

Build Healthy Habits



CHALLENGE

Take action to make positive changes

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Build Healthy Habits.”
2. Create a plan to develop a healthy habit with repetition, cues, and rewards.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



When Pennsylvania resident Emily Kilar was hungry, fried food and soda was her go-to meal. Poor food choices and lack of exercise became a way of life for her. And so did an extra 85 pounds.

Then she realized those bad habits were taking a toll on her health, happiness, and quality of life. And she knew something had to change.

But instead of a crash diet, weight-loss pills, or surgery, she decided to adopt new habits. Thinking about making a change?

Emily’s new habits included: Eating more fruits and vegetables, taking daily walks, drinking more water, and doing these things consistently.

And you know what? She lost all those extra pounds one healthy habit at a time. Now she’s a nutrition counselor who helps others make smart diet and lifestyle choices.

Ever wonder what it takes to develop a healthy habit? Is there something you want to change to improve your health, be more productive, feel better, or live longer? Take the month-long health challenge and learn to Build Healthy Habits.

Quiz: Habit-Change Challenge

How much do you know about healthy habits? Take the quiz to find out:



T F

1. It only takes 21 days to develop a healthy habit. faster from illness or injury.
2. Most adults know fruits and vegetables are healthy, but only 12 percent eat enough of them.
3. About 40 percent of your daily activities and choices are based on habits.
4. Three of the steps to developing a healthy habit include: repetition, cues, and rewards.
5. If you want to adopt a new habit, persistence will help you achieve your goal.

How did you do? It typically takes longer than 21 days for most people to develop a new healthy habit. Research shows it takes an average of 66 days or longer.¹ Healthy habits can improve your health, boost your mood, increase productivity, and help you live longer. It’s worth the effort.

Answers: 1.False. 2.True. 3.True. 4.True. 5.True.

Happy & Healthy: Top 5 Habits to Live Longer

Want to be healthier, feel better and live longer? A Harvard University study looked at the habits of about 123,000 people over 30 years.²

Researchers found five specific habits that cut the risk of death from heart disease by 82 percent. The same habits cut the risk of death from cancer by 65 percent, and helped people live longer by 12 to 14 years.

Ready to be healthier this year? The top 5 healthy lifestyle habits to help you live longer include:

1. Eat a healthy diet
2. Exercise regularly
3. Maintain a healthy body weight, or lose weight if you need to
4. Avoid or limit alcohol
5. Don’t smoke, or quit if you do

How to make lasting lifestyle changes
<https://tinyurl.com/yb9we53n>



Positive-Change Power: 5 Basics to Build Healthy Habits

Ready to create some healthy habits? Trying to change everything at once usually doesn't work. You know...

- **You eat healthy** for few days or a few weeks.³
- **You make time for exercise** every day (e.g. walk, bike, run, gym)⁴
- **And then something happens** (work, family matters, vacation, health issues). Without a long-term plan, everything falls apart. That ever happen?

Once you identify the healthy habits you want to create, you need a plan to help you be consistent and keep moving forward, even when life happens.

That's how Emily Kilar lost 85 pounds, changed her exercise habits, and improved her diet.

Ready to get started? Here are the 5 basics to building healthy habits:

1. Take a closer look

Start by looking at the source of bad habits:

- Do you overeat when you're stressed out?
- Do you skimp on sleep, hit the snooze button, and skip workouts?

Find out what triggers a bad habit. That's good info to help you make better choices before your diet or exercise habits go off the rails.

2. Disrupt bad habits

Once you know the cues for bad habits, create a distraction.

- Steer clear of the snack machine, buffet, and drive-thru when you're stressed out.
- Put the alarm clock on the other side of the room.

Create a disruption that gives you a little time to stop, think, and choose your next move.



3. Try habit stacking

Ever try to stop a bad habit, like eating ice cream late at night? All you can think about is eating ice cream. Try habit stacking.⁵ Add a positive habit to the evening routine you already have in place (sans the ice cream).

Go for a walk, do some yoga, read a book. Research shows this works better than just trying to stop bad habits.

4. Create patterns & reminders to be consistent

Your bad habits didn't just appear one day. You probably spent a lot of time working on them. If you want to adopt new habits, rinse and repeat. For example:

- Go to bed at the same time every night.
- Follow a healthy eating plan like the Mediterranean Diet daily.
- Always take the stairs.
- Exercise at the same time every day



Repetition helps train your brain to make the healthy choice on autopilot.

Need a reminder? Set an alarm on your phone. Research also shows using a mobile app or fitness tracking device can help you make positive changes.⁶

5. Be accountable

If you're struggling to develop a healthy habit, get help from someone else.

- Share your goals with a friend, health coach, or health professional.
- When you know you're accountable, you're more likely to make the right choice and be consistent.
- If you do start to slip, your accountability partner can help you get back on track faster than trying to do it on your own.

'Now' is always the best time to start

If you want to shed bad habits and develop healthy habits, *now* is always the best time to start. Start with one healthy choice, and keep going. You can do this!



References

1. Arlinghaus, K., et al. (2019). The importance of creating habits and routine. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 13(2): 142-144. From: <http://tinyurl.com/cjso4bpv>
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3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). Improving your eating habits. From: <https://tinyurl.com/zlfpoc>
4. Feil, K., et al. (2021). A systematic review examining the relationship between habit and physical activity behavior in longitudinal studies. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12: 626750. From: <http://tinyurl.com/eb54fcte>
5. Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic Habits: Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. Penguin Random House.
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Build Healthy Habits



CHALLENGE

Take action to make positive changes

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Create a plan to develop a healthy habit with repetition, cues, and rewards. Practice daily or as often as possible.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to connect with others.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, each week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____	HC [] ex. min. _____		
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_____ Number of days this month I practiced building healthy habits

_____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____