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## VICHEALTH'S TOP 10 2013 NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

As a new year approaches, many Victorians will consider making sweeping changes to better their health and wellbeing. Making 'resolutions' requires motivation and resolve, but both often fizzle out as the year rolls on.

This year, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is suggesting a different approach to the old-fashioned New Year's Resolution to put a positive focus on health in 2013.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said too many resolutions fail because there is so much pressure to get it right the first time and the way we frame our resolutions can be far too negative.

"Could it be because we frame our resolutions around stopping, banning and cutting down, that we let ourselves down?" Ms Rechter said.

"What if we change the language so we highlight the positives that might come from our resolutions?"

"The new year is an opportunity to take stock and think about how making simple changes to our routines might put us on track to health and wellbeing that will last a lifetime."

To give people some ideas about alternative New Year's Resolutions, VicHealth has compiled a list of the top ten questions to get you started.

### **1. What moves you?**

At home, work or in between, more activity can be combined with fun and social interaction. Taking public transport, walking or cycling where possible not only saves money and helps the planet, it also builds our fitness. If you can't avoid driving, try parking further away to add a walk to get to your destination.

### **2. Got a healthy eating plan for the New Year?**

The first step is to think about what we put in our mouths. We should eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegies a day. Summer is a great time to experiment with fresh salads, barbequed vegies and chilled fruit makes a refreshing snack any time of the day.

### **3. Thought of active recreation?**

Try playing a new sport or doing some active recreation locally. Being physically active lowers blood pressure and it can be protective against some forms of cancer. It can also improve our mental wellbeing by reducing stress and depression.

### **4. Sick of hangovers?**

That's easy. Drink less alcohol. Keep it safe, sensible and social. Stay hydrated, pace your drinking and don't forget to eat.

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### **5. Want to reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes?**

Time spent sitting is now known to be detrimentally associated with increased risk factors for Type 2 diabetes. The good news is that it is easy for us all to increase our 'insurance' against not only diabetes but also cardiovascular disease – we just need to stand up and move more during the day. Think about standing up while on the phone, stretching during TV ad breaks and, if most of your day is spent sitting down, get up every half hour or so, even if just for a minute or two.

### **6. Craving to be smoke-free?**

A positive vision of what will be possible when you give up smoking is a great motivator. Think about the holidays you will be able to afford, the different lifestyle, the new activities you will be fit to do. Stopping smoking also reduces the incidence and progression of lung disease including chronic bronchitis and emphysema. If you've tried before in previous years, don't be discouraged, try and try again – you can succeed. Chances are you'll look and feel healthier sooner than you think.

### **7. Do you invest time in others?**

Socialising with family, friends and neighbours is good for our health. Try volunteering and help others. Belonging to a network of people with similar interests makes us feel cared for and loved. Friendships provide social connection and support. By creating and maintaining new networks and interests we can improve our mental health and live longer.

### **8. Tried the arts?**

People who get involved in cultural activities regularly live longer than those who don't participate. It seems that activities such as joining a choir, learning a musical instrument, or even reading, stimulate our immune system to secrete protective hormones that help our ability to fight infections.

### **9. How much do you sleep?**

Less than seven and a half hours sleep can increase cardiovascular incidents such as stroke and heart attack, particularly if you suffer from high blood pressure. Getting into a routine can enable your body to recognise it is time to rest – create a relaxing bedroom environment and go easy on the caffeine.

### **10. When do you relax?**

Sometimes we have to work hard at relaxing. When you want to switch off from the day's events, try relaxation breathing techniques, meditation or even exercise – it's a great way to 'live in the moment'. The World Health Organisation says there is 'no health without mental health', so it's essential that we take time to look after ourselves and our emotional health.

*Discover what works for you. If you are a smartphone user, try the free app, [Lift](#), which allows people to record their resolutions and track their progress over time.*

**ENDS**