

Prescription 1

Conquer Your Fears

The Beginning of the End

Many books show you how to begin something: a diet, a business, a financial plan. This book is about ending something: ending a passive approach to your most valuable asset—your health; ending the frustration you feel when dealing with doctors or anyone in our health care system; ending the fear that somewhere inside a disease is lurking, waiting to claim your well-being, your peace of mind, or your life, and you are powerless against it.

By picking up this book, you've made a life-changing decision. You've realized that your health is too important to leave up to somebody else. You know that in order to live the longest life you can, you've got to understand your own health, have a plan to protect yourself, and take charge of your health and your life.

The National Center for Educational Statistics says that five out of six people have only *intermediate* health literacy skills—the ability to understand health information and use that information to make decisions about our health and our life. Their study shows that very

What Are the Odds?

Mad cow disease:	1 in 40 million
Shark attack:	1 in 10 million
Struck by lightning:	1 in 576,000
Finding a four-leaf clover:	1 in 10,000
Having a shaving injury:	1 in 6,600
Catching a baseball at major league game:	1 in 563
Having a stroke:	1 in 6
Developing diabetes:	1 in 3

few of us are proficient when it comes to understanding our health. And these results don't seem to have much to do with our reading literacy or educational levels. We're all stumped. The health information we're given is too technical and filled with too much jargon. For example, to help us eat less salt, we have to scour the ingredients list on a can of green beans to find the *sodium content*. While we hear story after story filled with health scares, warnings, and advice, we have virtually no training, experience, or help on how all of this information can be used in our own lives to make us feel better and stay healthy. It's this ignorance that keeps us from doing what we should to be healthier and traps us in the darkness of fear about our health rather than the power of enlightenment.

Dave, a man who successfully battled cancer, described to me the effect this ignorance, early in his diagnosis and treatment, had on both his body and his mind:

The worst part, truly the worst—more than the nausea, losing my hair, fearing death—was not knowing, not understanding what was happening to me. Each time the doctor ordered a test or treatment, I'd spend the night before with cold sweats, dreading not only the procedure itself, but even getting the results. And most of the time I didn't even know why I was having the test at all. Once I decided to stop being ignorant and get information so I could understand everything that was happening to me—*before* it happened—most of my fear just evaporated. Just knowing, understanding, asking questions and getting answers, empowered me in a way I never thought was possible. I felt better, more in control. I'm convinced it's what made me get better. That fear of the unknown was eating at me, almost making me feel like just letting the cancer win.

Face Your Fears

Everyone has fears about their health—we just don't talk about them very often. Like all fears, they make us uncomfortable. They come from the dark recesses of our childhood and touch on topics that get at our very core: pain, suffering, loss of control, loss of loved ones, death.

It's normal to feel uncomfortable talking about a health condition with someone who's battling an illness. What do you say? What's too personal? How do you show you really care and want to help? Thankfully, we've moved away from the days when we would discuss someone's condition with whispers and nods. But while we talk about the treatments and the trips to the doctor, we still tiptoe around the subject of our fears and our feelings. The Health Fears Appraisal, beginning on page 20, will help you examine your health fears in five key areas: your health, your family, your work, your health care team, and your financial matters. Answer these questions honestly to help you understand where your fears may be holding you back from living your healthiest, longest life.

I'm going to help you put an end to the fears and behaviors that keep you from feeling your best and may even shorten your life. You'll learn to pull back the shutters on your fears, bring them out into the light, and separate what's irrational from what's real. I'll give you simple steps you can take to be in control of your health. And most importantly, you'll start breaking those bonds of ignorance, taking off the blinders, and finding the power to become an expert on your own health. Together, we'll examine feelings about

- fears about your health matters
- your health power and perceptions
- your doctors
- your family's health
- your commitment to a healthy life

You'll learn how to harness the positive power of those feelings to build a real-life plan you can use to begin your journey toward health, wellness, and happiness.

