

January 2013

## Quick-Start Resolutions for the New Year



Resolving to lead a healthier lifestyle is a good way to begin the New Year. But don't despair if you still haven't confirmed your New Year's Resolutions. There's still plenty of time to choose a better path for the year ahead.

"Millions of Americans make resolutions that go unresolved largely because they fail to utilize proven behavior modification techniques to support their new goals," says Don R. Powell, Ph.D., president of the American Institute for Preventive Medicine in Southfield, Michigan, and author of *365 Health Hints*.

"For starters, it's important to set realistic goals for yourself," he says. "It takes some time to develop a bad habit, so don't expect to change things overnight. In addition, try to work on only one habit at a time. It's not easy to change your behavior, and it can become overwhelming if you try to change too much, too soon."

Here are 10 major changes. Pick 1 or 2 that are important to you, work on them, and move on to others when you have met your goals.

### 10 Quick-Start Resolutions

**1. I resolve to get physical.** Sticking to a regular exercise routine is one of the most important steps you can take to improve your health and longevity. Starting this year, devote 30 minutes, three to four times a week to an aerobic activity you enjoy. Good choices include walking, running, swimming, biking, skating and aerobic dancing.

**2. I resolve to maintain an ideal body weight.** This year, eat high-fat foods in moderation. Approximately one in two Americans is overweight, and these extra pounds contribute to heart disease, diabetes, stroke and an increased risk of certain cancers.

**3. I resolve to stop smoking and try avoiding those people who still light up.** Cigarette smoking is the single-most preventable cause of illness in America today. Each year, six times more Americans die from cigarettes than were killed in the Vietnam War. Side stream smoke is just as bad; it can be deadly to nonsmokers who inhale it on a regular basis.

**4. I resolve to control my blood pressure.** If you haven't had your blood pressure checked recently, do so. Follow your doctor's instructions if it's high, and faithfully take any prescribed medication. If left untreated, high blood pressure is the primary cause of stroke.

**5. I resolve to develop a strong social support network.** Studies have shown that people who have supportive relatives, friends and co-workers are sick less often than those who don't. Be a friend to others and keep your family close and caring.

**6. I resolve to reduce my cholesterol.** This year have your cholesterol tested or retested, if necessary. The average cholesterol level in the United States is 215 — 15 points above 200, which is considered healthy. If your level is high, follow your doctor's instructions and reduce your consumption of red meat, regular dairy products and food items high in saturated fats.

**7. I resolve to control my hostility.** For your heart's sake, make an effort to control a bad temper. Studies have indicated that anger and hostility may be as bad for your heart as smoking and high blood pressure.

**8. I resolve to drink moderately, if at all.** Of the 10 leading causes of death each year, alcohol is a contributing factor in six of them. Two corollary resolutions are to never drink and drive, and to never ride with someone who has been drinking.

**9. I resolve to clean up psychological pollution.** People who live long lives characteristically possess a positive attitude about life. Resolve to stop indulging in negative thinking which can pollute your mind and negatively influence your health and emotional well-being.

**10. I resolve to always buckle-up.** Make it a rule that you won't start your car until everyone is buckled-in. Wearing a seat belt greatly increases your odds of surviving a car accident.

"By keeping all 10 resolutions you can add years to your life and life to your years," Dr. Powell says.

*Krames Staywell*

## Making Time for Yourself and Your Family



A new year has arrived! While you're building your list of resolutions for 2013, don't forget the importance of setting aside time for yourself. Whether you're spending time alone or looking for activities for the whole family, make sure you maximize your free time.

## Myths and Tips About Dressing for Winter



Do you know enough about the cold to keep warm?

Poor planning of a winter outing can lead to frostbite and hypothermia. The following are some misconceptions about the cold, and some suggestions for staying toasty this winter.

**Myth: Dressing warmly avoids cold, virus, flu**

Mom was wrong on this one -- mostly. If you haven't been exposed to a virus, cold weather won't make any difference.

Robert Pozos, Ph.D., director of the thermal division at the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego, has put this theory to the test. He led a study in which researchers immersed 250 medical students in cold water until their body temperatures dropped to 95 degrees -- the point at which hypothermia begins. Some subjects got dehydrated and suffered slight cases of constipation, but none of them caught colds or viruses.

The researchers did find out that the body's defenses go down if the body is worn out. One student pulled an all-nighter before going to the laboratory. His body temperature dropped much more quickly than the others, Dr. Pozos says.

"The body has tremendous resistance," Dr. Pozos says. "People who get sick after being in the cold are already pretty sick anyway. Cold is just another stressor, like mowing the lawn or opening up your mail and finding out you owe income taxes."

**Myth: You lose body heat through your head**

There's nothing special about your head. You'll lose body heat from any part of your body that is exposed. It's a good idea to wear a hat, but other parts of your body must also be covered to keep you from getting cold, experts say.

The amount of heat you can lose through your head depends upon a number of factors, including how thick your hair is and how much energy you expend in the cold. You can expect anywhere from 5 percent to 55 percent heat loss from the head.

**Myth: Men, women feel cold at same temperature**

Ever notice that a woman's hands and feet tend to get colder before a man's? It's because the external temperature at which men's and women's bodies begin conserving heat -- called the set point temperature -- varies by about three degrees.

When surrounding temperatures drop to a certain point, your body will conserve heat by shutting off the blood flow to the hands and feet, making them feel chilled. For women, that temperature is about 70 degrees, while men can hold steady until about 67 or 68 degrees.

**Myth: Dress in layers to stay warm**

It's true that dressing in layers allows people to adjust for different levels of activity. But one well-made, warm garment will do just as well to keep away the winter chills, Dr. Pozos says.

"In the old days, people didn't know about dressing in layers," Dr. Pozos says. "They wore big old parkas instead." A good all-purpose garment might be a parka made of real animal fur, wool, or a good synthetic material, says Dr. Pozos.

Dressing in layers does have merit, particularly for someone exercising in the cold, he adds. For the best results, he suggests wearing polypropylene or another synthetic fabric next to the skin, a knit middle layer (which can be taken off if you get too warm), and a synthetic outer layer.

**Myth: Cotton is a good insulator**

Don't drag those old cotton long johns out of the closet yet. They may be comfortable for lazing before a fire, but they can be downright dangerous outside in the cold.

When cotton gets wet, it conducts heat away from the body at a much more rapid rate than other fabrics, says Andrew J. Young, Ph.D., an exercise physiologist with the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine in Natick, Mass. Anything that can dampen your clothes -- such as perspiration, rain, or falling in the water -- can cause cotton to start robbing you of heat fast.

A good substitute is polypropylene, capilene, or some other synthetic substance that pulls water away from your skin.

**Myth: Drinking alcohol will keep you warm**

Drinking alcohol may make you feel warm because it causes blood to rush to your skin's surface. But it actually causes your blood vessels to dilate and makes you lose heat faster. Drinking alcohol in the cold also impairs the shivering process, which generates extra body heat.

But the worst part about alcohol consumption is that it impairs judgment. In a study of 10 emergency rooms across the country, 85 percent of hypothermia cases were related to drug and alcohol use, Dr. Pozos says. "It gives you a false sense of security, and then you end up doing something stupid," he says.

**Myth: Fake fur as warm as real fur**

Sorry, animal lovers. If you are going for one garment when you dress for the cold, animal fur is the best insulator, working much better than fake fur. Real animal hairs keep heat from leaving the body, and the leather of the fur is designed by nature to absorb heat, experts say.