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Wellness Goals: Get SMART



When it comes to health and wellness, setting realistic, measurable goals can help you stay on track — and keep you feeling motivated instead of discouraged or overwhelmed

SMART is an acronym backed by research that can help guide healthy goal setting to make things feel achievable, while also building confidence and support progress: **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound**

Goals set this way are not abstract like 'be healthy' or 'lose weight'. A SMART goal must be clear, trackable, and action-oriented. They create clarity, structure, and accountability. They give the brain a clear task and the body a sense of progress, which is crucial for those of us stuck in a cycle of stress or feeling overwhelmed by starting.

For example, instead of a vague goal like 'eat better,' a SMART goal might be 'I'll eat a source of protein at breakfast four days this week.'"

The SMART goal framework helps us stay on track to create lasting change

Can a 'Cortisol Detox' aid Weight Loss?



Influencers say high levels of cortisol, the 'stress hormone' cause weight gain, but is there really a link? Here is what medical experts say

What is Cortisol?

Nicknamed the '**stress hormone**', cortisol affects every system in the body. It plays a role controlling inflammation and stress, as well as regulating metabolism and the immune system. Thus, some diet and lifestyle changes aimed at lowering cortisol naturally may support weight loss, and reducing the effects on stress can help prevent coping by eating

What Causes High Cortisol?

The brain signals cortisol release for both negative and positive reasons. It helps us wake up in the morning but also spikes during illness or emotional stress. Symptoms of high cortisol include weight gain, especially around face and waist; high blood pressure and sugar; bruising or purple marks on the skin; feeling anxious or depressed.

What is a Cortisol Detox?

This means a set of practices and strategies aimed at reducing the body's levels of cortisol, which happens to go together with weight loss:

Diet Food plays the biggest role. Avoid processed foods and saturated fats in favor of whole foods with fiber and antioxidants

Sleep Levels are highest when you wake up and decline naturally throughout the day. Ensure eight hours of high-quality sleep at night

Exercise Exercising regularly, especially moderate to vigorous physical activity, will help lower your cortisol response

Stress Take time to unplug from work and responsibilities. Mindfulness, meditation, journaling and breathing exercises can all help. Limit or avoid alcohol consumption, as it increases levels

The idea of a 'detox' sounds appealing, but scientific evidence is limited. Techniques like eating well, exercising regularly, and prioritizing sleep are the best cortisol reduction techniques



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Banana Protein Muffins



These muffins are high in protein, low in sugar, and are perfect for breakfast or a healthy post workout snack.

Bonus: they're quick and easy to make ahead!

Ingredients

- 2 cups oats (can use quick or rolled)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup
- 1 cup mashed banana (about 2 very large overripe bananas)
- 1 cup plain 0% Greek yogurt
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup mini dark chocolate chips

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray regular sized muffin tin with non-stick cooking spray or line 12 muffin tins with silicone liners.
2. Place the oats in the food processor and pulse until the oats are finely ground.
3. Add the remaining ingredients to the food processor other than the chocolate chips. Blend until everything is combined and the oats are mostly smooth.
4. Stir in the chocolate chips until evenly distributed. You may wish to reserve a few chocolate chips to poke into the top of each muffin.
5. Divide batter equally among the muffin cups, and bake for 20-22 minutes, or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. They should be slightly firm to the touch and lightly golden in some places. Let the muffins cool completely before removing them from the tin.

Note: the best protein flavors to use in these muffins are Vanilla, Salted Caramel, or Cookies and Cream



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