The Monster in Your Closet

Ignoring your health doesn't mean that you don't think about it. As you probably learned when you scored your Health Fears Appraisal, we have a complicated relationship with our health. In many ways we obsess about it—there are thousands of health stories every day on the Internet, in the newspaper, and on television. Drugstore shelves are packed with remedies, cures, vitamins, and medicines. We talk

To conquer
fear is the
beginning of
wisdom.

—BERTRAND RUSSELL,
PHILOSOPHER

Health Fears Appraisal

Health Matters

Disagree ←————→ Agree

1. If I couldn't do things that I enjoy (for example, sports, travel, reading), due to illness, I would be miserable.	1	2	3	4
2. I'm afraid that if I get sick, I will be ignored and avoided by other people.	1	2	3	4
3. If I were to get sick, I would be embarrassed to tell others about my condition or to ask for help in coping with my condition.	1	2	3	4
4. I am scared to face the truth about my health because I fear it will be bad news.	1	2	3	4
5. I don't want to think about the prospect that someday I will die.	1	2	3	4
6. I worry that getting sick could affect my ability to have sex.	1	2	3	4

Scoring and Evaluation

My Score _____

Evaluation

- 21–24** You're letting your fears get in the way of your good health. Instead, take control of your health with prevention and healthier choices.
- 16–20** While some fears are reasonable, they may be keeping you from living your healthiest life. Embrace your health and take charge to feel great!
- 11–15** Make a little more effort to face your fears head-on to put yourself at ease.
- 6–10** Keep building on your strengths to stay in control of your health.



Confronting your health situation need not be scary. With a little effort, you can take charge of your health and feel at ease. Start by taking the Personal Health Assessment, then develop your Healthy Life Plan. Use these as a starting point to take control of your health.

Health Fears Appraisal

Family Matters

Disagree ←————→ Agree

1. I don't have family members whom I can rely on if I have health problems.	1	2	3	4
2. I worry that I will be a burden to my family if I have an illness that I can't handle myself.	1	2	3	4
3. I don't think I am strong enough to handle the situation if a member of my family or another loved one gets sick and/or requires long-term care.	1	2	3	4
4. I have too many members of my family relying on me for me to get sick.	1	2	3	4
5. I am afraid that I might have inherited or passed along health conditions within my family.	1	2	3	4
6. I worry that I don't do enough to protect the health of my family or encourage healthy habits.	1	2	3	4

Scoring and Evaluation

My Score _____

Evaluation

- 21–24** Unfortunately, you're too old to be adopted! Try to bring your family together, strengthen your support network, and develop healthy lifestyles.
- 16–20** Work on improving your support system. Consider widening your circle to include friends, coworkers, and others.
- 11–15** Look for ways to improve your family's health and support.
- 6–10** You have a great family support system. Are you willing to adopt others?



Relationships with your family and friends are one of your greatest health assets, so keep them strong. Your family health history is also an important legacy. It's not just genetics you inherit or pass on, but healthy (or not so healthy) habits like eating, exercise, stress management, and so on.

(continued)

Health Fears Appraisal (continued)

Work Matters

Disagree ←————→ Agree

- | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If I were to get sick, I would have difficulty keeping my current job or finding another one. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. My employer is not concerned about my health, and my work environment is not safe or health-friendly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I don't feel comfortable discussing concerns about my health with my employer because I think they will judge me or treat me differently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. I worry that I won't be paid if I miss work because of illness, and this would be a financial hardship. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. I am concerned that my employer does not provide adequate health coverage for my family's needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I would be embarrassed if my coworkers found out that I had a health condition. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Scoring and Evaluation

My Score _____

Evaluation

- 21–24** Your work environment creates a lot of stress about your health. Develop contingency plans and do more on your own to protect your health.
- 16–20** Your work environment needs some work. Make sure you explore all the options available both through work and on your own.
- 11–15** You may need to do some research and make efforts on your own to stay healthy and shore up your situation.
- 6–10** You have a health-friendly work environment. Keep up the good job!



Working in an environment that doesn't promote wellness can be hazardous to your health. There's a lot more to employee health than workplace safety. Talk to your employer about what they're doing to help you stay well.

