

REPLACE YOUR RESOLUTIONS WITH SMALL, EFFECTIVE HABITS THAT LAST

How many times have you made a new year's resolution to get healthy that didn't even last a month? You're not alone. According to behavioural economists, it takes a lot more than just sheer willpower to reach those goals.

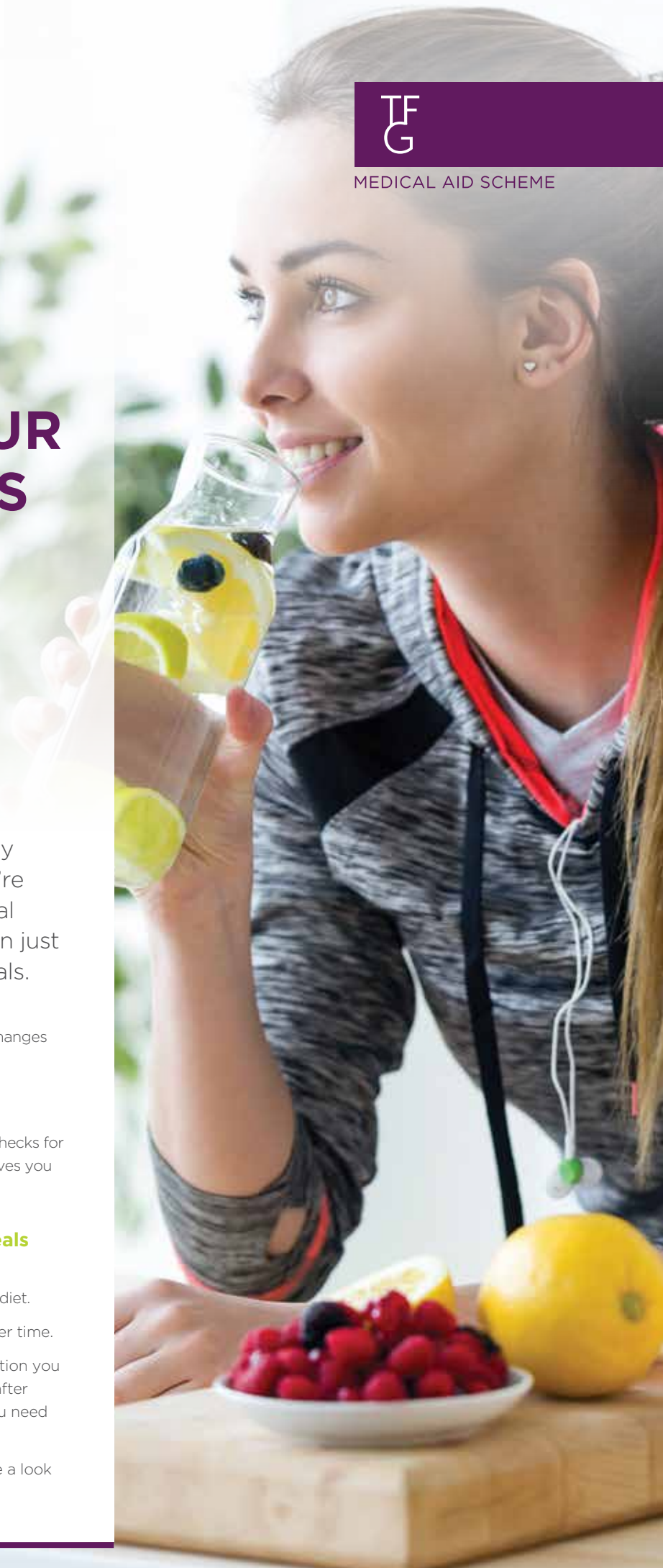
Here are a few ideas on how to start making small changes to instill healthy habits:

Find a starting point

Schedule your family's health screenings and health checks for the year. Understanding your family's health status gives you insight into what you may need to change.

Add a few healthier options to your meals

- Little by little, start adding more fresh fruit and vegetables, wholegrains and lean protein to your diet.
- Focus on reducing your salt and sugar intake over time.
- If you need a specialised diet because of a condition you have, visit a dietitian to make sure you still look after your condition while still getting the nutrition you need and improving your diet.
- If you feel like you need a bit more support, have a look at joining a group like Weigh-Less.



Ideas to get started with exercise

Making daily exercise part of your life can reduce your risk of obesity and developing chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure.

