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Healthy eating into the New Year

Commentary by Carol Carr, Clinical Dietitian at Evans Army Community Hospital

The new year is here and it is time to start thinking about your New Year's resolutions. If you want to succeed and make resolutions that last make sure that your goals are both realistic and attainable. Realistic weight loss is between ½-2 pounds per week for most healthy adults. The best way to lose weight is to make healthy lifestyle and dietary choices that you know you can stick with. The following tips will help you get started.

First reflect on your current dietary and exercise routine to identify areas for improvement. Do you eat late at night, or find yourself eating fast food too often? Being honest with yourself and creating self-awareness can help you determine what habits need to be changed. Keeping a food and exercise journal for several days can help you see what food groups are missing or consumed in excess in your diet. Once you determine areas for improvement, make sure to make SMART goals that are specific, measureable, attainable, realistic and time bound. A good SMART goal would be: drink at least 64 ounces of water per day, 7-days per week and track intake using a food journal.

Then increase your vegetables! Many Americans do not eat nearly the recommended amount of vegetables each day. In a Center for Disease Control and Prevention survey, the majority of Americans self-reported eating less than 1.5 cups of vegetables per day. If you are not a fan of eating vegetables, try preparing them using a different cooking method. Roasting vegetables in the oven can add a more complex flavor than steaming or boiling. Be adventurous and try vegetables outside of your comfort zone. Vegetables like jicama and snap peas make delicious snacks and can be served with a side of hummus for added protein and flavor.

Be selective with your carbohydrates, as not all carbohydrates are created equal. If you are trying to lose weight, many carbohydrates contain fiber that provides satiety and can help control your appetite. Fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains are excellent sources of fiber and nutrients. Try to

limit highly processed foods and items with added sugars. These foods are often low in fiber and nutrients and high in empty calories.

You'll certainly want to watch your portion sizes, even if you choose healthy foods, as this can impede your weight loss efforts. An appropriate portion size for meat is 3 ounces, which is about the size and depth of a deck of cards. A serving of rice, pasta, or starchy vegetables such as potatoes, peas, or corn is about ½ cup or less. While you decrease your portion sizes of protein and starch, increase the portion of non-starchy vegetables (e.g., broccoli, carrots, Brussel sprouts, etc.) on your plate so the plate still looks full and you increase your intake of fiber to help control your appetite. If you are still struggling with portion control, try using the My Plate Model. Take an 8-9 inch diameter plate and make half the plate fruit and vegetables, a quarter of the plate whole grains or starch, and the last quarter of the plate lean protein. Dairy can be served on the side as a beverage or snack. Most people using this technique will eat 25 percent fewer calories per meal. For more information and helpful tips visit www.choosemyplate.gov .

And, do not forget to exercise! Finding an activity that you enjoy will help you to stay on track and persevere. For weight loss, the recommendation is



60 minutes of moderate cardiovascular activity most days of the week. If you are just starting out and 60 minutes seems like a daunting task, then start with 10-15 minutes of activity per day and work up to 60 minutes.

To help you customize your diet to suit your goals, consider seeing a registered dietitian. TRICARE beneficiaries can schedule appointments with dietitians on Fort Carson by calling the Evans hospital Nutrition Care Division at (719) 526-7290. Here's to a healthier new year. Go out and make some resolutions that count this year!