



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*“To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado.”*

NEWS

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Coloradans Can Get Healthier and More Energetic in the New Year With 7 Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors

DENVER – Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment experts Thursday recommended seven healthy behaviors to adopt for the New Year and continue for a lifetime. These behaviors can improve an individual’s quality of life by increasing his or her energy and preventing or reducing chronic illnesses such as heart disease and cancer. Research shows that setting goals and tracking progress are the keys to making these healthy lifestyle changes.

“To be successful, choose one healthy behavior change at a time and set a goal,” said Sara Rodriguez, Chronic Disease director at the department. “Write down your goal and keep it visible by putting it on your bedroom or bathroom mirror or setting up electronic reminders on your phone or computer. And ask your family and friends to support you.”

These healthy behaviors can result in improved health and energy and prevent or reduce chronic illnesses:

- **Quit smoking.** Set a quit date and stick to it. Make your house and vehicle smoke-free and use the Colorado QuitLine (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for free quit-smoking support. Get quit tips at MyQuitPath.org. According to the latest research from the U.S. Surgeon General, the harm of smoking is immediate, and there is no safe level of secondhand smoke.

- **Exercise for at least 30 minutes each day.** Research shows that the more enjoyable you find an exercise activity, the more you will stick with it. Physical activity can boost your immune system, burn calories at a faster pace and make you feel more positive.
- **Eat at least five fruits and vegetables each day.** Experts say eating fruits and vegetables that add color to your meals, such as those that are green, yellow, blue, orange or red, is one of the best ways to include vital nutrients and fiber. Try washing and cutting up fruit and vegetables in advance to “grab it and go” or save time when preparing meals.
- **Choose water instead of soda.** Studies show that even one can of soda with sugar per day can add 10 pounds to your weight in a year. Fill up a bottle or pitcher of water to stay hydrated throughout the day.
- **Choose low-sodium foods.** The majority of Coloradans get too much salt in their diets, and most of it comes from processed foods. Look at the labels to find low-sodium options. Experts say that after a few weeks of weaning from salt, you feel better and even find that unsalted food has more flavor.
- **Brush and floss daily.** Most people don’t know that oral disease is linked to chronic illnesses. Daily brushing and flossing and annual dentist visits prevent bacteria from building and spreading to the rest of the body.
- **Ensure sun safety.** Coloradans have a high rate of skin cancer. Experts say to wear sunscreen daily with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Even in the winter and on cloudy days, find shade when possible and wear sunglasses.

State health department experts also recommend annual visits to a health care provider to get blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar tested. Many Coloradans have heart disease, diabetes or cancer and don’t know it.

“Talk with your doctor about what tests are right for you,” said Rodriguez.