



HealthAdvocateSM Member Newsletter

17 Easy Wellness Tips for 2017



Looking to be happy and healthy in 2017? Then you may be interested in these 17 easy tips to help you improve your health and well-being.

1. Drink more water
2. Add 10 minutes of exercise to your day
3. Schedule a checkup with your doctor
4. Go to bed 10 minutes earlier
5. Commit to one healthy stress-relieving activity per day
6. Commit to saving more money
7. Add an extra serving of fruit or vegetables per day
8. Use part of your lunch break to walk
9. Spend more time with family and friends
10. Correct your posture
11. Unplug more
12. Brush and floss your teeth daily
13. Control your portions
14. Limit the time you spend being inactive
15. Reorganize your kitchen
16. Make a habit to appreciate all you have
17. Get moving at work

New Year, New You

If you are among the many, many people who made a New Year's resolution to move more, eat better or take other steps to improve your health, you are far from alone. But it can be tough to get and stay motivated if you are doing it on your own. Research shows buddying up can keep you accountable and make working toward your goals more fun, helping to ensure you stick with it past January. And since you spend quite a bit of time with your co-workers, why not work together to achieve your healthy resolutions?

Here are a few ideas to share with your colleagues to kick-start a healthy New Year together!

- **Plan a friendly competition** like most steps walked, percentage of body weight lost, minutes exercised or most fruits and veggies consumed in a week.
- **Use technology** like fitness devices, pedometers or online programs that help set up competitions.
- **Plan walking meetings** outside or around common areas of your office.
- **Work toward an event** like an upcoming 5k or charity walk.
- **Share your lunches** or plan meals with your coworkers to help stick to a diet.



Get Financially Fit

Taking small steps toward financial wellness can help improve your health and well-being. Worrying about your finances can cause stress which, in turn, can lead to anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and more. These tips can help you better manage your money to support improved health and well-being:

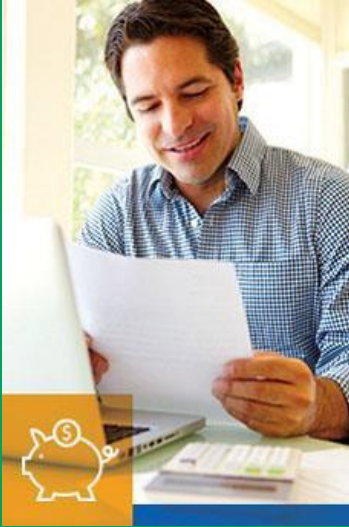
Create a budget. It's the key way to curb overspending. Follow these steps:

- Identify how much money you make each month.
- List your necessary expenses such as insurance, bills, food, rent or mortgage, etc.
- Figure in your optional expenses such as dining out, cable TV, gifts, etc.
- Calculate the difference between money earned and money you normally spend to see if you're breaking even, or are over or under budget.
- Track your spending every month. The aim is to be under budget for financial security.

Evaluate your spending.

- Look at your expenses and determine needs versus wants.
- Keep your spending less than your income.

Monitor your credit. If you can't pay the balance on your credit cards each month, you'll pay interest. This means you're spending more than the item's listed price!



National Birth Defects Prevention Month



About one in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect. Not all birth defects can be prevented. But a woman can take steps to increase her own chance of having a baby with the best health possible.

Birth Defects Are Common

Every 4 ½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. That means nearly 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year.

Birth defects are structural changes present at birth that can affect almost any part or parts of the body (e.g., heart, brain, foot). They may affect how the body looks, works, or both. Birth defects can vary from mild to severe. The well-being of each child affected with a birth defect depends mostly on which organ or body part is involved and how much it is affected. Depending on the severity of the defect and what body part is affected, the expected lifespan of a person with a birth defect may or may not be affected.

Identifying Birth Defects

A birth defect can be found before birth, at birth, or any time after birth. Most birth defects are found within the first year of life. Some birth defects (such as cleft lip) are easy to see, but others (such as heart defects or hearing loss) are found using special tests, such as echocardiograms (an ultrasound picture of the heart), x-rays or hearing tests.

Causes

Birth defects can occur during any stage of pregnancy. Most birth defects occur in the first 3 months of pregnancy, when the organs of the baby are forming. This is a very important stage of development. However, some birth defects occur later in pregnancy. During the last six months of pregnancy, the tissues and organs continue to grow and develop.

For some birth defects, like fetal alcohol syndrome, we know the cause. But for most birth defects, we don't know what causes them. For most birth defects, we think they are caused by a complex mix of factors. These factors include our genes (information inherited from our parents), our behaviors, and things in the environment. But, we don't fully understand how these factors might work together to cause birth defects.

While we still have more work to do, we have learned a lot about birth defects through past research. For example, some things might increase the chances of having a baby with a birth defect, such as:

- Smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking certain "street" drugs during pregnancy.
- Having certain medical conditions, such as being obese or having uncontrolled diabetes before and during pregnancy.
- Taking certain medications, such as isotretinoin (a drug used to treat severe acne).
- Having someone in your family with a birth defect. To learn more about your risk of having a baby with a birth defect, you can talk with a [clinical geneticist](#) or a [genetic counselor](#).
- Being an older mother, typically over the age of 34 years.

Having one or more of these risks doesn't mean you'll have a pregnancy affected by a birth defect. Also, women can have a baby born with a birth defect even when they don't have any of these risks. It is important to talk to your doctor about what you can do to lower your risk.

Prevention

Not all birth defects can be prevented. But, there are things that a woman can do before and during pregnancy to increase her chance of having a healthy baby:

- Be sure to see your healthcare provider regularly and start prenatal care as soon as you think you might be pregnant.
- Get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day, starting at least one month before getting pregnant
- Don't drink alcohol, smoke, or use "street" drugs.
- Talk to a healthcare provider about any medications you are taking or thinking about taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medications and dietary or herbal supplements. Don't stop or start taking any type of medication without first talking with a doctor.
- Learn how to prevent infections during pregnancy.
- If possible, be sure any medical conditions are under control, before becoming pregnant. Some conditions that increase the risk for birth defects include diabetes and obesity.

Living with a Birth Defect

Babies who have birth defects often need special care and interventions to survive and to thrive developmentally. State birth defects tracking programs provide one way to identify and refer children as early as possible for services they need. Early intervention is vital to improving outcomes for these babies. If your child has a birth defect, you should ask his or her doctor about local resources and treatment. Geneticists, genetic counselors, and other specialists are another resource.