honest and direct with your partner. You can say: “I would like to talk about sex and STIs. What do we both need to know?”

Share your own story. Have you been tested? When? If you have an infection, are you being treated for it?



Some STIs can be cured. Others can be controlled with medicine but not cured.

2. Be faithful. This means that you and your partner only have sex with each other. Remember: Be tested and, if needed, treated before you begin a sexual relationship.

3. Use latex condoms. Use them during any sexual activity—every time. Both male and female condoms help.

Keep in mind that pills and other types of birth control do not prevent STIs.

4. Do not use drugs or alcohol. These can lead to risky decisions, such as not using a condom.

Focus on health

Be honest with your provider about your sex life. He or she may suggest shots to help protect you from STIs. One shot can prevent hepatitis B. Another prevents some types of HPV.

HPV is a group of viruses. Some HPVs can lead to cancer of the cervix. The shot protects against most HPVs that can lead to this cancer, but not all.

STIs are serious. They can cause painful symptoms. Some can make it hard to have children in the future.

So be tested, and play it safe. ■

Resolutions

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might break down and smoke a cigarette? Or even buy a pack? It is OK. Decide right now that you will get back on track if that happens.

- Exercise for 30 minutes on 3 days each week. Getting active just feels good. Remind yourself that this goal will also help reduce stress.

Plan—then act. So you have decided to make a change. Next, think about how you will meet your goal, and get prepared.

You might:

- Pick out a few tasty recipes that use whole grains, veggies or beans. Make a shopping list



of any ingredients you need.

- Get over-the-counter stop-smoking aids, such as patches or gum. Or ask your provider about prescriptions that can help. Plan to throw out your ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes on your quit day.
- Find a fitness buddy. Ask a friend or family member to

commit to exercise with you.

Go—and keep going. Here is your final step. Put your plans into action.

If you get off course, do not give up. Just remember why you decided to make the change, and start again. ■

Sources: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; American Psychological Association

Pregnancy

Get Help to Quit Smoking and Drinking

If you are pregnant and still smoke or drink, now is the time to quit. Both alcohol and tobacco can hurt your health and harm your unborn baby too.

Smoking exposes you and your baby to dangerous chemicals. And when you drink, the same amount of alcohol that is in your blood goes into your baby's blood. But a baby's body cannot break down alcohol

like yours can. As a result, your baby could:

- Be born too early
- Be born with birth defects
- Have lifelong learning problems

No shame in asking for help

If you are having trouble quitting, ask for help. Your provider can:

- Help you make a plan for quitting
- Give you quit aids to help

you deal with cigarette cravings

The California Smokers' Helpline offers telephone counseling to help you quit. Medi-Cal members can get free patches and a \$20 gift card for creating a plan to quit. Call **800-NO-BUTTS (800-662-8887)**.

If you are dealing with alcohol issues, counselors are available 24 hours a day to offer support. Call **650-573-3950**. ■

Sources: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; March of Dimes

Pregnant?

If you think you may be pregnant, it is important to see a doctor within your first 3 months. Go before you show! When you see the doctor for timely prenatal and postpartum care, you can get rewarded with gift cards. Call HPSM at **650-616-2165** to sign up.

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Health Can Be Your Child's Habit

There is a secret to helping kids develop healthy habits. Make it easy for them.

When something is easy, you do it again and again without thinking about it.

Eating well and being active can be easy. These are habits that can keep your family well. And if kids start them young, they may continue them throughout their lives.

Here are some tips to get your kids started.

Stock smart foods

- Enjoy meals together. During family meals, kids are more likely to eat healthy foods and less junk food.
- Keep healthy snacks around the house. Chips and cookies are OK now and then. But store them out of sight. Keep fruits and veggies where kids can get them.

- Go for the color. Have everyone choose a color, and then ask them to select a fruit or vegetable of that color. See how many different-colored foods you can eat in 1 week.

- If you serve whole milk, switch to 2 percent and then 1 percent.

Get active for fun

- Fill your home with active toys. Basketballs, hula hoops and jump ropes are examples. Store them where your kids can easily get them.
- Plan birthday parties that will get people moving. It could be a swimming party or a day at the park.
- Schedule family fun nights. Spend at least 30 minutes 3 times a week doing something active. It might be a bike ride,



a hike or a game of tag in the yard. It is a time to be together and get some exercise.

- Make activity a game. For example, when shopping with your child, count how many steps it takes to get from your car in the parking lot to the front door of the store. On your next trip, see if you can increase your steps. ■