- Depending on your current fitness level, you may want to start with adding a walk or a few shorter walks to your day. Use your tea break at work, for example, to take the longer way around to the coffee station. Gradually increase the distance and intensity of your walks over time.
- If you're already exercising regularly or somewhat fit, but stuck in an exercise rut, why not try a fitness activity you've not tried before or take your exercise outdoors? You can, for example, take to your local Parkrun, try tennis or go for a demo session at your nearest cross trainer.
- Setting a personal goal makes reaching your resolutions easier. For example, if you like running, you can choose an upcoming race that you can comfortably enter in a few months' time. Then find an easy-to-follow beginner exercise programme that will get you ready for the event you chose.
- Remember to also not overdo it - make time for rest days in between your exercise days.

Eating healthily, sticking to your exercise regime and practicing good hygiene can help you boost your immune system and if you do get sick, to get back on your feet quicker.



IMPROVE YOUR EYESIGHT BY STRENGTHENING YOUR EYE MUSCLES

Eye muscles are like any other muscles in the body that need exercise to get stronger. And stronger eye muscles mean that your eyes can focus better.

IMPROVE YOUR EYESIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES

Here are several natural methods that might help you improve your sight:

1. Rest your eyes

Rest your eyes properly during the day and by getting enough sleep at night. This is especially important for people who work on a computer most of day.

The 50-10 method

For every 50 minutes spent working on your computer, give your eyes a 10-minute break by looking at other things.

The 20-20-20 method

For every 20 minutes spent working on your computer, give your eyes a 20-second break by focussing on things that are about 20 meters away from you.

During the break, make sure you focus on things further away from you than your computer as well as things that are very close to you. You can also close your eyes to rest them properly.

If you get up and walk around while you exercise your eyes, it also allows your body to stretch and helps your blood circulation.

2. Do eye exercises

Strengthen your eye muscles to help them focus better:

- Start by covering your eyes with your hands for 10 seconds. Repeat three times.
- Look up to the ceiling without moving your head, then look down at the floor. Repeat 10 times.
- Now do the same, moving your eyes from left to right 10 times.
- Finish off by rolling your eyes clockwise and anticlockwise 10 times in each direction.

3. Do regular general exercises and eat a balanced diet

Doing regular exercises help maintain and improve the elasticity of the eye which can improve sight and prevent worsening of eyesight.

Proper nutrition supports eye health. Eat lot of fruits, vegetables, nuts and fish.

Ask your optometrist for more exercises that can improve your specific eyesight problems.

ARE YOU ADDICTED TO MEDICINE?

Whether it's antibiotics to fight off bacteria or a painkiller to get rid of a headache, the medicine we take can be addictive.

Over-the-counter (OTC) medicine like painkillers and cough mixtures contain some of the most commonly abused, containing codeine and alcohol. Others include appetite suppressants, which contain stimulants and are usually affordable and easily accessible.

Because prescription drugs are generally more difficult to get because they need a prescription, some people resort to using more than one doctor to make getting the prescription more simple.

EFFECTS OF MEDICINE ABUSE

When you have an addiction to any substance, it means that normal bodily functions are suppressed or damaged. Long-term addiction can lead to liver and kidney damage no matter the type of medicine. In some cases, it can even cause heart and blood pressure problems.

