

ALTERNATIVE HEALTH OPTIONS

How to Stay Healthy... and Out of the Doctor's Office



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INTRODUCTION

Back in the day, the family doctor was someone you could trust completely. You always knew he or she had your family's best interests at heart.

Regardless of what the ailment was, you could depend on receiving an honest and accurate diagnosis based on your symptoms, as well as a solid treatment plan that would spell out the best way for you to get better.

Hopefully you still see a doctor such as that. But in reality, there are too many people in the medical profession these days who are more interested in scoring points with their employers than in giving you the best possible treatment. Their jobs depend on making money for their employers, and that fact often clouds their judgment.

The way they accomplish their goals of driving up the price of their care is by talking patients into submitting to every imaginable unnecessary and costly test. They'll prescribe expensive drugs



you don't really need – and which could actually end up doing you more harm than good. In addition, they will refuse to tell you about natural and healthy alternatives to those medicines that they know would be better for you than the treatment plans and medications they prescribe.

These medical personnel have no qualms about draining your resources while weakening your system with potentially harmful drugs. And, of course, the big pharmaceutical companies, as well as the Food and Drug Administration, are in on it, too. Their goals seem to be cleaning out your wallet and weakening your system with unneeded and potentially harmful vaccinations.

And let's not even get started on the Affordable Care Act, which has turned out to be exactly the train wreck that many of us predicted it would be. ObamaCare is designed to make people become dependent on government healthcare and destroy the budgets of individuals, businesses and even states.

So, what can we do to combat this problem? Well, the single most important thing is to stay out of the doctor's office. Easier said than done, right? Yes, but trying to stay as healthy as possible by making common sense diet and lifestyle choices is a good strategy regardless of the alternative.

The best way to stay as far away from the doctor is not an apple a day, despite the old-time slogan. It's discovering and using alternative health options. Let's start with a few that you can eat.

- Eat plenty of raw fruits and vegetables every day. Citrus fruits in particular are said to reduce the risk of stroke.
- Eat walnuts to help lower your cholesterol, relieve your arthritis and battle depression.
- Drink coconut water for asymptomatic infections and take iodine for your thyroid and your circulation.
- Drink a little red wine for your heart and eat blueberries to stabilize your blood sugar levels.
- Drink apple cider vinegar and honey. In a 10-ounce glass of cold water, stir in two tablespoons of raw apple cider vinegar and two tablespoons of raw wildflower honey. Drink it as is or heat it up and drink it as a tea.
- Make sure you get plenty of Vitamin D for your bones and blood vessels, and B vitamins for breathing issues including asthma and wheezing.

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

We all know we should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, but studies show 90 percent of us don't get enough of them. This increases our risk of health problems ranging from heart attacks to diabetes to high blood pressure. Five servings daily are recommended.

One study, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH), showed that a low-fat diet high in fruits and vegetables reduced systolic blood pressure (the top number in a blood pressure reading) by 11 points on average and lowered diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) by nearly six points.

Researchers even believe that particular foods "probably" provide protection against certain cancers. For instance, non-starchy vegetables may protect against mouth, throat and stomach cancer, while fruit probably provides lung cancer protection, and lycopene from tomatoes may protect against prostate cancer.

For many of us, eating healthy is not as easy as it sounds. However, there are a few simple steps you can take that will make it easier to get the right nutrition.

- **THINK FRUITS AND VEGGIES FIRST.** At every meal, aim to fill at least one-half of your plate with vegetables, avoiding heavy sauces and filling the rest of your plate with lean protein and whole grains. Eating fruit first when you snack also leaves less room for unhealthy choices.
- **MAKE IT CONVENIENT.** After grocery shopping, take a few minutes to chop and package your produce for easy access later. Having fruits and veggies ready to go means you're more likely to eat the produce you bought, instead of ordering pizza.

- **BOOST VARIETY.** According to Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, variety is just as important as quantity. “No single fruit or vegetable provides all of the nutrients you need to be healthy,” says the school’s website.

Of course, there are other healthy foods besides vegetables and fruits. They include:

- Dry beans, such as red beans, navy beans, and soybeans, plus lentils, chickpeas and peanuts
- Whole grain breads and cereals
- Whole grains, including wheat, rice, oats, corn and barley
- Fish
- Poultry
- Low-fat dairy products.

MOODY BLUES

How we feel physically can be significantly affected by the mood we are in. So, it’s also important to use natural means to remain as upbeat as possible. For mild depression, try some of these natural remedies:

- **CONSUME FISH OIL AND VITAMIN D.** Both are directly tied to emotional health. Eat fatty, cold-water fish, such as salmon. Also, get 30 minutes of sun on your face and arms daily.
- **EAT MORE PROTEIN AND FAT, AND LESS CARBS AND SUGAR.** Sugar can lead to chronic inflammation and suppress healthy proteins. Focus on organic, animal-based foods, fruits, vegetables and nuts.
- **CONSUME HERBS.** Two herbs that have been shown to have beneficial effects on mood are Rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*) and St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*).

