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GPs can empower us to make that change



Dr Michael Tam says GPs can help you with your health goals.

With a holiday season of blissful self-indulgence and dietary lapses behind us, many of us will now shift gears and adopt New Year's resolutions that put us on the road towards improved health in the year ahead.

Whether you are determined to kick an unhealthy habit, lose weight or to run a marathon, visiting your regular GP can be the starting point on your road to success.

A first step can be to simply have a health check with your doctor to screen for current health issues, and assess the risk for any future disease. You may even develop new health goals with your family doctor.

“It’s good to want a change and creating a New Year’s resolution isn’t all that bad an idea”, says Dr Michael Tam, a researcher at the Ingham Institute’s General Practice Unit, and senior lecturer at the Discipline of General Practice, the University of Sydney.

“However, to maximise the likelihood of success with behaviour change, you need back-up and support. Your doctor can provide guidance or direct you to support services to make sure you’re in it for the long haul.”

“Planning, thinking, and talking with family and loved ones so they can support you is as important as the resolution itself.

“And sometimes the focus should not be on less, but more. More sleep, more fresh fruit and veggies, more water, and more daily steps on the path to a healthier lifestyle.

“If you don’t succeed the first time, that is part of the experience of trying to quit,” Dr Tam said.

“Think about why you want to change and know that change does not have to occur on January 1 – it can be before or even after – as long as it can be maintained over the long term.

“For example, many people see diabetes as a sugar-based condition, but a person who lives with diabetes and smokes can halve their risk of a heart attack a year after quitting.”

GPs are here to empower people to make a change and to build on their good intentions.

And when you’re ready to run that half marathon, you can do so with the doctors, scientists, and medical researchers from the Ingham Institute of Applied Medical Research.

Join the team on May 20 at Sydney Morning Herald’s Half Marathon or show your support at: inghaminstitute-smhhalfmarathon.everydayhero.do