

Dieticians say small steps can lead to big results

By Meg Heaton
mheaton@rivertowns.net

While the inclination may be to literally "hit the ground running," when it comes to making healthy choices, experts seem to agree that small changes are the best way to get lasting results.

Hudson Hospital registered dietician Jean Weiler has her top suggestions for making changes that can have a healthy and lifelong impact.

First up — eat more fruits and vegetables. "This is harder than it sounds. It seems simple but most of us don't eat enough of either despite the fact that these days we have a wide variety of choices available throughout the year," said Weiler. And she points out that fruits and vegetables are a good way to satisfy the appetite without adding a lot of calories.

Her next suggestion is to take a good look at portion size. "We tend to eat a lot more than we need and we aren't even aware of it. We're kind of trained to eat larger portions but just being conscious of it can make a difference."

Weiler's third tip is to take advantage of online resources. There are plenty of them but among her favorites is www.choosemyplate.gov. The site includes a wide variety of information to help make the kind of changes Weiler is talking about including a way to track what



Hudson Hospital dietician Jean Weiler says a good place to start this new year is by eating more fruits and vegetables.

you eat, menus and recipes, food plans, videos and nutrition advice and tips.

"Making a resolution that calls for drastic, immediate

"Making a resolution that calls for drastic, immediate changes in what you eat or how you exercise doesn't work."

Jean Weiler
Registered dietician at Hudson Hospital

changes in what you eat or how you exercise doesn't work. Taking too large of a step at the beginning doesn't seem to work. Baby

steps seem to. If you don't eat any fruits or vegetables now, start by adding one a day. Change isn't easy so start small and you will be able to stick with it longer and incorporate it into a healthier diet."

Help where it starts

Registered dieticians Missy Mulligan and Mary Jo Brunner can be found just inside the door at Family Fresh

Market, 2351 Coulee Road, and customers regularly pop in to ask questions, get advice and pick up recipes.

The two say having dieticians available in grocery stores like theirs is a growing trend. Consultations with customers can include a store tour to help identify shopping patterns and healthier alternatives as well as assisting people in making food choices that can make a difference.

Among their top suggestions for making changes in the new year is food journaling. "It isn't just about what you are eating but when you are eating and what you are doing when you eat," said Mulligan. "Are you eating when you are angry or lonely?"

Brunner said it is all about raising your consciousness. "If you don't know what you are doing on a regular basis, you can't change it. And when you journal and see it in writing. It becomes pretty obvious if you are eating too much."

They agree with Weiler about watching portion size and suggest using a smaller dinner plate as a starting point, making less look like

more. And they say to stop eating out of bags or boxes. "You start out thinking you are going to eat just five chips and the next thing you know almost the whole bag is gone. Again it is about being conscious of what you eat," said Mulligan.

Their third suggestion is to pay attention to the calories you drink. Things like soda, juices and alcohol don't fill a person up or satisfy hunger but do add calories. Water is at the top of the list they do recommend, lots of it, maybe flavored with lemon or other fruits.

As for diet drinks, they aren't high on them. "They have little or no nutritional value, have a lot of artificial sweeteners and acids and other additives. Water is still a better option," said Brunner.

Eating every three to five hours can help to keep a person satisfied and keep their metabolism up and help them avoid overeating at the end of the day. Snacks should include a protein with some fiber like string cheese and an apple or plain yogurt with fruit or nuts or flavored with



Dieticians Missy Mulligan, left, and Mary Jo Brunner are regularly available to customers at Family Fresh Market in Hudson. The store is about to begin the "well-balanced challenge" to help people lead a healthier lifestyle.

vanilla or almond extract or cinnamon.

All three dieticians had other suggestions and appear to like nothing better than talking about food — the right kind. All it takes is to get their help is to ask.

To contact Weiler at Hudson Hospital call (715)531-6460 or go online at www.hudsonhospital.org. Contact Mulligan or Brunner at Family Fresh at (715)381-1413 or go online at www.familyfreshmarket.com

Help is out there

While it is difficult to escape being bombarded by commercials and ads with celebrities touting their successes with weight loss, there is help available close to home.

Along with providing nutrition advice on a daily basis, the dieticians at Family Fresh Market are about to begin "The Well Balanced Challenge."

Beginning Monday, Jan. 14, at 5:45 p.m. participants can enroll in a 12-week program that includes information meetings, private weigh-ins, measurements and consultations, meal planning advice on metabolism and physical activity.

The cost is \$60 with the money being returned to participants in cash prizes upon completion of the program.

For more information, go to familyfresh.com and click on health and wellness or call (715)381-1413.

Hudson Hospital offers a variety of classes including "Healthy Habits for Life," a program designed to build lifelong eating and fitness habits that over time will result in higher energy levels and decreased health risks.

The 12-class series is taught by Hudson Hospital & Clinics registered dietitians. Sessions include practical, easy-to-follow information to help set individual, attainable goals that can lead to positive lifestyle changes. Topics include metabolism measurement, weight and measurements, membership to the hospital fitness center during the series and a customized meal plan.

The Hudson Hospital & Clinics Fitness Center is open to the public for a nominal fee. Equipment includes cardio and strength training equipment along. The center is supervised by a trained staff and offers both fitness and cardiac rehabilitation services.

For more information call (715) 531-6400 or go online at hudsonhospital.org.