

Forming Habits: It's All About Routine

What does it take to form a habit?

You may have heard the common saying that it takes 21 days to create a habit. Whether 21 days, 66 days, or 110 days, what we do know is that it takes time and effort for a new activity to become a part of your daily routine.

Research has shown that 40% of people's daily activities are performed each day in almost the exact same way. When it comes to forming new habits, you can apply this research by performing your new healthy habit at the same time, in the same way, each and every day. For example, if your goal is to floss your teeth on a daily basis, you may schedule time to do this right after brushing your teeth at night. You may even place the floss beside your tooth brush as a visual cue. And lastly, make sure to actually floss your teeth!

Exercise:

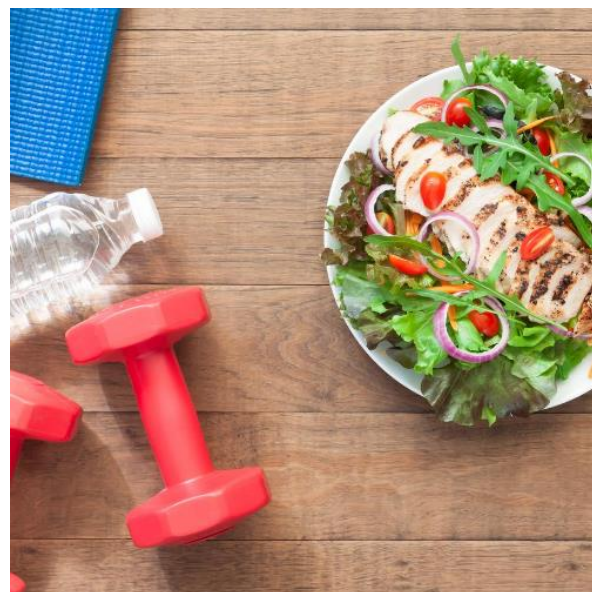
The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults should be getting 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity aerobic exercise per week. This should be done in bouts of 10 minutes or more, though many people find it is easiest to break this down into 30 minute increments, 5 days a week. Scheduling which days of the week work best for you is important. First, take the time to identify where you have 30 minutes gaps in your schedule when you can realistically exercise. Write these down and then create a plan moving forward. If you schedule your exercise time each week, it is more likely that you will do it, and even more likely that it will become a part of your routine long term.

Nutrition:

If your goals include eating well, routine meal preparation is very important. Prior to grocery shopping, it is helpful to plan the meals you will be eating for the upcoming week. If you take the time to do this each week, for example on Sunday morning, and continue to do so on a weekly basis, not only will meal planning get easier, but you will set yourself up to eat well throughout the week. Before you know it, it will be a part of your weekly routine.

Sleep:

When it comes to sleep, getting into a consistent routine of what time you go to sleep and what time you wake up is important. It is recommended that you get 7-9 hours of restful sleep each night. In order to keep this consistent, it is recommended that you go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekend. This helps maintain a regular sleep-wake cycle.



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Regardless of what healthy habit you may be working towards, scheduling time in your day to purposefully work on it is a must. Whether exercise, nutrition, or sleep-related, it is important to try to perform it on a consistent basis, in the same way, to increase the likelihood that it will become a part of your daily routine.

References:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3505409/>

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/08/140808111931.htm>



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