

Small lifestyle changes that make a big difference

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While many modern-day ailments can be linked to unhealthy lifestyle choices, changing those choices can be a challenge. It may seem overwhelming or useless to even try.

But Dr. Stephen Kopecky, a Mayo Clinic cardiologist, recommends approaching [lifestyle changes](#) in the same way you would learn a [musical instrument](#) or teach a child math: one step at a time.

Whether your goal is to lower your [blood pressure](#), manage symptoms of diabetes, lose [weight](#) or just feel healthier as you age, small changes can make a big difference.

Here are five small actions that can lead to powerful transformations.

- Take one less bite a day of unhealthy foods. If you want to make healthier food choices, start with a single bite. Leave the pizza crust on your plate and instead help yourself to another bite of salad. Or add a single slice of apple to your breakfast.
- Cut corners without sacrificing the meal. You don't have to stop eating the foods you love, but you may need to think differently about portions. Eat anything you want, but don't eat as much as you want of anything you want.
- Get up and move for three to five minutes every hour. Physical activity consists of two parts: moving more and sitting less. If you lead a sedentary life—and most people in the U.S. do—get up every hour to move your body in a way that you enjoy.
- Take 10 minutes for intervals. No time for a long workout? No problem. Interval training is a highly effective and time-efficient form of exercise. It consists of short, 30-second bursts of high-intensity activity with periods of rest. For example, switching from walking to jogging, or biking hard up a hill during a leisurely ride.
- Say these two words: "It's OK." Forgiving yourself when you hit a slump is important. Positive self-talk takes practice just like anything else, but eventually being friendly to yourself will become second nature.

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