- **FAST NOW AND THEN.** Fasting for a day or at least skipping a meal here and there helps your body digest and eliminate cellular debris. It’s a good way to clean out your system and elevate your mood.
- **EXERCISE.** Patients with depression improve as much as those treated with medication when they stick to an exercise program, according to studies.
- **LAUGH.** Laughing lowers cortisol, the hormone associated with stress. The effect can continue hours after you’re finished laughing.

IMMUNE SYSTEM BOOSTS

Is your immune system strong? If so, it probably keeps you from getting sick several times a year. There are germs everywhere you go, including on the handles of grocery carts, and you pick them up all the time without knowing it. But if your immune system is weak, you will know it because sometimes those germs will make you ill.

Researchers still do not understand exactly how the immune system works, but abiding by healthy guidelines seems to allow the immune system to function better. It’s your first line of defense against environmental attacks. So, help it by...

- Getting at least seven solid hours of sleep each night.
- Not smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol only in moderation.
- Maintaining a healthy weight for your height and build.
- Controlling your blood pressure.
- Washing your hands frequently.

- Sanitizing the surfaces in your home, especially in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- Not chewing your nails. This habit can result in transmitting germs directly into your mouth and increasing the likelihood that you will get sick.

sleepiness is a factor in an estimated 100,000 car accidents annually, resulting in approximately 1,500 deaths.

GET YOUR PROPER Z'S

Getting the right amount of quality sleep isn't just about keeping you from yawning at work or while your spouse is talking to you. It can protect your physical health, your mental health and your overall quality of life.

How you feel while you're awake is often a direct result of how well and how long you slept the previous night. Your body works to support healthy brain function while you're sleeping, and if you are sleep deprived over time, it can raise your risk for chronic health problems.

Sleep affects your thinking process, your alertness and reaction times, your ability to focus on problems, and even your mood and how well you get along with other people. A proper amount of sleep helps you pay attention better, make logical decisions and be creative when necessary. Exercising regularly will make you more tired when you go to bed and improve your sleep pattern.

The healing and repairing of your heart and blood vessels is influenced by the amount of quality sleep you get. Because sleep deficiency can negatively affect the way your immune system responds, it is linked to the increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, angina and stroke.

Tired people assume they can drive as well as they do when they're wide awake. But studies have proven that drowsy drivers don't drive all that much better than drunk drivers. Driver

USE MEDICINAL HERBS

It doesn't get much more natural than using herbs for medicinal purposes, and it's been going on for tens of thousands of years. In fact, archaeological evidence demonstrates that humans were using medicinal plants during the Paleolithic Era some 60,000 years ago.

There are approximately 20,000 plant species native to North America, and Native Americans have used about 2,500 of them medicinally. Today, the usage of herbal medicine is nearly universal among non-industrialized nations. It's estimated by the World Health Organization that about 80 percent of the population of some Asian and African countries currently uses herbs to treat disease for some aspect of primary health care, due mainly to their affordability. Fortunately for them, more than two-thirds of the world's plant species are grown in developing countries.

Of course, this is not just a third-world phenomenon. In current Western clinical settings, herbal medicine usage has been increasing in recent years as scientific evidence for their effectiveness has become more widespread. As a result of this knowledge and acceptance, millions of people have been able to treat many of their own non-life threatening illnesses and injuries rather than being dependent on doctors.

Countless people today purchase herbal teas to help with a wide variety of their ailments and as a preventative for many more. Some have been benefitting from those herbal remedies for many years and would never give them up. Other folks who also believe firmly in the power of herbal remedies – and also wish to remain as self-reliant

as possible – choose to grow their own herbs, make their own infusions, decoctions, salves and tinctures, and then harvest the seeds to grow the same herbs again.

Why use medicinal herbs? They are safe, inexpensive, tasty, easy to grow and they work. They also promote self-reliance.