Health Fears Appraisal

Health Care Team Matters

Disagree ←————→ Agree

1. I'm afraid to go to the doctor because I'm afraid I will get bad news.	1	2	3	4
2. I am embarrassed to talk with my doctor about problems with my body.	1	2	3	4
3. I am afraid that not having a doctor who manages and cares about my health may be putting my life and my health at risk.	1	2	3	4
4. I don't like to talk with my doctor because he or she will think I'm stupid.	1	2	3	4
5. I believe my doctor cares more about making money than about taking care of my health.	1	2	3	4
6. I am afraid to go into the hospital for fear that I will never come out.	1	2	3	4

Scoring and Evaluation

My Score _____

Evaluation

- 21–24** Strike out! Your relationship with your team is not healthy. Having doctors you trust and can work with is crucial to your health and well-being.
- 16–20** Pop fly! You need to get off the bench and scout some new doctors.
- 11–15** Base hit! Examine how you can improve your relationship with your doctors and find doctors who care about you to play on your team.
- 6–10** Home run! You're working well together, but don't stop there. Look for ways to make sure you're doing all you can on your end to be healthy.



Your health care team should have all your bases covered. If you're not happy with one of your team members, don't hesitate to make a trade. By the same token, a team is only as good as its manager (you). So get in there and play ball.

(continued)

Health Fears Appraisal (continued)

Financial Matters

Disagree ←————→ Agree

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I can't afford to get sick because I won't be able to work and pay my bills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. If I get sick, I worry that I will lose my health insurance or be unable to get coverage. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. I worry that I am damaging my health by avoiding treatments or drugs because I can't afford them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. If I have major medical bills, I am afraid that I won't be able to pay them and may have to declare bankruptcy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. I worry that I cannot afford a medical emergency for a member of my family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. I believe I would put my family at risk of losing our way of life if I were to get sick. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Scoring and Evaluation

My Score _____

Evaluation

- 21–24** You need outside help or advice to help you get the care you need and establish a medical safety net.
- 16–20** Develop a plan to avoid financial hardship—insurance, aid, new job, and so on.
- 11–15** Look for ways to strengthen your medical financial situation.
- 6–10** Even people with health insurance can get hit with big medical expenses. Make sure you've covered all your bases and get good preventive care.



Most personal bankruptcies in the United States are related to becoming ill. If you are uninsured, look into programs that your state and local government offer. Don't wait until an emergency arises to get the information you need!

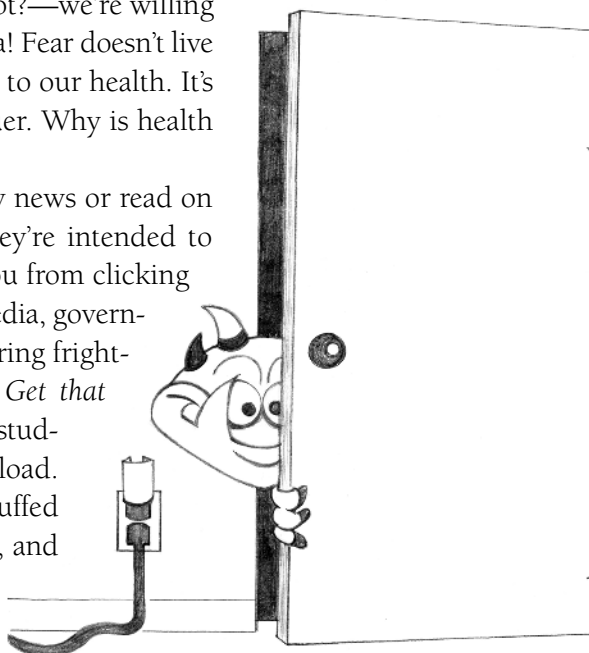
about our health, think about it, and fret about it. But at the same time, in many important ways, we neglect it, figuring we'll do something about it tomorrow.

I like to call our health the monster hiding in the closet. You know it's there, but as long as you don't open the door, you'll be okay, right? You get up, you go to work, and you feel okay. That monster's asleep in the closet and everything's fine. But then . . . you feel a lump in your breast . . . you wake up on the floor and can't remember how you got there . . . you see blood where blood shouldn't be. That monster's awake now, and he's a bigger beast than you ever imagined. You're scared.

