

5 Evidence-Based Tips for Building Health Habits

1 Choose behaviours with personal value or are rewarding to you

- Habits that are meaningful and rewarding (e.g., stress reduction) are much easier and more rewarding to initiate and maintain.



Keller et al. (2021). Habit formation following routine-based versus time-based cue planning: A randomized controlled trial. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 26(3), 807–824. doi: 10.1111/bjhp.12504

2 Start small and build up

- Small behaviour changes are easier to initiate and maintain than large ones. Try breaking a bigger goal into smaller, more achievable steps to build momentum.
- For example, short bursts of exercise (2–5 mins) throughout the day may help building exercise habits.



Godinho et al. (2014). Will is not enough: Coping planning and action control as mediators in the prediction of fruit and vegetable intake. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 19(4), 856–870. doi: 10.1111/bjhp.12084.

3 Ground habits in a routine

- Try pairing a habit with a specific part of your schedule. Your body will naturally get used to this pattern over time, which will help solidify this in your routine.
- For instance, people who set up a routine and ate fruits after a certain meal of the day successfully consumed more fruits.



Diefenbacher et al. (2022). Habit formation in context: Context-specific and context-free measures for tracking fruit consumption habit formation and behaviour. *British Journal of Health Psychology*. doi: 10.1111/bjhp.12637

4 All is better with a friend

- Friends can provide encouragement and motivate you to stick to your new habit.
- By having a support network and people who also know about your goal, they can help you stay accountable and monitor your progress with you.



Gruber, K. J. (2008). Social support for exercise and dietary habits among college students. *Adolescence*, 43(171), 557.

5 Hope for the best, prepare for the worst

- Everyone encounters challenges. Identify any potential barriers that will stop you from successfully maintaining a new habit and make plans to overcome them.
- For example, if you struggle with exercising on your own, consider signing up for group fitness sessions or arranging to meet with friends for walks.



Kilb & Labudek. (2022). Effects of behavioral performance, intrinsic reward value, and context stability on the formation of a higher-order nutrition habit: An intensive longitudinal diary study. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 19(1), 1–14. doi: 10.1186/s12966-022-01343-8