



Preparing for a New Year and Healthy You with Caroline Alena, M.D., Baptist Medical Group Primary Care - North Hill

Before we know it, the holiday season will have passed and New Year's resolutions will be in full swing. Many of our resolutions include maintaining a healthy weight and adopting healthier habits all around. Dr. Caroline Alena with Baptist Medical Group Primary Care – North Hill shares her winter health tips to help you stay on track.

Q: What are some tips to help us maintain healthy habits and avoid sickness during winter months?

A: When it comes to maintaining a healthy diet, keep in mind that moderation and portion control are key. This means that you can enjoy your holiday traditions and don't have to feel left out, but you do have to remain mindful of how much you're actually eating. I find that many people find success with using a fitness app for tracking their calories or by keeping to their diet throughout the week and splurging on a cheat meal over the weekend. Making healthy substitutions in your cooking is great way to save calories. And don't forget to keep track of alcohol, which is a huge source of hidden calories and sugar.

To avoid sickness, get your annual flu shot and frequently WASH YOUR HANDS, especially before eating or touching your face.

Q: Why is maintaining a healthy weight important?

A: Maintaining a healthy weight is important for a number of reasons. We are seeing a rise in many weight-related medical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. But many people don't know that obesity can also increase your risk of various cancers and in some instances liver and kidney problems, too. Keeping a healthy weight will help reduce the risk of developing these problems and will keep you feeling younger and healthier longer.

Q: What does it mean to be overweight or obese?

A: Most clinicians use a calculation called BMI as an objective measurement of a person's height to weight ratio. It is used as a tool help gauge a patient's body composition, and generally a BMI>30 signals obesity. Often being overweight and obese can also impair restful

sleep causing fatigue throughout the day. It is also linked to higher blood pressure, diabetes and increased risk for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States.

Q: What are some manageable factors that contribute to healthy weight loss?

A: Making sustainable lifestyle changes and habits is key. This works by both making changes in your diet, like reducing carbohydrates and saturated fats, as well as developing your exercise routine.

Here are some simple changes that make a big difference in your health:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Go for a brisk walk on a break during your work day.
- Ride your bike instead of driving where safe.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week. That can be a daunting number, but I've seen a lot of people find success with the new Couch to 5K programs. Alternatively, exercise in a pool may be better for people with joint pain.

Q: Where can people in our area go to seek support about maintaining their health?

A: Keeping regular appointments with your primary doctor is a good start. Our community also has a number of resources ranging from the YMCA, dieticians, physical therapists and local pharmacies where you can check your blood pressure. Also a great resource for guidance on overall health is the weight loss center at Baptist.

To view Dr. Caroline Alena's profile: www.BaptistMedicalGroup.org/doctors/caroline-alena-m. To schedule an appointment, visit baptistmedicalgroup.org or call 850.437.8637.

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For more information about this press release or to schedule an interview, please contact Marilyn Smith at 850.791.5254 or BHCMediaRelations@bhcpns.org.

About Baptist Health Care

Baptist Health Care is a community-owned, not-for-profit health care organization committed to improving the quality of life for people and communities in northwest Florida. The organization is a proud member of the Mayo Clinic Care Network. A 2003 Malcolm Baldrige recipient, Baptist continuously strives to be a national leader in quality and service. Baptist Health Care includes three hospitals, two medical parks, Andrews Institute for Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine, Lakeview Center, Baptist Medical Group and Cardiology Consultants. With more than 6,500 employees and employed physicians, Baptist Health Care is the largest non-governmental employer in northwest Florida. For more information, please visit www.eBaptistHealthCare.org.

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