

## 7 Resolutions to Improve Heart Health in 2013

BY [Kate Silver](#)

Did you know that in your lifetime, your heart will perform more physical work than any other muscle in your body? Your heart truly takes care of you, so it's important that you care for your heart.

In 2013, resolve to make heart health a priority. To get started, you don't have to do anything life-changing. In fact, according to Anne Albers, MD, an Ohio Health cardiologist who specializes in women's heart health, small changes are often more effective. "With any resolution, you want to do manageable changes," says Albers. "I like to have attainable goals, because if you set really high expectations, if you can't meet those, you're not going to do anything. Something is better than nothing."

Albers shared the following steps to improve heart health in 2013, and beyond.

- 1. [Quit smoking](#).** Smoking is one of the most preventable causes of premature death. For one, it increases the risk for heart disease. In addition, when you stop smoking, you help lower your blood pressure and lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol. "If you want to live longer, stop smoking," says Albers.
- 2. [Avoid second-hand smoke](#).** For women, we know that even being around smoke increases the [risk for heart disease](#) and death. Avoid it whenever possible.
- 3. [Know your numbers](#).** You owe it to yourself to take an active role in your own health. Find out your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight and discuss those numbers with your doctor. With his or her help, you can monitor any changes and make informed decisions.
- 4. [Process out processed foods](#).** In 2013, try switching out just one process food for something you make yourself. It doesn't have to be complicated – it can be as simple as a soup. By switching over from processed foods, which are usually high in [sodium](#), you can make a difference in your blood pressure and overall health.
- 5. [Get moving](#).** It's easy to be sedentary, particularly if you drive to work and sit at a computer all day. Small steps can make a big difference. Try parking further away from the office, choosing the stairs, taking a walk after lunch and standing up every hour at your desk to stretch. If you have a pedometer, aim for 10,000 steps a day. If not, try to get 20 to 30 minutes of moderate activity a day or 150 minutes a week.
- 6. [Get your friends and family on board](#).** Women are the caretakers. Whether we're taking care of our parents, our children, our partners or looking out for friends, we have a unique ability to influence changes in diet and [exercise](#). You can impact a lot of people just through your own choices.
- 7. [Spread awareness](#).** It still comes as a surprise to many people when they learn that heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women. It's up to all of us to inform our circles of the risks and the actions a person can take to minimize those risks. What seems like a simple conversation could save someone's life.

[Kate Silver](#) is an award-winning journalist based in Chicago. Her work has appeared in Washington Post, Men's Health, Chicago Tribune and other online and print publications.