



# Habits

## What is a Habit?

### habit <sup>1 of 2</sup> noun

hab·it ('ha-bət)

[Synonyms of habit >](#)

- 1** : a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior  
| her *habit* of taking a morning walk
- 2 a** : an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary  
| got up early from force of *habit*
- b** : **ADDICTION**  
| a drug *habit*
- c** : a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition or physiologic exposure that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance  
| the daily bowel *habit*

Habits are a topic of great importance because, good or bad, they define what we do on a regular basis and thus direct the outcome of our life. In fact habits are so important that many bestselling books have been written on the topic!

Developing new habits requires consistent repetition with 33 repetitions needed for simple behavior changes. More complex patterns can take 18-254 days to solidify! In order to succeed in creating a new habit, start small and specific and pair them with existing routines. For example, if you are trying to add meditation to your routine, pair it with your regular yoga practice. Meditate immediately after class until it becomes a habit. Also make



it enjoyable in whatever way works for you. If exercise is your new habit, listen to music, use dance as exercise or join a class. Whatever makes you happy and able to follow through.

## Strategies

The different books on habits have different approaches. Atomic Habits by James Clear focuses on improving 1% every day through small incremental changes rather than goals. Tiny Habits by BJ Fogg emphasizes small behaviors (e.g. floss one tooth) and the Now Habit by Neil A. Fiore focuses on overcoming procrastination and guilt-free play. There are many more books for you to explore and most of them cover these basic strategies:

- **Start Small:** Make the habit so easy you cannot say no, such as doing two lunges while brushing teeth, to build momentum.
- **Habit Stacking:** Anchor new behaviors to existing ones (e.g., doing push-ups immediately after brewing morning coffee).
- **Be Specific (Implementation Intentions):**  
Define the exact time, place, and action (e.g., "I will walk for 15 minutes at 7:00 AM in the park").
- **Environment Design:** Modify your surroundings to make good habits convenient and bad habits difficult.
- **Reward Yourself:** Immediately reinforce the new behavior with a positive feeling or small treat to increase the likelihood of repetition.

## Common Setbacks

A very common theme in new habits can be illustrated by considering a common occurrence with dieting. She starts the diet on Monday and does great until Thursday when, for whatever reason, she stops at McDonalds on the way home and devours a Big Mac, Large Fries and a Diet Coke before she even starts the car. She goes home, beats herself up, gets some ice cream and goes to bed guilty and defeated. She wakes up the next day and decides she will start her diet on the following Monday and proceeds to “pig out” until then.

She does not understand that her gut microbiome is craving the Mickey D’s and is creating self-talk to get what it wants. She also does not know about the [Willpower Bucket](#) and how



emotional and physical stress can weaken her resolve for that day. Education is key in changing habits, especially health related habits. Some common pitfalls and solutions include:

- **Missing a Day:** If you skip a day, do not abandon the habit; simply return to it immediately. Slip-ups are normal and do not erase progress. What does erase progress is to continue your old habits and “starting again Monday”.
- **Monotony:** Change your routine occasionally to stay motivated, such as trying a new workout location or workout with friends.
- **Lack of Structure:** Plan for potential obstacles to avoid falling back into old routines. If your Willpower or Metabolic Harmony score is low on any given day, you can plan ahead and avoid tempting situations.

At the end of the day, you can change your unwanted habits. Let’s face it, you created these habits slowly but surely and you can change them the same way. Metabolic Harmony + and the other suite of SweetWater Health apps provide an affordable, simple and effective way to create a healthy lifestyle that works for you!