Among the many herbs you might want to explore (and maybe even grow yourself) if you haven't already done so are:

- Anise, a flowering plant native to the eastern Mediterranean region and Southwest Asia
- Borage, a beautiful flowering plant with blue, star-shaped flowers
- Catnip, a vigorous mint plant with clusters of pinkish-white flowers and downy, heart-shaped, grayish-green leaves
- Cayenne Pepper, which usually remains green while on the plant and often turns fiery red after being picked
- Chamomile, a robust herb with many white, daisy-like flowers with yellow centers
- Culver's Root, with dark green, serrated leaves, and white, pinkish, pale blue or pale lavender corollas in slender spikes
- Echinacea, a stunning prairie plant with daisy-like flowers ranging from pink to purple, surrounding a spiny central disk
- Hyssop, a vibrant evergreen bush with spikes of bright blue flowers and lance-like leaves
- Lemon Balm, featuring crinkly dark green leaves and clusters of small, cream-colored flowers
- Mad-Dog Skullcap, featuring a slender stem, ridged leaves and tiny flowers
- Nettle, with soft, serrated green leaves covered with fine "stinging" hairs
- Pleurisy Root, bearing corymbs of deep yellow to dark orange flowers
- Yarrow, with beautiful small flowers in red, yellow or white tones and grouped in flat clusters

KEEP MOVING

The more we sit around, the less healthy we are. All sorts of problems can crop up when one's life is too sedentary, and all sorts of advantages can be gained when we keep moving. Here are a few:

- **HEART HEALTH.** Exercise reduces the "bad" cholesterol that clogs arteries. It can also reduce blood pressure and improve blood flow.
- **WEIGHT LOSS.** Have you ever seen an obese marathon runner? Thirty minutes of exercise a day, four to five days a week, will do the trick.
- **STRESS RELIEF.** By providing a diversion to daily stresses, exercise can reduce muscle tension, and for many it increases self-esteem.
- **BRAIN HEALTH.** Researchers have found that brain responses in active seniors were comparable to those of young adults.
- **OXYGEN SUPPLY.** Exercise improves the body's use of oxygen and supplies nutrients to the body's cells.

DRINK MORE WATER

We've been told for years now that we're supposed to drink eight glasses of water a day. Probably very few of us actually do that and even fewer of us count the glasses we drink.

As a general rule, I believe most of us drink water or another beverage that has water in it when we're thirsty, and we don't drink anything when we're not thirsty. But there are good reasons why we should make sure we drink at least eight glasses of water a day.

Here are six important reasons for drinking plenty of water each day:

- The water inside you, which makes up about 60 percent of your body, serves a variety of purposes. It helps your circulation, creates saliva, helps digest your food, helps maintain body temperature and moves nutrients around to where they should be. Drinking plenty of water maintains the proper balance of fluids that your body needs to function the way it is supposed to.
- Drinking water can lower your calorie intake and reduce your weight. This occurs when you're thirsty (drinking water instead of beverages with calories) and when you're hungry (drinking more water than usual and eating less food than usual, or eating food with high water content).
- Drinking water can energize your muscles. Your cells need a good balance of fluids and electrolytes. When they don't get it, you experience muscle fatigue. It's especially important to drink plenty of water before and during exercise because that's when you lose fluids and electrolytes through sweating.
- Drinking water helps your skin look better. When people start to get dehydrated, you can see it in their skin, which appears dry and wrinkled. Your skin absorbs the water you drink and can act as a barrier to fluid loss. Moisturizer on your skin can also help.
- Drinking water helps your kidneys function properly. Your kidneys do a great job of getting rid of toxins in your body, but only if enough water is flowing through them. Help your kidneys do their important job by drinking plenty of fluids.
- Drinking water helps your bowels function normally. Without enough fluids, constipation will occur. The combination of fiber in your diet and plenty of fluids should keep your bowels functioning properly.

PREVENT INJURIES

Regardless of how healthy you eat, how often you exercise and how much water you drink, an injury will put you in a doctor's office or the hospital. We all need to exercise caution in our daily lives, especially as we age.

For older adults, falls are the number one cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma, loss of independence and injury deaths. One of three seniors will fall during this calendar year, but fewer than one-half of them will tell their doctors about it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention...

- One out of five falls for a person 65 or older causes a serious injury such as broken bones or a head injury.
- Each year, 2.5 million older people are treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained in a fall.
- More than 700,000 people are hospitalized due to a fall injury annually, most often because of a head injury or hip fracture.
- At least 250,000 older people are hospitalized for hip fractures every year.
- More than 95 percent of hip fractures are caused by falling, usually by falling sideways.

- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries.
- The direct medical costs for fall injuries, adjusted for inflation, are \$34 billion annually. Hospital costs account for two-thirds of that total.

Many seniors feel dizzy after standing from a sitting position, especially if they've been sitting for a while. This could mean a drop in blood pressure, which makes the individual feel as if he or she is going to pass out. It could also be due to the onset of diabetes or an issue with a medication or eyesight. That's why it's important that seniors report their falls – and near falls – to a doctor, even if they are not injured.

Sometimes a fall happens due to a loss of balance while walking or slipping on something they don't see. Lower body weakness and a Vitamin D deficiency can also be contributing factors in a fall. Of course, home hazards are often to blame, including uneven steps and clutter.

