

Progress over perfection: Habits for a healthier future

Chronic conditions like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity are becoming more common. Risk can increase with age, but these conditions are not inevitable. Long-term health is shaped by everyday lifestyle and behaviours: how much we move, what we eat, how we sleep, and habits around alcohol and smoking. The key is to set up these behaviours so they don't rely on motivation, because motivation comes and goes. Simple routines and clear cues make the healthy choice easier to start. Small rewards and visible progress make it easier to repeat.

Over time, repetition builds confidence and momentum, and small, steady improvements can make a meaningful difference. Most people already know the 'healthy choices'. The challenge is making them fit into busy days. Instead of a complete lifestyle overhaul, focus on small habits you can repeat and build into normal life. A good place to start is sleep. Better sleep often makes everything else easier: clearer thinking, more energy to move, less mindless snacking and more patience under pressure. Most adults benefit from 7–9 hours of quality sleep, and a consistent bedtime is a strong first step.



Build sustainable movement

'Exercise' doesn't have to mean the gym, a strict routine or high-intensity workouts – the goal is consistency and progress over perfection.

Aim for a well-rounded mix of:

- ▶ **Endurance:** supports cardiovascular health and builds muscles
- ▶ **Strength:** supports muscles, blood sugar control and bone health
- ▶ **Balance:** improves stability and helps reduce falls risk
- ▶ **Flexibility:** supports mobility so everyday movement feels easier

Many guidelines suggest around 30 minutes of moderate activity most days, but it's worth saying plainly: even small increases help – especially when the movement is simple enough to repeat tomorrow.





Implement changes that become a habit:

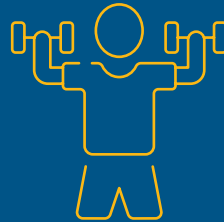
- ▶ Set yourself up to follow through
- ▶ Decide what you want to change, and why it matters
- ▶ Choose one daily action that fits your routine
- ▶ Tie it to a clear cue (e.g., after lunch, after brushing teeth)
- ▶ Repeat until it starts to feel normal

Reinforce what's working:

- ▶ Acknowledge progress each time you follow through
- ▶ Track it in a supportive way: notes, a calendar, a simple app, or an accountability check-in.

Improving your health isn't about doing everything perfectly. It's about stacking small, sustainable choices – better sleep, regular movement, healthier eating patterns and lifestyle habits – until they become your normal.

Starting early is great, but starting today is just as beneficial.



Lemon Prawn Orzo

Prep: 5 mins Cook: 15 mins Serves: 4

Ingredients list

- ▶ 1 1/2 cups dry orzo (risini)
- ▶ 3 cups chicken/vegetable broth
- ▶ 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ 500 g raw prawns, peeled + deveined
- ▶ 1/2 tsp smoked paprika, plus salt + pepper
- ▶ 1/2 red onion, finely diced
- ▶ 3 garlic cloves, minced
- ▶ 2 bunches asparagus, cut into quarters
- ▶ 2 cups frozen peas
- ▶ 2 cups baby spinach
- ▶ 1 lemon (zest + juice)
- ▶ 1/2 cup milk
- ▶ 1/4 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- ▶ 4 tbsp grated parmesan
- ▶ Optional: 1/4 cup parsley, 1 tsp chilli flakes

Method

- ▶ Add orzo and broth in a saucepan and bring to a boil, reduce to simmer and cover for approx 10 mins or until al dente. Set aside and don't drain.
- ▶ Add olive oil into a frypan on a medium/high heat, add prawns and season with salt, pepper and paprika - cooked for 2-3 mins each side then remove and set aside.
- ▶ Using the same frypan on medium/high heat, add onion, garlic, and asparagus and saute for 2-3 mins, then add cooked orzo along with its liquid together with milk, peas, spinach, lemon juice and zest and cook for a further 3-5 mins.
- ▶ Remove from heat, add almonds, and parmesan cheese and garnish with optional parsley and chilli to serve.



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