



# SMART Goals for Lasting Change

**SMART = Specific, Measurable, Adjustable, Realistic, & Time-Based**

Setting goals can help you make lasting lifestyle changes to improve your health. Goals help you see what is important as well as stick to your plan. As you get into the habit of setting and meeting goals, you may find you are more able to believe in yourself and your ability to make changes. The tips below will help you set clear and effective goals.

## 1 Specific

Be as clear as possible regarding what you will do. Make sure the goal is **your goal** and not meant to please someone else. Write your goal down and put it in a place you will see each day.

*Example: "I want to complete the 5K (3 mile) Heart Walk in October."*

## 2 Measurable

Spell out exactly what you will do, how long, and how often.

*Example: "Over the next two weeks I will walk 30 minutes over my lunch hour, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays."*

## 3 Adjustable

Keep a good attitude when working on your goal. Don't get too upset if you miss a target. If you have a setback, just reset your goal to take this into account. Being too hard on yourself can get in the way of long-term success.

*Example: An illness prevents you from doing the Heart Walk in October, so adjust your goal to find another 5K walk to register for in November or December.*

## 4 Realistic

Be realistic about the goals you set. You should feel at least 70% confident you will be successful in meeting the goal. Sometimes it helps to break your goal down into smaller steps. Start with 1 or 2 goals—not a whole list.

*Example: Perhaps you want to run a marathon someday. If you have not been a regular exerciser, it would not be realistic to run a marathon in 3 months. Instead, try for a 5K (about 3 miles) in 3 months, and then a 10K (about 6 miles) run and so on.*

## 5 Time-based

Goals that reach out beyond six months are too long to keep you interested and motivated. Set and re-evaluate goals every 2-3 months. Success in meeting small goals helps to build confidence for continued success.

*Example: A goal of running a 5K race in 3 months is a time-based goal. Another example would be "My smoking quit date will be my birthday, October 1st this year."*



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## More helpful tips:

### Identify problems that might get in the way of reaching your goal.

These problems may include the weather, your health, your family or your own negative thoughts. Make a plan to remove the problem or find a way to deal with it.

### Reward your success.

Meeting even a small goal is worth celebration. Don't get overwhelmed with all that you still have to do. Small steps are the key to lasting lifestyle change.

### Follow up.

Frequent visits with your health care provider for progress reports, feedback, support, and problem solving will help you stay motivated and increase your chance of success. Ask your nurse, doctor or other health care provider if you can check in with them at least once a month while you are starting on the path of making a healthy lifestyle change. These visits may be less frequent as this change gradually becomes a habit.

