Making Changes for Better Diabetes Control

January is a time when we usually reflect on the year, promising ourselves we will make some “healthy” changes. Making change can be disruptive to your daily schedule if not done slowly and carefully.

To be successful at making good changes in our lifestyle, consider the following:
1. Pick a goal which is very reachable. Set your goals so you cannot fail. If we try to progress too fast or set goals which are not attainable, we will fail, which sets us back.
2. Choose 1 or no more than 2 goals to work on at one time.

Set weekly goals for each:
a. For example, “I will start walking every morning 1 ½ miles x25 minutes at 8:30 am.” Wake up putting on your walking attire and walking shoes. Set up alarm for 8:30 that calls to you to get walking! Also put your goal on the calendar with the time on every day you plan to walk.
b. Another goal may be to eat protein at each meal/snack. Protein will cause you to feel fuller, thus not wanting to eat as much. Make a list of appropriate protein foods to use at meals and at snacks. Put your list on the refrigerator and go to the store to buy protein foods to have on hand at all times. (Protein foods include meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese stick, cottage cheese, scoop of peanut butter, 6-8 nuts)
c. While stocking your pantry with protein foods, you may want to purge all “inappropriate” foods that are temptations but cause blood sugars to rise when eaten (cookies, candy, sweetened drinks, sweetbreads, etc). Having those foods in the house make it too tempting to grab some at any time.
d. Be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day. With cooler temperatures, we don’t get as thirsty and are under-hydrated. If you like cold water, keep a container in your refrigerator. You should be drinking the entire container of water each day.

3. After each week, evaluate how you have done making your changes. If you have been successful, give yourself a “gold star.” Design a new goal to work on this coming week while you continue with the other goals.

4. If you are unsuccessful at attaining your goal, determine why. Was your goal too big? Refine it to make it “reachable.” Remember baby steps may seem like you are not doing anything different, but if you are successful at making that small change, you will feel good about your efforts, and can continue making small changes toward attaining your end goal.

Susan Smith, Ph.D., CDE, is a nationally Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) and a specialist in the field of diabetes since 1988. Since 2002 she has worked with patients individually through all of the internal medicine and family practice providers at Visalia Medical Clinic, as well as with VMC’s James Mohs, MD, endocrinologist. Smith also leads the monthly diabetic support groups, which are open to non-VMC patients and family members. Next seminar is Monday, Feb. 10 at 9:00 am or 5:30 pm. ssmith@vmchealth.com