



Small Steps for Your Health

There are many things you can do to help prevent type 2 diabetes or its complications, but where do you start? It's not always easy to eat healthy and be active in today's fast-paced world.

It's easier to make healthy lifestyle changes one step at a time and over time. Think of each small step as one piece of your effort to change your habits. The good news is that making just a few small changes can have a big impact on your health.

Are You Ready, Willing, and Able to Change?

To succeed at making lifestyle changes you need to answer YES to the question, "Are you ready, willing, and able to change?" You must have better reasons to change than reasons not to change.

Take what you want to do and break it down into small steps. Then think about a few things you are ready, willing, and able to change and leave other habits for another time.

What are You Ready, Willing, and Able to Change?

Think about your current eating and activity habits. What foods do you buy? How active are you? Try to keep honest food records for a few days to get a true picture of what you eat. Based on your current habits, start with a few changes that are easy to tackle. Pick some changes that you want to do the most, and that will make the biggest impact. Perhaps choose one change in your eating habits and another in activity. Remember you don't need to change everything at once.

For example, if you eat fast food at lunch because you're in a hurry, try bringing a healthier meal from home. Maybe you can walk in place during the commercial break when you watch TV.

Making an Action Plan

Setting Goals

There are many things you need to do to manage your disease. Focus on one goal at a time.

Setting "**S.M.A.R.T.**" goals can help you reach your health goals. **S.M.A.R.T.** goals can also help you manage your time and track your progress.

S.M.A.R.T. goals are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-specific.

Specific: What exactly do you want to accomplish? Decide what, who, where, when, why, and how.

Measurable: How can you track your progress? How will you know when you have made it to your goal?

Attainable: Is meeting this goal something that is possible for you? Do you have everything you need to make it happen? If not, how will you get what you need?

Realistic: Is the goal something you know you can do if you try? Is it important to you?

Time-specific: When will you complete this goal? Set a time or a deadline that you know you can meet if you try.

For example, "I will walk for 20 minutes with my neighbor after dinner on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday."

Making an Action Plan that Works

Think of one thing about food, physical activity, taking medicine, or coping that you are ready, willing, and able to change. Using the S.M.A.R.T. goals principles, write a goal for yourself.

My Plan to Reach My Goal

- What am I going to do?
- When and how often will I do it?
- Where will I do it?

Did You Succeed?

The last step is to see how you did at making the change. Ask yourself these questions: Did I succeed? Did I set my sights too high? Did something happen in my life to keep me from being successful? If you were successful, give yourself a BIG pat on the back. (Or maybe a trip to the movies!)

Wait, you are not done! Making a change for two weeks or a month does not mean that it will stick for life. It's easy to slip back into old habits. Keep practicing your new habits. It may take time before they're part of your daily life. If you weren't successful, try again. Revise your goals if you need to. Make sure you're setting S.M.A.R.T. goals that are within reach.

What is Your Next Step?

Choose some new goals to work on. Slowly, goal by goal, over time you'll be eating healthier and staying more active. You'll also be on your road to preventing or delaying diabetes or its complications.