

Health Tips

How Small Steps Today Can Lead To Big Benefits Tomorrow

(NAPSA)—For many people, it's important to remember that big changes begin with small steps.

For example, consider the case of Ravida Benjamin, RN. She was an overweight, insulin-dependent diabetic for most of her life when she decided to take control of her health. Through her work as a nurse with Kaiser Permanente in Hawaii, she had seen firsthand the health complications that can affect diabetic patients.

"I thought, 'for my family, I'd like to get healthy,'" she remembered.

Benjamin started small, first by adding fruits and vegetables into her diet. Eventually, she began walking every day. As Benjamin began losing weight and noticing positive changes in her body, she became more motivated to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

Benjamin used programs offered by Kaiser Permanente to find healthy meal ideas, learn the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and find encouragement from others sharing her journey.

Over time, she lost more than 60 pounds and no longer has to take insulin shots to keep her diabetes in check.

"Go for a short walk and build," encouraged Benjamin. "I've gone



A nurse in Hawaii, Ravida Benjamin knows it's a healthy idea to take a brisk walk just about every day.

from walking 30 minutes a day to 120 minutes uphill when I have a day off."

Acknowledging that getting healthy is a challenge, Benjamin suggests, "Start small, don't get discouraged. You might slip, but that's OK."

Even when making small lifestyle changes, however, it can be hard to know where to start. To help, Jack Der-Sarkissian, M.D., a family medicine doctor with Kaiser Permanente in Los Angeles, offers five tips for getting and staying healthy:

- **Eat breakfast.** Start the day with a big nutritious breakfast, eat a good-sized lunch and have something small for dinner. Avoid

soda and fruit juice, which contain lots of calories that don't benefit your body.

- **Walk.** Starting a new exercise regimen can be tough, especially for those who sit all day at work. In the beginning, just try to move. Walking for 30 minutes a day, five days a week benefits your body mentally and physically.

- **Take sleep seriously.** The average person sleeps only six hours per night, while research shows the body needs seven to eight hours to function properly. Lacking sleep affects both minds and bodies.

- **Cut out cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.** Even using these substances every now and then has negative effects on health.

- **Nurture your healthy relationships.** Keeping your mind stimulated and happy by being social with friends, family and colleagues also has physical health benefits.

For more information about getting healthy and Kaiser Permanente's healthy lifestyle programs, visit www.kp.org. To watch a video about Ravida Benjamin's story, visit Kaiser Permanente's Care Stories blog at www.kp.org/carestories.