Shutting that monster in the closet isn't just a bad plan, it's a deadly one. But too often, it's the way we deal with our health. Why, when we know the monster's in there? We're too busy, too distracted, or have better ways to use our time—and often it's because that little monster can be pretty darn scary.

In this age of sometimes excruciating self-exploration and self-revelation, celebrities and just regular Joes alike line up on Oprah, Dr. Phil, Larry King, and—heaven help us—Howard Stern to reveal their deepest, darkest secrets. We talk about everything—it seems nothing is off-limits anymore. Facing Your Inner Child; Overcoming Your Fear of Success; I'm Okay, How Come You're Not?—we're willing to look our inner selves in the mirror and say, "Ha! Fear doesn't live here anymore!" Except, it seems, when it comes to our health. It's one of the last fears we seem reluctant to conquer. Why is health something most of us just want to avoid?

The health headlines you hear on the nightly news or read on the Internet can be downright frightening. They're intended to scare you into listening or reading (and keep you from clicking off to somewhere else). And many folks in the media, government, and our health care system think that hearing frightening statistics might scare you into action. *Get that prostate exam or die!* They mean well, but in fact, studies have shown that most people are on overload. Daily reports on health risks and scares have stuffed our closets full of monsters in every size, shape, and color, and we've decided it's easier to just slam that door shut than figure out what to



RESOURCE

Health Myths for Women

Get the facts on common health myths for women at www.cdc.gov/women/owh/myths.

do. Vague threats are announced without specifics to help us understand who is at risk and how real a threat is. Take breast cancer, for example. You don't often hear it reported that 70 percent of women who get it don't die from it. And if women took advantage of early screenings and treatment, more than 95 percent could survive. Elaine Ratner, author of *The Feisty Woman's Breast Cancer Book*, says that the publicity given to breast cancer in an effort to drive women toward prevention and detection has created a false impression that breast cancer is far more common than it is. Ratner believes that this fear has actually had the opposite effect, making women avoid tests and examinations that could save their lives.

Jessie Gruman, president of the Center for Advancement of Health, says that the media plays a big part in stoking these fears. "The problem is that mass media fly on news, meaning information has to be tarted up to be used. This plants the seeds of fear instead of education."

But health scares are not reserved just for today's twenty-four-hour cable news channels. America has a rich heritage of hysteria and hype when it comes to health. Let's take a look at some infamous health scares of our past and present.

Famous Health Scares in History

Lethal Tomatoes

Scare April 1812: Tomatoes are poisonous and will kill you.

Fact Although Italians had been growing and eating tomatoes since 1550, Americans didn't start eating them until around 1830 because they were widely thought to be poisonous. Legend has it that Colonel Robert Gibbon Johnson introduced the tomato to Salem, Massachusetts, by publicly eating a basket of tomatoes in the town square. He drew quite a crowd of gawkers, who expected to watch him die.

Result Can you imagine food without tomatoes? Pizza Hut might be called Flat Bread Cheese Shack.

Don't Pass the Cranberry Sauce

Scare November 1959: U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Arthur Fleming announced that a shipment of cranberries examined in San Francisco had traces of aminotriazole, a pesticide

that hadn't yet been evaluated by the government but hadn't shown any danger. He casually warned, just fifteen days before Thanksgiving, that to be safe Americans probably shouldn't buy cranberries at all until the chemical could be tested further.

Fact The pesticide affected only a small portion of the total U.S. crop and wasn't found to be dangerous. For a person to ingest the same amount of the chemical that lab animals received in testing, he would have to eat 15,000 pounds of cranberries every day for years.

Result Secretary Fleming's offhand comment caused a panic about cranberries. The risk to humans from consuming cranberries was infinitesimal. On the campaign trail for the 1960 presidential election, Vice President Richard Nixon and Senator John Kennedy both consumed cranberries to show Americans that there was no danger.

