

The following strategies can help you set and reach a goal to make healthy changes.

Choose a healthy living goal that is important to you

- Identify something that **you** want to do to improve your health
- Example: “I would like to be more physically active.”

Get Support

- Let others know of your goal and ask for support to help you meet your goal.
- A buddy system can help you and your buddy!
- Tell your healthcare team about your goal so they can support you.

Keep track of your progress

- Choose a way to monitor your progress that works for you and helps you stay on track.
- Examples of ways to monitor your progress:
 - Step on a scale and write down your weight daily
 - Use a pedometer to keep track of steps
 - Use a diary or log to keep track of what you eat
- Use apps on phones or tablets. If you meet your goal, terrific! Enjoy the satisfaction from your accomplishment.
- If you had trouble reaching your goal, think about what you might do differently.

Manage roadblocks and challenges

- As you start working toward your goal, think about challenges or problems you might face.
- Think about ways you have worked around roadblocks in the past and how you might manage them now.
- Learn problem-solving skills to address roadblocks. One place to learn about these is the Moving Forward program, which can be found at www.veterantraining.va.gov or as a mobile app called Moving Forward.

Change routines

- Change your routine to break up old habits and make way for new, healthier ones.
- For example, some people are used to having a cigarette after dinner. They may choose to go for a walk after dinner instead.

Stick to it

- Change requires perseverance. For example, most people who quit smoking make multiple attempts before they succeed.
- Slips and setbacks are common and you can learn from them.
- You can get back on track!

Make your goal “SMART”

If you take the first letter of each tip, it spells out the word, **SMART**.

- **Specific** Describe what you will do, with details
Example: “walk at a brisk pace in my neighborhood”
- **Measurable** Choose how much and how often to measure
Example: “I will walk for 15 minutes, 5 times per week”
- **Action-oriented** Choose something you will do, not just think about
Example: “I will walk at least 5 days a week”
- **Realistic** Choose a small doable step that fits in with your life
Example: “15 minutes”, rather than an hour; “5 times a week”, rather than every day
- **Time-based** Set a time to start and to review your goal
Example: “I will start next week and review my progress after 2 weeks of walking.”

An example of a SMART goal is *“I will walk at a brisk pace in my neighborhood for 15 minutes, before I leave for work, Monday through Friday, starting next week. I will do this for 2 weeks and then review my progress.”*