Everyone gets off track with exercise now and then. These times are called “slips.” Slips are:

- Times when you don’t follow your exercise plans or routine.
- To be expected as a normal part of building and working to maintain an exercise routine.
- Not an excuse to “throw in the towel.”
- Opportunities to learn and to make progress toward your exercise goals.

An occasional slip does not hurt your progress. What can hurt your progress is the way you react to slips.

What causes you to slip is learned. It is a habit. You can learn a new way to react to slips to get back on track with exercise.

What to Remember After a Slip

First, remember two things:

- **Slips are normal and to be expected.** 99.9% of all people have slips, both while building and working to maintain an exercise routine. You are making lifelong changes. Slips — and what you learn from them — are an important part of the process.
- **No slip, no matter how long it lasts, will ruin everything.** The slip is not the problem. The problem occurs if you don’t get back on track fast and keep heading toward your goals.
Five Ways to Handle Slips

After you slip from your exercise or other healthy lifestyle plans, use these tips to get back on track:

1. **Talk back to negative thoughts with positive thoughts.** Negative thoughts can be your worst enemy. Talk back. “I’m not a failure because I skipped my workouts last week. I can get back to my regular routine today.”

2. **Ask yourself what happened. Learn from the slip.** What got you off track? Can you avoid that in the future? For example, did you skip a walk because it was raining? Next time it rains, plan to do an exercise DVD.

3. **Regain control the very next time you can.** Do not tell yourself, “Well, I blew it for the week,” or “I’m really off track on this vacation. I’ll get back on track after I get home.” Get back on schedule with your exercise routine **right away.**

4. **Focus on all the positive changes you’ve made.** How many steps in the right direction have you made so far? Did you go from doing next to nothing to doing something? Had you made some progress before the slip? Take pride in those changes, and build on them.

5. **Talk to someone supportive.** Call a friend for support. Share what happened and talk about new strategies for handling slips. Ask for suggestions. Commit yourself to a renewed effort.

A great way to find support and stay on track is to **find an exercise buddy or join an exercise group or event.** If you can’t find a group, create your own! A few examples:

- A walking buddy or group where you work or in your neighborhood
- A buddy or a few friends who go to the gym or YMCA together
- A class in aerobics, spinning, strength training, yoga, or another form of exercise
- A team that plays a sport together
- A team that trains for and enters local fitness events together (such as 5K walks/runs)

Talk with your UPMC Health Plan health coach about these and other resources that might be right for you.
Make a Plan for Handling Slips

1. What are some things that cause you to slip from healthy eating? (Examples: holidays, vacations, eating out, needing to work late, feeling bored or angry or lonely)
   a. ____________________________________________________________
   b. ____________________________________________________________
   c. ____________________________________________________________

   Imagine that you did slip in one of the above situations. Choose one or more of the five ways to handle slips. How could you use it to help you get back on track?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. Imagine that you did slip in one of the above situations. Choose one or more of the five ways to handle slips. How could you put it to work to get back on track?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. Now choose another situation from your answers to questions 1 and 2. Choose one or more of the five ways to handle slips. How could you put it to work to get back on track?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________