

# TO YOUR HEALTH

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## New Beginnings

by Susan Cusson, NP

The beginning of a new year is traditionally a time when many people are inspired to implement change. New Year's resolutions are a tool we sometimes use to jump start a new habit or break an old one. Some of the most common resolutions are to exercise more, lose weight, eat healthier, get organized or learn a new skill or hobby. What helps us get to our goals and what gets in the way?

Change is hard and we've all encountered difficulties along the way to achieving our most important goals. According to Katy Milkman, behavioral scientist and author of a new book titled "How To Change", there are several factors common to human nature that interfere with this process. Difficulty getting started, impulsivity, forgetting and low confidence are among some of the more common obstacles. Milkman found that "we're more likely to pursue change on dates that feel like new beginnings because these moments help us overcome a common obstacle to goal initiation: the sense that we've failed before and will thus, fail again". This "fresh start effect", as she calls it, explains why so many people set resolutions on New Year's Day. Her research showed that new beginnings like this can offer us a "psychological do-over". It allows us to distance ourselves from past failures and gives us a reason to be optimistic about the future.

The start of a new year is a good time to pause and reflect on the past and think about future goals. This time of reflection can lead us to try to make a change. As we enter our third year of the pandemic, there's a lot to reflect back on. 2021 was quite a year with vaccines offering much promise of a return to "normal" life. Then came the new variants, first delta and now omicron.

As we enter into the third year of the pandemic you might be wondering what there is to be optimistic about in 2022. When will things get better? According to a recent University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, 71% of older Americans felt the same level of resilience as they did before the pandemic. Fifteen percent said they actually felt more resilient. Resilience was defined as overcoming challenges, recovering and bouncing back from adversity. The poll found older adults more able to find joy and experience less stress. These findings, noted by Jessica Finlay, Ph.D. co-author of the study, are consistent with previous research and demonstrate that even in times of stress, older age can be "a period of great strength, growth, wisdom and resilience".

Being outdoors, connecting with friends and family, whether in person or virtually, are sources of joy for many. We've learned a lot about how to take care of ourselves and our loved ones by getting vaccinated and boosted, wearing masks indoors, keeping distance and getting tested.

While we cannot control what happens with the virus around the world, we each have the ability to set and achieve personal goals. Identify one attainable goal, utilize the "fresh start effect" that comes with the new year, forget about any past failed attempts and hold onto that optimism right through 2022.



### An Aspirin a Day???

You've likely heard reports about aspirin over the past few years. You might be asking yourself "should I be taking aspirin or do I still need that aspirin I've been taking all these years?" The answer depends on your medical history. In October 2021 the US Preventative Services Tasks Force (USPSTF) recommended against initiating aspirin for the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease in adults 60 years or older. This is different than the recommendation from 2016. Primary prevention is for people who have never had a heart attack or stroke.



Adults with a history of a heart attack or stroke should continue on a daily low-dose aspirin to prevent another cardiovascular event. Each situation is different and if it's not clear which category you fall into ask your healthcare provider at your next routine visit.

Of course aspirin isn't the only way to reduce risk. We can all benefit from regular exercise. It doesn't have to be all at once or even in the gym. Walking can have very positive effects on your cardiovascular and cognitive health. Try setting a goal, at least 8000 steps a day if possible.

Other ways to keep your heart and brain in good health:

- ⇒ Getting enough sleep—seven hours a night is optimal
- ⇒ Limiting alcohol intake
- ⇒ Staying engaged socially—isolation can have negative effects on health

⇒ Maintain your weight by eating a diet high in non-starchy vegetables, fresh fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds and olive oil. Eat fish, poultry, and dairy products in moderation and try to limit red meat.

*~Here's to a healthy 2022~*

### Announcement

We are pleased to announce that Mary Bannon, NP has joined our team of medical providers at CWV. Mary earned her Masters of Science with a focus in gerontology at Boston University and has over 35 years of experience in geriatrics. She will be working part time, primarily in the Nursing Center, and also covering the Clinic on an occasional Saturday or when Susan is away.

*Welcome Mary!*

### Insurance Updates

It's that time of the year again! Every October through December, there is an opportunity to change health insurances. These changes generally go into effect on January 1st. If you changed any of your health or prescription insurances, please bring your new cards to the Clinic so that copies can be made for your medical record. It is very important for the Clinic to have the most recent information for proper billing of medical services.

It is also a good time to check all the information on your Vial of Life. Has your health care proxy or their contact information changed? Please check all the information and bring any changes to the Clinic. There is a secure message box located just outside the Clinic where you can leave your information when the Clinic is closed.