

Big lifestyle changes in your plans for 2010? Here are a few tips to help keep you on track

EAT more vegetables. Cut out red meat. Clear all sugar from the cupboards. Get a gym membership. Lose 30 pounds.

If you're like most Canadians, Jan. 1 means a slate as clean as a new snowfall. It's a chance to start a new beginning.

That's why nearly 50 per cent of the population make New Year's resolutions, according to the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

Visit any gym at the start of the year and you'll see it's packed with resolute people eager to honour their New Year's vows. A month later, the population of that same gym is considerably sparser.

If you've made a health resolution you'd like to keep, take these tips from the experts:

Jennifer Cohen, Los-Angeles-based personal trainer and creator of No Gym Required shoes

■ Nix the long workouts

Setting a goal to exercise for two daunting hours a day might not give you the results you're looking for and may, therefore, push you off the wagon, so to speak, says the Winnipeg-born Cohen, who has built her fitness business around the concept that short, high-intensity bursts of exercise are the key to fitness. "All research has proven 20 minutes of intense exer-

cise or intervals is way more effective for weight loss and for fat burning," she says. "The days where you'd see me running for 45 minutes are long gone because your body just plateaus." To interval train, exercise at a medium intensity for a couple of minutes. Switch to a high intensity for one minute. Go back to a medium speed until your heart rate settles. Try one more minute of intense exercise and back again to medium speed. Adjust accordingly.

■ Don't feel obligated to go to the gym
Vowing to get to the gym every day is unnecessary and may be the reason you eventually give up on your 2010 fitness promises, says Cohen, noting life often gets in the way of gym visits. She says those wanting to get fit need to commit to working out and eating well outside the gym. "Exercising in a place that's called the gym is not going to make you svelte and beautiful. It's going to come from what you're doing outside the gym and having common sense," says Cohen. She says developing a healthy lifestyle means taking the stairs at the office, doing lunges on your living-room floor and eating well even when dining out.

Jordan Cieciwa, personal trainer and owner of Professional Edge

■ Know what you're in for

The idea of exercising seems dandy, but workouts — especially first workouts — come with some degree of pain and soreness. If you're not ready for the discomfort, says Cieciwa, you may take time off from your routine before you go back. "That's five or six days



that you didn't burn calories. You get into issues where you start breaking the plan already and you get down on yourself."

Avoid such a situation by staying mentally prepared for the soreness that comes hours after a hard workout. If you're unsure whether your pain is normal, seek the advice of a sports doctor or physiotherapist who can tell you if you're dealing with an injury or just the usual post-exercise aches.

■ Constantly set small goals

You've got a beach vacation coming up in a couple of months and you need to lose 10 pounds and two inches off your waist. Not a problem, says Cieciwa. But once you've hit your desired weight and waist size, you need to come up with another small health goal. "If you don't have a followup plan, most people lose their motivation," says the personal trainer, who suggests setting goals such as doing 10 perfect push-ups or running one mile to keep your new body permanent.

Barb Cajas, personal trainer and director of CORE Training and Therapy



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Adam Taylor makes good use of the equipment at Professional Edge.

■ Clear your schedule

Planning to work out daily without knowing exactly when and how long you're going to do it is a sure way to end up failing, says Cajas. "Something in your schedule has to go," he says. "Or you just dug yourself into a hole." The personal trainer and university kinesiology instructor says the most successful goal-setters have a dedicated block of time set aside in which to work out. "Nothing else gets in the way. They've already cleared their life."

■ Get your mind off the scale

Instead of deciding you're going to lose 20 or 30 pounds, Cajas says you'll have a better chance of succeeding if you choose a goal that's not scale-related — one that you can accomplish in the short term. "Set goals like, 'I'm going to make sure I eat breakfast every day so I don't end up starving and overeating.' I think that's probably one of the best ways to set weight-loss goals."

Adrienne Leslie-Toogood, director of sport psychology, Canadian Sports Centre Manitoba

■ Anticipate setbacks

Just like a person battling drug addiction will experience relapses, a person aiming to keep a New Year's health resolution will also deal with setbacks, says Leslie-Toogood. The sport psychologist tells people making resolutions to anticipate these stumbles and aim to get back to their goal as soon as possible.

"You are human, and rather than focusing on that setback, realize that tomorrow is a new day and you'll start again. If a setback happens there's no use punishing yourself. It happens." Leslie-Toogood also recommends analyzing why you did not achieve a past resolution — pinpointing mistakes so you don't make them again.

■ Don't keep it secret

Instead of guarding your New Year's health resolution like a sacred secret, share it with a good friend or two, says Leslie-Toogood. "If you have a good friend who you can tell your goal to, you guys can hold each other accountable," she says.

Have an interesting story idea you'd like Shamona to write about? Contact her at shamona.harnett@freepress.mb.ca