Swine Flu Is Coming

Scare March 1976: A soldier at Fort Dix in New Jersey died from the "killer flu." Americans were whipped into a frenzy by reports that an epidemic was about to hit the United States. President Ford authorized a \$135 million immunization program, and about 40 million Americans received shots.

Fact The soldier was the only person to die from the virus, and no epidemic developed. In a tragic irony, the vaccine itself caused an adverse reaction in some people, sickening hundreds and killing twenty-five—more than the disease itself.

Result This is probably the biggest overreaction to a health scare in our history and highlighted the power of the modern media to generate health hysteria. What's referred to by many health experts as the "Swine Flu Fiasco" is said to have diminished Americans' faith in health pronouncements from the government and rocked our confidence in the government to respond prudently to a potential large-scale contagious outbreak.

Coffee Causes Cancer

Scare February 1981: A study claimed that drinking two cups of coffee per day doubles your chances of getting pancreatic cancer, while drinking five cups per day triples your risk.

Fact The flawed study was published by a Harvard doctor whose findings could never be reproduced. There has not been any evidence since to suggest that coffee causes cancer.

Result Unbelievably, coffee sales were not affected by the study. This illustrates the danger that can come from putting too much emphasis on the results of a single study.

Can You Heal Me Now? Cell Phones and Brain Tumors

Scare 1990: An urban legend circulated and was picked up by the media that magnetic fields produced by a cell phone will cause brain tumors.

Fact While it is not possible to prove that electromagnetic fields (EMF) are safe, they have never been clearly linked with cancer.

Result Incidence of brain tumors has risen slightly in recent years, but not in proportion with the increase of cell phone use. The real danger of cell phones is using them while driving. Drivers using cell phones are four times as likely to have an accident as nonusers.



Bird Flu Pandemic

Scare Summer 2005: Fear spread that a lethal strain of flu would migrate from birds (no pun intended) to humans, causing a worldwide pandemic and killing millions of people.

Fact Common flu strains often go from birds to humans and are not necessarily life-threatening. The most recent bird flu strain causing concern, H5N1, has been linked to the deaths of slightly over a hundred people who came into direct contact with poultry, primarily in Asian and Eastern European countries. While scientists are concerned that the virus may gain the rare ability to be transmitted from human to human, which *might* cause a widespread flu epidemic, there is currently no evidence that this has occurred.

Result Being prepared for an epidemic of any kind is a challenge for the health care system in every country. The difficulty comes in deciding how much money and resources to direct toward a health problem that in all probability will never materialize, when at the same time millions of people aren't being treated for conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and asthma—conditions that are killing people every day.

You vs. the Monster

With all the scary news that you are bombarded with every day, battling the monster in your closet can be hard, partly because some health fears do contain a kernel of truth. No one can promise you that you won't get cancer or that you'll never have a heart attack. Your doctor can't guarantee "Disease-free or your money back!"

What's Your Real Risk?

What's interesting is that many of the things that seem to get the most press and invade our thoughts are things that, statistically, we have a very low risk of falling victim to (such as a terrorist attack, a plane crash, an epidemic). By contrast, some of the health issues that should get our attention (including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and car accidents) don't seem to generate as much fear and, as a result, not much action to prevent and treat.

The Health Fear or Health Fiction checklist will help you evaluate whether a risk is something you should take seriously or one that just merits some interested watching. On page 30, you can see a sample I've done for a current health threat—bird flu—that's getting lots of news coverage. Be sure to evaluate the actual threat, not the "what if" scenario that usually gets the most attention. For example, you might say, "Hey, isn't the bird flu

Health Fear or Health Fiction		
Should I Be Worried?		
Use the following guide to help evaluate if you should be worried about the latest health scare.		
1. Did the information come from a credible source?	Yes	No
2. Is it contagious?	Yes	No
3. Is it easily transmitted or acquired?	Yes	No
4. Is there an available vaccine?	Yes	No
5. Is there an available treatment?	Yes	No
6. Can you avoid the source (for example, airborne viruses as opposed to a particular contaminated food)?	Yes	No
7. Is it in your geographic area?	Yes	No
8. Are you in a high-risk group?	Yes	No
9. Does it have a serious or even deadly effect?	Yes	No
10. Has it affected a large number of people?	Yes	No
Scoring and Evaluation		
(Count the bold responses you circled.)		
My Score _____		
Evaluation		
8–10	Take it seriously.	
5–7	Take precautions but don't panic.	
0–4	Just pay attention to it.	

