

Doable Health Goals for 2023

Are you striving to get healthier and feel better in general? Most of us want to improve something about ourselves, and that's a good thing. Following through is another ball game but setting goals and taking small steps to accomplish those goals can get us there. The following are some examples of wellness goals that can get us on track.



Screen limits – Give yourself a device break, or at least try to use your devices less. Too much screen time is unhealthy for quality sleep and mental health. You can be proactive by setting up screen time limits right on the device to help you cut back.

Drop unwanted pounds. If you aren't having success with diet and exercise on your own, consult a professional – your physician, a dietician or nutritionist, or a weight loss specialist.

Adjust your workstation to support your body. 6-8 hours sitting at a desk can be hard on your body and your mind. Do you have neck or back pain, eye strain, etc.? Make some ergonomic changes such as switching to a standing or adjustable desk, an ergonomic chair, and/or regular massage. Get up and take little walks throughout the day. Stretch regularly.

Begin your day with a workout. As your day progresses and gets busy, it's not that easy to be motivated or find the time to work out late in the day. It's a great feeling being able to cross one healthy to-do off your list first thing in the morning.

Build muscle. The benefits of having more muscle mass go far beyond how you look. It can help burn more calories, lower risk of falls and injuries, help to manage blood sugar, and improve heart and brain health. Start slow and work your way up.

Prioritize dental health. It can affect your overall health in a big way. Take the time to improve your dental health by brushing twice daily, flossing, and seeing your dentist every 6 months for a cleaning and to deal with TMJ, grinding, gum disease, or cavities.



California Grilled Veggie Sandwich

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup light mayonnaise
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/8 cup olive oil
- 1 cup sliced red bell peppers
- 1 small zucchini, sliced
- 1 red onion, sliced
- 1 small yellow squash, sliced
- 2 (4x6-inch) focaccia bread pieces, split horizontally
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese

Directions:

1. In a bowl, mix mayonnaise, minced garlic, and lemon juice. Set aside in the refrigerator.
2. Preheat the grill for high heat.
3. Brush vegetables with olive oil on each side. Brush grate with oil. Place bell peppers and zucchini closest to the middle of the grill and set onion and squash pieces around them. Cook for about 3 minutes, turn, and cook for another 3 minutes. The peppers may take a bit longer. Remove from grill and set aside.
4. Spread some of the mayonnaise mixture on the cut sides of the bread and sprinkle each one with feta cheese. Place on the grill cheese side up, and cover with lid for 2 to 3 minutes. This will warm the bread, and slightly melt the cheese. Watch carefully so the bottoms don't burn. Remove from grill, and layer with vegetables. Enjoy as open-faced grilled sandwiches.

Serves 4.

Recipe and photo by <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/14504/california-grilled-veggie-sandwich/>

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Solve sleep issues if you don't currently get good quality sleep. Sleep is vitally important to your health. "Everything from blood vessels to the immune system uses sleep as a time for repair," says Dr. Kenneth Wright, Jr., a sleep researcher at the University of Colorado. Sleep helps prepare your brain to learn, remember and create. If you are having trouble sleeping most of the time, take steps to find out why. Talk to your health care provider.

Socialize – Being with other people plays a key role in maintaining mental health. Spend quality time with friends and family. Enjoy each other's company. Make it a goal to schedule in-person outings.

Schedule a checkup. Whatever your age or gender, getting the recommended health screenings can be a key step in the prevention or early detection for a range of health concerns including high blood pressure or cholesterol, cancer, or hearing loss and more. You should also schedule a skin check with your dermatologist and an eye exam. Just as you would maintain your car, maintain yourself!

Get lab work done. This is an easy way to monitor your overall health and wellbeing. Tests can reveal nutritional deficiencies, markers of heart disease and diabetes as well as to ensure that your thyroid, kidneys, and liver are functioning properly.

Go out for a walk. Walk your dog; walk with a friend or family member. Walk alone. Get outside and enjoy the fresh air. Both being outside and the physical activity are beneficial for body, mind, and spirit. You will benefit most if you get out most days.

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2021/04/good-sleep-good-health>

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/mens-health-checkups-and-screenings-are-key>

Quick At-Home Circuit Exercises

Sometimes it's a challenge to get motivated to go to the gym! But that's no excuse not to exercise. There are tons of exercises you can do at home – even with no equipment- just using your own body weight – or in this case – your couch!

Couch Squat Cross Chop

- Target your legs, butt, and core with this move that also serves as a great warm-up (don't squat as low during the first set).
- Stand with your back to your couch cushions, feet hip-width apart, and your arms extended at chest height, hands clasped together.
- Perform a squat by bending your knees and sitting back into your hips as you chop your arms down and across to the outside of your left thigh.



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Butternut Squash Chili

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped or pressed
- 1/2 cup dry red wine
- 3 cups butternut squash cubes, in 1-inch pieces
- 1 1/2 cups cooked white beans (rinsed, if canned)
- 1 14-ounce can whole tomatoes with juice, chopped into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup salsa
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)
- Plain reduced-fat Greek yogurt
- 1 avocado, halved, pitted and cut into 1/2-inch cubes

Directions:

Heat the olive oil in a large soup pot over medium heat, 1 minute. Add the bell pepper and onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 more minute. Pour in the wine and let bubble 1 minute, stirring and scraping any browned bits from the bottom of the pot.

Add the butternut squash, beans, tomatoes and their juice, salsa, 1 cup water, the chili powder, cumin, cocoa, cinnamon and cayenne, if using. Bring the chili to a simmer, then reduce the heat to medium low and cook, stirring occasionally, until the squash is tender and the chili begins to thicken, about 1 hour. (If the soup looks too thick while cooking, add up to 1 cup more water.) Serve topped with a dollop of Greek yogurt and some avocado cubes.

