

# WELLNESS WORKS



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Happy New Year! January is the time many of us reflect on what we have accomplished in the past year and set new resolutions. Unfortunately, many of us give up on those resolutions by February. This month, focus on methods of setting and keeping your goals.

## Set Yourself Up For New Year's Resolution Success

Making a New Year's resolution is easy. Keeping it is the hard part. But the simpler you make it for yourself, the more likely you are to stick with the plan. Not all of these tips work for everybody, and you may find something completely different that makes it easier for you. But if you're ready to make a change, these tips will give you a starting point to building good habits and sticking with them.

**Set good goals:** It's easy to look forward to the promise of a new year and make grand goals...that really have no chance of succeeding. Let's say your resolution this year revolves around food. "I'm going to eat healthy this year" is a hard resolution to keep, especially if you have fast food for lunch five days a week. It's vague, so it's hard to know whether you've really "kept" the resolution. If you really love fried food, it's also a big step.

Instead, try making a main goal with a few sub-goals. You could say "I'm going to make healthier dietary choices. My methods of doing this will be bringing my lunch to work at least three days a week, meal planning before grocery shopping, and going meatless one day a week." This resolution is concrete—and if you slip up on one sub-goal, you still have the others to reinforce your healthy habits.

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## Resolve to Donate Blood

Because of cold weather across the country, not to mention the height of cold and flu season, blood donation drops off in mid-winter. As a result, the Red Cross has designated January as National Blood Donor Month. If you want to volunteer or become more charitable this year, donating blood (or funds, if you're able) is a good place to start. When you're ready to donate, these tips will help make it a quick, easy, and relatively painless process.

### Before the Donation

- Maintain a healthy iron level in your diet by eating foods such as red meat, fish, poultry, beans, spinach, iron-fortified cereals and raisins.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Drink an extra 16 oz. of water or nonalcoholic fluids beforehand.
- Bring your donor card, driver's license or two other forms of ID.
- Eat a healthy meal before your donation. Avoid fatty foods, such as hamburgers, fries or ice cream.

### During the Donation

- Wear clothing with sleeves that can be raised above the elbow.
- Let the person taking your blood know if you have a preferred arm and show them any good veins that have been used successfully in the past to draw blood.
- Relax, listen to music, talk to other donors or read during the donation process.
- Take the time to enjoy a snack and a drink in the refreshments area immediately after donating.



### After the Donation

- Drink an extra four (8 ounce) glasses of liquids and avoid alcohol over the next 24 hours.
- Keep the strip bandage on for the next several hours.
- To avoid a skin rash, clean the area around the strip bandage with soap and water.
- Don't do any heavy lifting or vigorous exercise for the rest of the day.
- If the needle site starts to bleed, apply pressure to it and raise your arm straight up for about 5-10 minutes or until bleeding stops.
- If you experience dizziness or lightheadedness after donation, stop what you are doing and sit or lie down until you feel better. Avoid any activity where fainting may lead to injury for at least 24 hours.
- Learn more about your need for iron after blood donation at [www.redcrossblood.org/iron](http://www.redcrossblood.org/iron)

Adapted from [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org)

**Know yourself:** We all respond to habits and routines differently. If you know that you do better when you are responsible to someone else, consider joining a support group based on your particular goals. (A quick Google or search of Meetup can help you find these groups.) Similarly, if you feel constrained by an all-or-nothing approach, you may want to build in some breaks for yourself.

To continue the previous example, maybe you know that bringing your lunch is working for you, but your co-workers are going out for a birthday celebration. Don't skip the party just because it's not in your plan; join in, and just choose a healthier menu option. Just make sure you go back to bringing your lunch tomorrow. Think about what's helped you keep previous, shorter term goals and apply those winning strategies to your resolution.

**Plan ahead:** Sometimes a little planning can help you over trouble spots. If you eat lunch out all the time because you don't have easy homemade lunch options, that meal-prep suggestion above can come to your rescue. Plan the menu, shop, and prepare your meals on the weekend so you can grab and go during the week. Even if your resolution has nothing to do with food, the same method applies. If you recognize the obstacles ahead of time, you can make a plan to help you get over them. It's easier to avoid an obstacle than to recover later. If you miss a step, however, don't give up! Frustration is normal, but a slip-up doesn't invalidate your hard work. Own the mistake, and try to get back to your new routine.

**Use tools to help you:** There are a lot of tools, both technological and old fashioned, that can help you stay on task. If you like crossing things off a checklist, add goals to your daily to-do list. Make notes and stick them on your desk, refrigerator, and nightstand. If you're data-driven, a health goal app like Fitbit or financial goal app like Mint may provide you the motivation you need. (You can find an app for pretty much any resolution, from quitting smoking to learning to meditate.) If gamification works for you, an app like Habitica unlocks rewards when you stick to a habit or accomplish a goal.

**Celebrate small victories:** Keep yourself motivated by giving yourself small rewards when you reach milestones. Did you bring your lunch every day this week? Meal plan for a whole month? Celebrate it! The size of the reward should be proportional to the size of the victory, and definitely not related to it. If you're trying to eat healthier, don't derail those efforts with a fried food smorgasbord. Take yourself to the movies (just skip the snack bar), plan an evening with friends, or spend some time on a fun hobby.

Once you've decided that it's time to make a change, it's helpful to plan out your resolution ahead of time. While some would argue that January 1 is an arbitrary date to make sweeping, revolutionary life goals (or even small practical ones), it helps to have a red-letter date to jumpstart a new routine. Maybe starting on your birthday makes more sense to you. If you want to do something like quit smoking, there are annual events like the Great American Smokeout to jumpstart a change. Whatever day you pick, having a plan and knowing your strengths will set you up for success.



Recipe of the Month:

## Hoppin' John

A New Year's Day tradition in many Southern households, this distinctively named dish of rice and black-eyed peas is believed to bring good luck for the coming year.

### Ingredients

1-1/2 cups dry black-eyed peas  
 1 pound ham hocks  
 1 onion, chopped  
 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes  
 salt and pepper to taste  
 4 cups water  
 1-1/2 cups long-grain white rice  
 1 cup shredded smoked Cheddar cheese (optional)

### Instructions

In a large pan place the peas, ham hock, onion, red pepper, salt and pepper. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook for 1-1/2 hours.

Remove ham hock and cut meat into pieces. Return meat to pot. Stir in the rice, cover and cook until rice is tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle shredded cheese over top, if desired. Serve.

### Nutrition per serving (makes 6 servings):

Calories: 475; Calories from Fat: 84; Fat: 9.3 g; Saturated Fat: 4.9 g; Cholesterol: 61 mg; Sodium: 619 mg; Carbohydrates: 64.1 g; Fiber: 5.4 g; Sugar: 4.5 g; Protein: 33.6 g

Adapted from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)