Sample Health Care
Evaluation: Bird Flu

Health Fear or Health Fiction	
Should I Be Worried?	
Use the following guide to help evaluate if you should be worried about the latest health scare.	
1. Did the information come from a credible source?	Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
2. Is it contagious?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
3. Is it easily transmitted or acquired?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
4. Is there an available vaccine?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
5. Is there an available treatment?	Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
6. Can you avoid the source (for example, airborne viruses as opposed to a particular contaminated food)?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
7. Is it in your geographic area?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
8. Are you in a high-risk group?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
9. Does it have a serious or even deadly effect?	Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>
10. Has it affected a large number of people?	Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/>
Scoring and Evaluation	
(Count the bold responses you circled.)	
My Score	<u>4</u>
Evaluation	
8-10	Take it seriously.
5-7	Take precautions but don't panic.
0-4	Just pay attention to it.

contagious—why did you answer ‘no’ to number two?” The fact is that as of this writing, the bird flu has been transmitted only from bird to human (and even then on a very limited basis) and not from human to human. Every threat in the world has the potential to morph into something deadly; what you want to evaluate is the actual threat to you today. You can even use this list for conditions like diabetes and heart disease. While it is just a general guide, it can help you decide when your worries are worthy and when it’s better to watch and wait.

How to Cope with Your Fears

The following strategies will help you from getting overwhelmed with negative headlines and information overload and will keep things in perspective.

- **Don’t go it alone.** Being alone can isolate you and let you be overcome with your fears. Getting out and being around other people will remind you of the simple pleasures of life and help you get another view on the issues.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** If you’re truly worried and need help coping, talk to your doctor, a family member, a social worker, or a friend. You may not realize that your fears have turned into an anxiety issue or panic attacks. Talking to someone will also help you understand the real risks and get help doing what you can to minimize those.
- **Help other people.** Many people who have lived through traumatic experiences or disasters report that it was saving other people that helped them get through the disaster and forget about their own problems. Thinking about those who need help will take the focus off yourself.
- **Understand that sometimes life is random.** Even people who take every precaution, live the healthiest life, and do everything right can have an accident or get sick, while people who smoke, drink, and hang-glide can live to be ninety. It’s impossible to eliminate every danger in life, and you probably wouldn’t want to even if you could. All you can do is try to take reasonable steps to reduce your risks and live the healthiest, safest life you can while still doing the things you love.

- **Enjoy your life.** Letting your fear overtake you is just giving in to a negative outlook. If you let fear keep you from doing what you should to be healthy or live a good life, you're letting the fear win. Time is too precious to throw away on being afraid.

When Fear Interferes

If you suspect your health fears have gotten out of hand, ask yourself the following questions to determine if you are coping with your fears or if they are overwhelming your life. Answering “yes” to one or more of the questions below may mean you should talk to a doctor, counselor, family member, or friend to make sure you aren't getting paralyzed by your fears.

- Are you worried or anxious most of the time?
- Do you feel hopeless about your future?
- Do your health fears make you avoid doctor appointments, get preventive care, or manage your health conditions?