While it's true that many seniors are injured by falls, it's not an inevitable result of aging. Falls don't have to occur. Many falls suffered by seniors every year didn't have to happen. Here's how you or your loved ones can decrease the odds of experiencing a fall in the home:

- Do exercises to improve balance and strengthen muscles. Tai chi is a great method for accomplishing this, but ask your doctor for other suggestions.
- Get rid of the clutter. An organized home free of boxes, stacks of magazines and other items – especially in narrow hallways and on staircases – is a much safer environment for a senior.
- Remove loose carpeting and slippery throw rugs, especially if they are near staircases, as they are very easy to trip on. Flatten any raised floorboards, which can also cause a fall.

- Add handrails to stairs and hallways, as well as grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower, and next to the toilet. A local handyman should be able to handle this so that you don't run into a big expense.
- In addition to those grips, make sure that mats in bathtubs and showers are non-slip. You can also place non-slip mats in other rooms and on porches.
- Make sure there is proper lighting in every room used by a senior. Use higher-watt bulbs during waking hours, and keep a nightlight in any room a senior may frequent after waking up, including bathrooms.
- Have your eyes checked at least once a year and ask your eye doctor if you should have different eyeglasses to wear while walking outdoors than you do for indoor activities including reading.
- Baggy clothes may be comfortable, but they can also catch on items when turning a corner or drag on the ground and be stepped on. Properly hemmed clothing is safer for seniors.
- Many people take their shoes off in the comfort of their home, but it's easier to slip when one is wearing socks. You're better off with bare feet than socks, but the first choice is shoes, which also help preventing stubbing injuries.
- Keep a small emergency survival kit in each room, featuring non-perishable snacks, a full water bottle and a first-aid kit. This could hold you over until someone is able to help you.
- Take it easy. Seniors need to remind themselves that for the most part, they don't need to be in a hurry anymore. After standing from a sitting position, take a moment to get adjusted. Then move slowly from one room to another.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

You don't have to be into an Eastern religion to practice a relaxation technique. Meditation, yoga and prayer all involve quiet reflection, and there are definite links between these practices and good health.

Data shows that the 4,000-plus people who were referred by their healthcare providers to the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston had an average 43 percent reduction in their use of health services the following year.

The key is the slowing down of breathing and the relaxation of muscles, which in turn counteracts the toxic impact of chronic stress.

VITAMINS, MINERALS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Which vitamins and minerals do you need, and which ones might be unnecessary? A lot of that has to do with your diet. A healthy diet will minimize your need for additional vitamins and minerals, while a not-so-healthy diet will require more. Here are four that you should make sure are in your diet:

- Potassium. Found in bananas, raisins, milk and leafy greens, potassium can lower blood pressure and improve irregular heart rhythms.
- Calcium. You can maintain healthy bones and prevent osteoporosis with the calcium found in milk and other dairy products, including yogurt and cheese.
- Beta-carotene. This antioxidant is found in carrots, sweet potatoes and green peppers, and is converted in the body to Vitamin A. It's good for healthy-looking skin, a properly functioning immune system and good vision.

- Iron. Liver, lean meats, seafood, nuts, and green, leafy vegetables all contain iron, which is important for the proper functioning of red blood cells.

There are countless numbers of supplements out there, some of which will make you healthier and others that will merely drain your bank account. The one I've found to be the most effective at giving a body exactly what it needs is Patriot Power Greens (www.PatriotPowerGreens.com).

PROBIOTICS

Did you know that some bacteria is good? Many different species of bacteria help you digest your food, for example. Probiotics are considered "good" bacteria. Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium can live in your digestive tract. If you check the labels of foods such as cereals, energy bars, dairy products and certain drinks, you'll see probiotics listed.

Studies are showing that ingesting probiotics could contribute to improving the body's immune response, which might reduce the severity and duration of the common cold by about 20 percent. Probiotics can help fight off infection, sometimes in the form of fermented foods including yogurt and sauerkraut.

ALCOHOL AND CHOCOLATE

We tend to think of alcohol and chocolate as guilty pleasures, but in moderation, they can be healthy for you. One glass of beer (12 oz.) or one glass of red wine (4-5 oz.) per day for adults has been shown to increase "good" cholesterol.

Dark chocolate, which is made with cacao, is loaded with chemicals such as flavonoids and theobromine that can reduce heart disease risk and lower bad cholesterol. Milk chocolates and light chocolates, on the other hand, are made with limited amounts of cacao and instead serve up too much sugar and milk.

CONCLUSION

We all have to go to the doctor once in a while. It's inevitable, and we shouldn't ignore serious health concerns. But we can make our doctor's office visits less frequent by eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods, doing our best to keep our immune system strong, getting plenty of sleep, consuming medicinal herbs, exercising regularly, drinking enough water, avoiding injuries, learning how to relax and taking in the proper amount of vitamins, minerals and probiotics.



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