The top 10 resolutions you can actually keep

When it comes to New Year's resolutions, most people are miserable failures. According to a recent study, 45 percent of Americans make them, but a mere 8 percent attain success.

Not surprisingly, "losing weight" tops the list of Americans' most popular resolutions; "staying healthy" clocks in at No. 5.

Motivational experts argue that vague goals like these invite failure. On the other hand, specific targets with well-delineated steps are more likely to be achievable.

In that spirit, here are 10 health resolutions you CAN keep:

1. Use a tracker! Apps and "wearables" are revolutionizing self-care. Devices such as the Fitbit enable people to track their mileage, and the iWatch will debut in 2015. It will be possible to chart and analyze your food intake, your sleep, your exercise, your body composition—the possibilities are limitless. The abundant feedback will be accurate, informative and, above all, motivational. Pick a device and commit to logging your healthy behaviors in 2015!

2. Lose 5 percent of your body weight. Just 5 percent! Studies show that fully 1/2 of persons on high blood pressure medication can wean off drugs if they were to lose merely 5 percent of their weight. Even if you don't attain "ideal" body weight, taking off five to 12 pounds, depending on your physique, will dramatically lower your risk of heart disease, cancer and dementia. How to do this? Follow the tips below and check out my guidelines for the Salad and Salmon Diet, a palatable, realistic way to gradually shed pounds without severe deprivation. Use a food tracker to monitor the caloric and nutrient content of your meals.

3. Break a sweat for 30 minutes per day 3 times per week. More frequent and prolonged bouts of exertion may be preferable, but for most people they're unrealistic and can lead to exercise "burnout" and injury. Studies show that 80 percent of the benefits of a rigorous exercise program can be obtained with a 30 x's 3 regimen. Be consistent. But don't just read the paper or gab on your cellphone—for exercise to be helpful you'll have to work hard enough to need a shower afterward.

4. Walk a mile per day. At a brisk but comfortable pace. Using your tracker (most new phones have them built-in) make sure your steps add up to at least a mile a day. If you're a car commuter and park near work, save part of your lunch break to hit your stride or bang out some steps while watching the news on the treadmill at home before or after work.

5. Sleep. Sleep deprivation takes a major toll on your health; the average American sleeps approximately 2 hours less than in 1900. Log your sleep time and remember, weekend "catch-up" sleep doesn't count. Regular sleep habits can help fend off obesity, diabetes, hypertension, depression and accidents.

6. Fast. The new science of "intermittent fasting" (IF) demonstrates that short bouts of non-eating combat inflammation and extend longevity. A simple and relatively painless way to implement IF is to limit your eating "window" to just 10 hours per day, e.g. breakfast at 9 and no food after 7 at night. It's a great way to lose weight, too, because most erratic food consumption occurs during the late

evening “witching hours.” Log your mealtimes.

7. Fidget. It’s been said that “sitting is the new smoking!” New studies suggest that prolonged periods of sitting—even if you’re an exerciser—dramatically increase your risk of cardiovascular disease. So set your wearable to alarm you every 45 minutes so you can make a quick circuit around your home or office.

8. Add vitamin D. Evidence for the beneficial effects of vitamin D is mounting; several studies show that higher levels of vitamin D are associated with reduced risk of death from ALL causes. Have your health professional check your vitamin D levels and supplement accordingly. Most adults will do fine with 2,000 International Units of D3 daily, but persons with certain health conditions may require more.

9. Take fish oil. The health benefits of omega-3 fatty acids are undeniable, and unless you’re eating lots of salmon, sardines or herring, you’re probably not getting enough. Take two capsules of high-potency, pharmaceutical-grade fish oil daily.

10. Boost your magnesium. Refined junk foods are almost bereft of magnesium; stress, alcohol, excess sugar, illness, and many commonly used medications deplete it. No wonder that one study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health shows that 68 percent of Americans are magnesium deficient. Common symptoms of magnesium deficiency include muscle spasms, fatigue and irritability; chronic lack of magnesium can contribute to the risks of diabetes and heart disease. Check with your health practitioner to find out if a magnesium supplement is suitable for you. Most people do fine with capsules or tablets delivering 150-200 milligrams of elemental magnesium per day (read supplement labels carefully). Check this table for good dietary sources of magnesium. Your nutrient tracker can help you assess the adequacy of your daily intake.

Adopting these 10 attainable, specific goals in the New Year can easily lead you into a healthier, happier 2015.