5 minute clinic

6 Ways to Keep Your Health Fears in Check

1. **Turn off the TV.** News channels tend to cover the same stories during the day, often giving a false sense of importance to minor issues. Wait a few days and see if the story continues to get coverage or if it was just the “press release of the day.”
2. **Call your doctor if you're worried.** Don't call in a panic at 3 A.M., but it's fine to call during normal business hours and ask if there's anything to be concerned about.
3. **Don't start stockpiling the latest hyped-up cure.** Not only does this add to the mania, but it will almost certainly waste your money and time and might even be dangerous.
4. **Get the facts.** It can be hard to find reliable information amidst all the hysteria. Look for articles or Internet sites authored by reputable, unbiased sources. The *Daily Tattler* may not be your best source of health information despite their crack reporting on two-headed alien babies.
5. **Consider your actual odds.** Put your risk in perspective. Your odds of encountering anthrax are about a zillion to one (not a real statistic). Your odds of getting injured in an automobile accident are 1 in 75. The risk of an accident doesn't stop you from getting into your car—you just try to drive safely. Well, some people do. Not the people where I drive, but some people. Don't let the media-reported “risks” keep you from living your life.
6. **Take positive action where it counts.** Being afraid without doing anything is just wasting your emotions. For example, if you are afraid of catching the flu, washing your hands more often is a simple thing you can do to reduce your risk and, hopefully, your fear.

RESOURCE**Check Out Product Safety and Recalls**

Get the latest on product recalls at 800-638-2772 or click on www.cpsc.gov.

- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- Do your health fears keep you from traveling, socializing, or doing other activities that make you happy?
- Do you feel isolated and alone?
- Does your worrying interfere with your work or personal relationships?
- Do you use drugs or alcohol excessively to cope with your feelings of anxiety?

It's also important to remember that worrying about your health is completely normal and, in fact, isn't always bad. If you keep it in perspective and don't let it overpower you, fear, in small doses, can help motivate you to make positive changes in your life. Fear can make you look for a better job, plan for your retirement, or adopt new habits. But too often, fears about your health have just the opposite effect. Since we aren't sure what to do to manage our own health, we would just rather avoid the subject altogether. Keep the monster in the closet where he belongs. Take me, for example.

I recently went to the doctor for a condition that had been bothering me. Nothing serious, just something that was sort of bothersome and niggling in the back of my mind. The doctor checked me out and said, "Everything seems fine, but let's go ahead and do a lab test, just to make sure nothing's there." Okay, no sweat. Then, three days later, I get a message on my phone: "This is Amy from Dr. Melco's office. Could you please call me about your test results?" My heart skips a beat, and then the dialogue in my head goes something like this: "Oh, it's probably nothing. I'm sure they call everyone. She sounded so serious, though. If it was nothing, wouldn't she have just said so on the message? Geez, I can't get sick now, I've got too much to do. As if you can schedule getting sick—get over yourself. John [my husband] doesn't need this right now—he's got enough on his mind. I'm not going to even mention it. You know what—it's Friday. What is she going to say that's important today anyway? If it's bad, I'll just worry and it will ruin the weekend and if it's good, it doesn't matter anyway. I'll just call back Monday."

But then another manic Monday appears, and I forget to call. Tuesday's even worse, and I finally remember to call, but darn it, it's after five o'clock and too late. Wednesday I have meetings all morning and when I get finished there's another message on my phone, "Taylor,

this is Amy. Please call Dr. Melco's office about your test results." Here we go again . . .

"She called back so it must be bad. She wouldn't bother if it were nothing. Now you're just being silly—she's just being helpful. Of all people, you should know that's what a doctor is supposed to do. *Stop!* Stop being stupid and just call her!"

So I call. "Hi, Amy, you left me a message about my test results?"

"Hi, Taylor, just wanted to let you know that the test was negative—everything seems fine. Dr. Melco said that if you start seeing the symptoms again, come in right away so she can get you checked out. Have a great day."

I can find a thousand good reasons why I put off returning that call, but the truth is, I was afraid.

Every test, every exam, every nagging symptom sends a shiver of fear down our spines and helps our monsters grow a little bit bigger. The key is to keep any risks, whether real or hyped, from clouding your judgment about your health. It's not closing that door that keeps the monster away; it's opening the closet, turning on the light, and looking that monster in the eye that will show him for the tiny creature he is.

