

Boost your Mind, 20 Body, and 21 Spirit in

THERE ARE 31 DAYS IN JANUARY, WHICH MEANS 31 OPPORTUNITIES TO ADOPT HEALTHY NEW HABITS THAT ARE SURE TO START YOUR NEW YEAR OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT. BY JILL SCHILDHOUSE

As we close the door on 2020 (okay, slam the door) and look ahead to 2021, we're faced with all the encouraging possibilities a new year can offer: a fresh perspective, a second chance, and the opportunity to turn over a new leaf. But it doesn't need to be that intense.

"There's so much pressure leading up to January 1st, when in reality, it's just another day," says Nina Zorfass, a health coach at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. "Instead of creating grand resolutions that require your utmost attention and dedication, start small ... very small. And start today. But most importantly, be kind to yourself when you mess up, because you'll definitely mess up— you're human! Each day is an opportunity to start fresh."

We asked myriad doctors, personal trainers, nutritionists, coaches and naturopaths to share some of their surefire tips for achieving optimal health—physically, mentally, and spiritually—in the new year. Here's what they had to say:

1 SPEND YOUR ENERGY WISELY. "One of the silver linings of this pandemic has been the ability to step back from the normal hustle and bustle of our lives to figure out what we really want in our careers, relationships, home, etc.," says Zorfass. "Many people realized that they were spending so much of their energy on things they didn't really care about, which caused unnecessary stress and anxiety." Take note of how you spend your time and how that matches up with your goals. Are you prioritizing things or people that don't bring you joy or don't bring you closer to your goals?"

2 READ LABELS TO AVOID HIDDEN SUGARS. Seriously, sugar hides in the darndest places. "Become a label reader and search for those hidden sugars that are driving up weight, chronic inflammation, and diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and fatty liver," says Renee Wellenstein, DO, double-board-certified OB/GYN and functional medicine. If an ingredient ends in "-ose"—for example, sucrose, fructose, or dextrose—it's a sugar. And if it has the word "sugar" in it, like beet sugar or coconut sugar, it's an obvious sugar. Also beware of the disguised sugars, such as corn syrup, malt syrup, and rice syrup

3 MANAGE STRESS WITH L-THEANINE. Before reaching for a prescription to help manage stress or anxiety, consider a natural supplement instead. "L-theanine is an amino acid from green tea that helps calm and relax you without making you feel sedated," says Wellenstein. "It can be used daily to prevent feelings of stress or anxiety, or at a moment's notice when something unexpected or stressful pops up. It also helps with focus."



4 CAFFEINATE WISELY.

Caffeine is fine when used in moderation—but who stops at one or two cups these days?

"The benefits of cutting caffeine are that you also might enjoy better sleep, less anxiety and jitteriness, fewer daytime crashes, and better sustained energy throughout the day," says Wellenstein. She recommends switching to matcha, a B complex supplement, chaga, or chicory root.

5 FEEL OUT YOUR FOODS.

Pay attention to how you feel after you eat certain foods. "Don't just let discomfort become normal," says Ashley Joi, a certified personal trainer at Performix House. "Log the foods that cause you to feel tired or bloated, or upset your stomach." The end result? A list you can give your doctor to test for allergies, or a list of foods to avoid.

6 HAVE A DANCE PARTY.

Not in the mood to work out? Joi says to turn on your favorite tunes—the ones you can never resist moving to—and have a dance party instead! "Your heart rate will rise, you're burning calories, and all the positive vibes and memories can come flooding in to elevate your mood."

7 DIG IN THE DIRT.

The saying, "God made dirt and dirt don't hurt," is more true than you realize. "The soil is full of beneficial microbes and, with regular exposure, you can support the health of your gut microbiome," says Sheri Vettel, RD, MPH, LDN, a registered dietitian at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. "Consider getting involved in a garden, whether it's your own or a shared space in your community."

"In fact, one study found that oregano contains four times more antioxidants than blueberries. Fresh herbs are also nutrient-rich, with many being good sources of vitamins A and K."

11 GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR CIRCADIAN RHYTHM.

Honoring your body's natural rhythms can go a long way for health. "For instance, consider going to bed earlier (with the setting sun) and rising for the day when the sun comes up," says Vettel. "Get sunshine on your skin daily to support melatonin production and sleep, and try eating your largest meal of the day when the sun is the strongest, around noon."

