

Don't wait until New Year's to ring in new fitness goals

New Year's may typically be a time for fresh starts and new goals, but when it comes to leading a more healthful lifestyle, there's no time like the present.

"You do not need a special day to start working on your goals," said Jacki Dalsimer, fitness director for Canton Club Health and Fitness in Baltimore. "If a person wants to lead a healthy lifestyle, to get in better shape and to have more energy, he or she should not put off starting to achieve his or her goals."

Dalsimer, who has been in the fitness field for 10 years and is a certified personal trainer, suggests beginning by identifying and writing down clear and achievable goals.

Keep a daily activity and food journal, she advised, and don't go it alone.

"Your friends, family and coworkers should be in on your plan and be there to support your new lifestyle," she said.

When it comes to selecting a gym, she said to look for one that is conveniently located.

"Take your time selecting a gym," she said. "Before you go, think about what is important to you from a gym. Is it cardio equipment, group fitness classes, weights, personal trainers, and/or wellness programs you are looking for? Many gyms offer free trials."

Personal trainers are a plus because they can create efficient and effective workout routines with one's goals in mind.

"Starting with a trainer will get you on the right path to success," she said, "and people are less likely to skip workouts if they're meeting with a trainer."

Becoming healthier isn't just about lifting dumbbells or sweating away on the

elliptical machine.

“Eating right is as important as hitting the gym,” said Dalsimer, noting that when she makes unhealthy choices, she notices a difference in how she feels. “If you spend an hour at the gym and head out for pizza afterward, you are negating all your efforts.”

She said dieting alone will help someone lose weight, but combining it with exercise will make someone more likely to keep it off.

“Exercise, especially strength training, helps speed up your metabolism,” she said.

Dalsimer, who wears a big smile as she helps gym patrons with exercise routines, said she knows from personal experience that “living a healthy lifestyle can allow people to truly live life to the fullest.”

The mother of a 3-year-old son, Dalsimer has exercised consistently through the years, including throughout her pregnancy, and sees the difference it makes. She’s also motivated by her clients.

“When I see how much better people feel in general after sticking to a routine and changing their lifestyles, I am reminded of why I chose to live a healthy lifestyle,” she said. “Life is short and should be lived to the fullest. In order to live life to the fullest, you need to take care of your body.”

Always encouraging,

Dalsimer explained, “losing weight, the healthy way, and keeping it off for life, takes time

“Focus on other reasons why you are beginning a new health plan such as for more energy, to improve sleep, improved self esteem, a mood booster, etc. The weight will come off in time.”