SIGNS OF ADDICTION

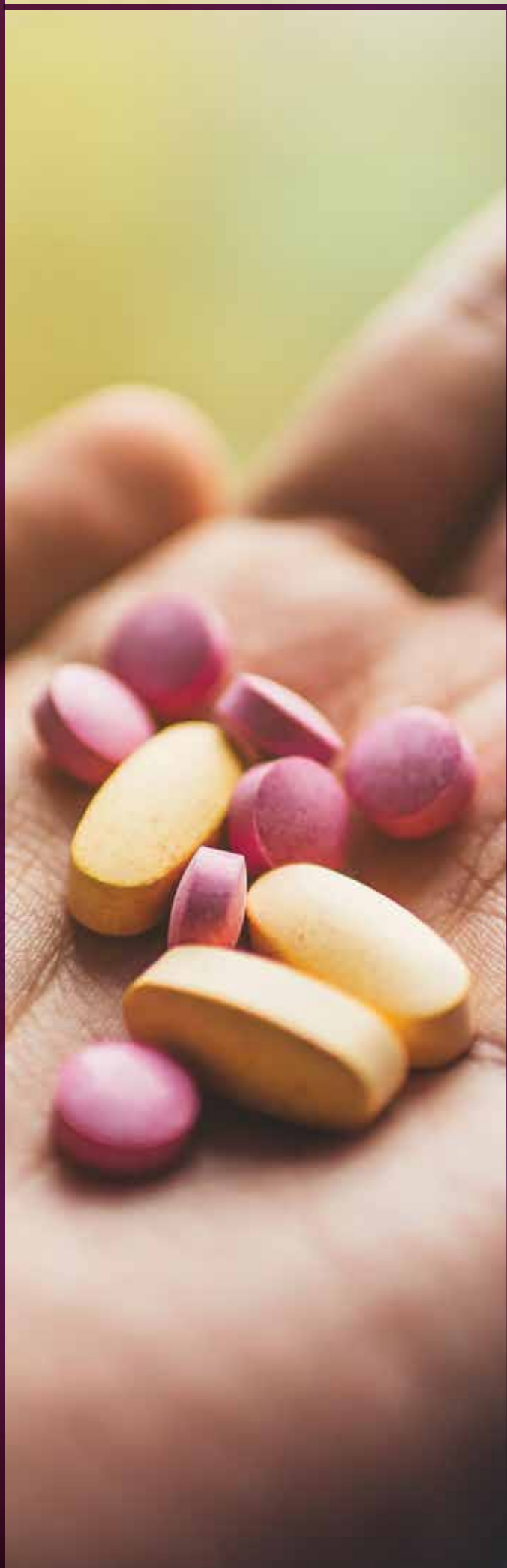
Withdrawal symptoms include mild symptoms such as irritability and headaches, to cardiac arrhythmia and life-threatening seizures. The withdrawal from some medicine, such as tranquillisers and sleeping tablets, can be as traumatic as withdrawing from substances such as heroin. As a result, stopping such medicine has to be managed with the help of a medical practitioner.

Using medicine at breakfast to, for example, avoid getting a headache, most likely indicates that the person uses it to mask other non-physical problems. Denial is very common in those struggling with addictive behaviours.

Although headaches are the most common withdrawal symptom – even from substances such as caffeine – taking painkillers frequently actually causes headaches. However, there is a long list of other withdrawal symptoms from analgesics and benzodiazepines, including disorientation, constipation or diarrhoea, hot and cold sweats, irritability and raised blood pressure.

Source: Health24. www.health24.com/Lifestyle/Street-drugs/About-recreational-drugs/Over-the-counter-and-prescription-drug-abuse-20120721. OTC and prescription drug abuse.

Accessed 6 February 2019.



MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DENTAL BENEFITS

When it comes to taking care of your teeth, TFG Medical Aid Scheme has you covered. Please refer to your Benefit Guide for more information about your dental benefits and more. But prevention is better than cure, so follow these tips for good oral health and hygiene:

1. Brush your teeth thoroughly at least twice

a day. The best time to brush teeth is after meals. Choose a toothbrush with a small head (better access to back teeth) and soft bristles (that are kinder on your gums). Brushing your teeth should take between two and three minutes each time. Keep your brush clean, never share it with anybody else and change it every three to four months.

2. Fluoridated toothpaste helps to harden tooth enamel and reduces your risk of decay. Make sure your kids have toothpaste suitable for their age group and don't let them swallow it. It is important that parents supervise brushing up until the child is seven and has developed safe and adequate oral hygiene habits.

3. Floss your teeth and use a mouthwash.

Clean between the teeth with interdental brushes or floss at least once a day. A mouthwash is not always necessary, but can still help to kill bacteria.

4. Limit acidic drinks like soft drinks, cordials and fruit juices. Food acids soften tooth material and dissolve the minerals in tooth enamel, causing holes (cavities).

5. Limit sugary foods. Bacteria in dental plaque changes sugars into acids.

6. Avoid tobacco. Not only will it save you from discolouring your teeth, possible oral cancer or periodontal complications, it will also help avoid using sweets to mask smoky breath, effectively doubling the amount of damage caused.

7. Protect your teeth from injury. Wear a mouth guard when playing sports or if you grind your teeth at night. Don't use your teeth for anything other than chewing food.

8. See your dentist regularly. Visit your dentist if you have any dental problem such as toothache, jaw pain or bleeding gums. Even without dental problems, adults and children should go twice a year for a check-up.