12 CHEW MORE THOROUGHLY.

How well are you chewing your food, really? "When my patients share that they're having digestive woes, the first question I ask is about how well they're chewing their food," says Vettel. "Chewing food well supports optimal digestion by creating lots of saliva." Saliva helps to dissolve food and contains digestive enzymes such as amylase (to break down starch) and lipase (which breaks down fat in the stomach).

13 BUILD YOUR TRIBE.

A like-minded community is beneficial to starting and maintaining your health journey. "Community benefits those who are succeeding and those who are having difficulty because it brings everyone together and allows everyone to share their strengths, offer help, give encouragement, and hold each other accountable," says Logan Delgado, fitness expert and cofounder of KetoCoach. Look for groups on social media or in your local community.

10 ADD FRESH HERBS.

Did you know that herbs are nutrition all-stars? "Many herbs—including basil, dill, cilantro, and oregano—offer significant antioxidant and antimicrobial benefits," says Vettel.

17 CREATE A SELF-CARE SPACE.

Spending more time at home probably means your living space is more crowded and full of commotion than ever before. "Create a self-care zone," suggests Jamie Gold, CKD, CAPS, MCCWC, a Mayo Clinic Certified Wellness Coach and author of *Wellness By Design: A Room-by-Room Guide to Optimizing Your Home for Health, Fitness, and Happiness*. "That

might be adding spa-inspired touches to your bathroom or creating a meditation corner in your bedroom. Covered patios and balconies with nature connections—like plants, trees, and water features—are also ideal, climate allowing. Add a favorite seat, cozy throw, lavender candle, or art piece, and spend 5–10 minutes a day there consciously decompressing."

18 STICK TO A SCHEDULE.

"Despite the chaos in the world, our brains like order," says Pedram Shojai, OMD, a doctor of Oriental medicine, master herbalist, and acupuncturist. "Set a wakeup time and keep a schedule. Work out at the same time. Keep your meals consistent and go to bed at the same time. This

16 EAT FIBER BY THE FORK.

"Fiber is beneficial for your gut and cardiovascular health, along with blood sugar regulation and satiety," says Feller. "Incorporate foods that are rich in prebiotic fibers like chickpeas, garlic, plantains, Jerusalem artichokes, and onions. A healthy microbiome is the foundation for optimal wellness."

15 INCLUDE VEGGIES FOR BREAKFAST.

One easy way to add more plants into your day is to start in the morning. "Top leafy greens with an egg and avocado for a delicious, unexpected breakfast salad," says registered dietitian Maya Feller, MS, RD, DN. "You can also add beans to bring soluble fiber and keep you fuller longer."

creates order and dissipates anxiety. It'll help you stay in rhythm even when the world around you is spinning."

19 JUST BREATHE.

We need to breathe to live, but so many people rarely think about how they are breathing. "Taking deep breaths, regularly through your nose, can elicit many health benefits, including decreased stress, decreased blood pressure, decreased anxiety, and a steadier heartbeat," says certified nutritionist and reiki master Serena Poon, CN, CHC, CHN. Don't know where to start? Try a 4-4-4 breath. Inhale for 4 counts, hold your breath for 4 counts, and exhale for 4 counts. Repeat up to 20 minutes.

20 PRACTICE AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE.

"Every day, write down just one thing that you are thankful for," says Steven R. Gundry, MD, a cardi thoracic surgeon and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Plant Paradox*. "Even if you're dealing with the loss of a job, kids stuck at home driving you crazy, inability to travel, fear of the unknown, or even loss of a family member or friend, there's always, always something to be thankful for."

21 REORGANIZE YOUR KITCHEN.

If your main goal is to lose weight in 2021, rethink not just your food but the room where you prepare it. "The number one complaint I've heard from clients over the years for why they have a hard time making healthful meals at home is that their kitchens are cramped, dark, disorganized, and unpleasant," says Gold. "Your kitchen is your home's 'fueling station' and should be optimized and reorganized for that purpose." This doesn't have to mean an expensive remodel, either—there are many items you can add to your existing kitchen cabinets and countertop appliances that will support healthy cooking.