Serves 4.

Recipe and photo by <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/melissa-darabian/butternut-squash-chili-3363643>

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- Pushing through your heels, quickly stand out of your squat as you bring your arms back to the start position.
- Repeat to the other side. Alternate sides for one minute.

Couch Climbers

- Get your heart pumping and your arms and abs firing with this elevated version of a mountain climber.
- Start by facing the couch cushions, and place your hands on the seat of the couch directly under your shoulders, arms extended. Walk both feet back out to a plank (top of a pushup) position and brace your abs in tight.
- In a quick, controlled motion, begin alternating; running; one knee in towards your chest at a time, keeping your shoulders steady over your hands the entire time.
- Do this as fast as you can for one minute.



Couch Dip and Kick

- Sit facing away from the couch with both palms pressed into the edge just outside of your hips. Walk your feet out away from your body and lift your hips off the couch (but keep your back close to it).
- Lift your right leg off the floor and bend your knee into your chest, foot flexed.
- Bend both elbows to perform a dip and lower your hips, pulling your right knee in closer to your chest.
- As you press out of the dip and extend your arms, lift your hips, and press out through your right heel, extending your right leg out in front of your hip.
- Repeat this for 10 reps with the right leg, and then do 10 reps with the left.



Tips to Prevent Binge Eating

Stop Starving Yourself! If you starve yourself, your blood sugar will be too low. This is often what causes people to binge eat. Without sufficient glucose, your brain doesn't have the fuel it needs to resist junk food. So, if you feel your energy fading, eat a healthy snack ASAP, like a handful of nuts or fruit and a slice of cheese to hold you over until your next meal.

Don't solely rely on your willpower. Activity not only keeps us strong and limber, it also balances out what we eat. If you eat a treat, exercise a bit longer or a little harder or more often. If you feel you need a reward after a workout, choose something other than food. Eventually, having completed a



Eggplant Meatballs with Marinara

Ingredients:

- 1 small eggplant (about 12 ounces)
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cooked white beans, such as cannellini or navy (rinsed, if canned), smashed with a fork
- 1 large clove garlic, very finely chopped or pressed
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1/2 cup finely grated parmesan cheese, plus extra for sprinkling (optional)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup whole-wheat panko-style breadcrumbs
- Olive oil mister or nonstick pan spray
- 2 cups marinara sauce

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil and place the eggplant on top. Use a fork to prick the eggplant 4 times, then place the eggplant in the oven and roast it, 40 to 50 minutes. Cool the eggplant 20 minutes. Leave the oven on. Slice the eggplant in half lengthwise and use a spoon to scoop out the flesh (discard the skin). Place the roasted eggplant in a medium bowl and stir in the egg and beans. Add the garlic, parsley, parmesan, 3/4 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper and stir to combine, then mix in the breadcrumbs.

Again, line the rimmed baking sheet with a clean sheet of foil and lightly mist it with spray. Shape the eggplant mixture into balls about the size of a golf ball. Place them on the prepared baking sheet and lightly mist the top of the balls with spray. Bake the eggplant balls until they are golden brown, about 20 minutes. While the meatballs cook, warm the marinara sauce in a small saucepan. Remove the meatballs from the oven, sprinkle with a little extra parmesan and serve with the marinara sauce.

Serves 4.

Recipe and photo by <https://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/melissa-darabian/eggplant-meatballs-with-marinara-sauce-3363570>

workout will be reward enough in itself as it boosts mood.

Play Defense. Oddly, people with the best self-control were the ones who used their willpower less often. Instead of fending off one temptation after another, they set up their daily lives to minimize them. In other words, they played defense. For example, they don't keep bags of snacks in the cabinet when they know they won't just eat one serving. If you have kids or a partner that can't live without the treats you want to avoid, put them in a different area of the kitchen or pantry that you don't see regularly – maybe even put them all in a bin or basket separate from your healthier fare.



Short on sleep? Pour a cup of coffee or tea (early in the day). This helps the area of the brain that supports your ability to stay focused and goal-oriented when confronted with tempting distractions. Make sure you get to bed early the next night and stay on a good sleep schedule. You're ALWAYS more tempted when you're bored and unfocused.

Seek professional help. If you just cannot stop overeating no matter how hard you try, talk to someone about it. There is help out there (family physician, counselor, dietician, etc.). You don't have to do it alone.



Pork, White Bean & Kale Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pound pork tenderloin, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. paprika, preferably smoked
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper, or to taste (optional)
- 1 cup white wine
- 4 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 bunch kale, ribs removed, chopped (about 8 cups lightly packed)
- 1 15-ounce can white beans, rinsed

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add pork, sprinkle with salt and cook, stirring once or twice, until no longer pink on the outside, about 2 minutes. Transfer to a plate with tongs, leaving juices in the pot.
2. Add onion to the pot and cook, stirring often, until just beginning to brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Add garlic, paprika and crushed red pepper (if using) and cook, stirring constantly until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add wine and tomatoes, increase heat to high and stir to scrape up any browned bits. Add broth and bring to a boil.
3. Add kale and stir just until it wilts. Reduce heat to maintain a lively simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the kale is just tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in beans, the reserved pork, and any accumulated juices; simmer until the beans and pork are heated through, about 2 minutes.

6 servings, about 1 2/3 cups each.

Recipe and photo by <https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/249492/pork-white-bean-kale-soup/>

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