



Did you resolve to improve your health in 2011?  
The only thing that might be slim are your chances,  
but here's some help to achieve your goals:

A study in December 2007, into the psychology of New Year's resolutions tracked over 3,000 people who had made a range of resolutions, from losing weight to quitting smoking. At the start of the study, 52% of participants were confident of success. One year later, only 12% had achieved their goal, and the actual success rate for the public might be even worse as these people were taking part in a study and therefore were more motivated.

What can affect your chances of keeping your resolution? Here are a few insights:

- **Narrow your focus and make only one resolution.** If you've made more, focus on the one that's most important right now. Many people make the mistake of trying to achieve too much. Your odds of success are greater when you channel your energy into changing just one aspect of your behaviour.
- **Be specific.** Think through exactly what you're going to do and how. Vague plans fail, so if you resolved to "lose weight", consider exactly what changes you need to make in eating habits and exercise in order to achieve that. If you plan to "go to the gym", tell yourself that you'll do it on Tuesdays and Thursdays after work.
- **Choose wisely and plan ahead.** You don't have to wait until New Year's Eve to make your resolution. In fact, you shouldn't. Last minute decisions tend to be based on what's on your mind at that time. Take time to reflect on what you really want to achieve. Your resolution can start any time.
- **Avoid previous resolutions.** That just sets you up for frustration and disappointment. Choose something new, or approach an old problem in a new way.
- **Consider gender differences.** In the 2007 study, men were significantly more likely to succeed when engaged in "bite-size" goal setting (e.g., aiming to lose a pound a week instead of trying to lose weight in general) or focused on the rewards associated with their goal (e.g., being more attractive to women). Women, in contrast, were more successful if they told others about their resolution or were encouraged not to give up because they had reverted to old habits (i.e., they treat a chocolate binge as a temporary setback rather than as all-out failure).

**Happy HEALTHY New Year!!!**