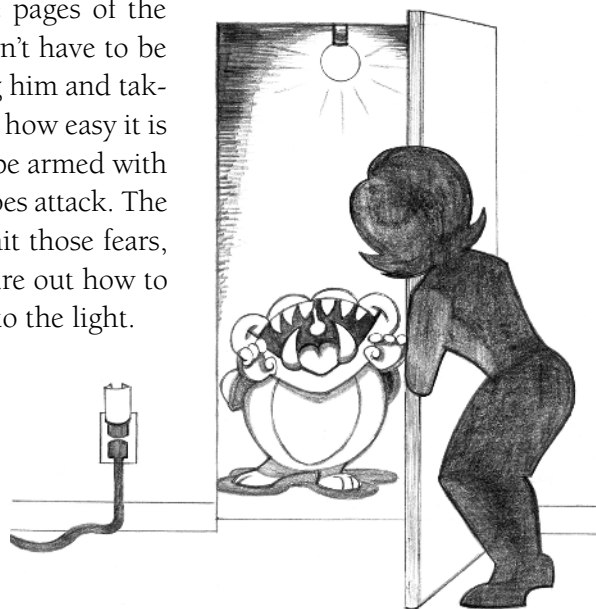
Health fears are not like other fight-or-flight fears you might experience, but more often resemble feelings of dread or anxiety. They keep you up at night. They come out of nowhere when you're least expecting it. They leap out at you from the pages of the newspaper and your television screen. But you don't have to be held captive by the monster in the closet. By facing him and taking charge of your health you will quickly discover how easy it is to decrease your risks, be prepared for battle, and be armed with the right weapons to fight that monster if he ever does attack. The first step to taking charge of your health is to admit those fears, recognize how they affect your behaviors, and figure out how to open that closet door to bring that monster out into the light.

What's Your Health Character?

What do you become when it comes to your health? I call this your Health Character. Do you bury your head in the sand and ignore all the signs, or do you bully your doctor with your own

Know! Way!

Rats and mice are the most dangerous animals on the planet. In the last thousand years, they have caused more deaths from disease than all wars combined.



diagnoses and cures? Do you hide under the covers at the least little scare, or do you have it all together? See if you recognize yourself in any of the following Health Characters.

Chicken Little

“I’m going home early today. I think I have a kidney infection.”

I looked up from my computer at my colleague Monroe.

“A kidney infection?” I asked. “What makes you think that?”

“I’ve got an ache in my lower back, right where my kidneys are. And my wife gets kidney infections all the time and I’ve got the same symptoms.”

Now, I knew that what Monroe’s wife suffered from was occasional bladder infections, which are fairly common in women. I suggested that maybe Monroe’s lower back ache was the result of him moving furniture over the weekend in his wife’s redecorating project.

“Nope,” Monroe winced, “it’s definitely a kidney infection. I think I better head over to the emergency room.”

“Okay,” I sighed. “Call me later and let me know if everything’s okay or if you need anything.”

Now, I wasn’t trying to minimize his symptoms or keep him at work, it’s just that Monroe had earned enough emergency room frequent flier points to circle the globe a couple of times. If Monroe watched a TV show about heart disease, he was sure to show up the next day complaining of pain shooting down his left arm. Seeing a report on the Internet about cell phones causing brain tumors sends Monroe to his doctor demanding another MRI. And heaven forbid someone he knows get diagnosed with an illness. Monroe will be on the phone to his doctor quicker than a skunk can clear a room! Monroe couldn’t seem to distinguish what was cause for real concern and what was just normal anxiety run amok. And like most Chicken Littles, Monroe also had a little duck in him, too (quack, quack). He would latch onto every crazy health story he could find, no matter how obscure or outlandish, searching for hidden symptoms and trying out the latest miracle cure. There was the book he bought that guaranteed a natural cure for every disease under the sun, including diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, by eating supernatural herbs and spices. Then there was the time he brought in grapes soaked in gin for everyone to try, promising they



would ward off cancer. I don't know about the health benefits, but needless to say, our staff meeting that afternoon was pretty lively.

Everyone has a little Chicken Little inside imagining that the pain in your arm is from a heart attack or seeing a report on skin cancer and looking at every mole on your arm as a deadly lesion. But taking these fears too seriously can put a strain on both your spirit and the health care system. A phenomenon doctors call the Bill Clinton Effect showed how much Chicken Little is a part of our nation's health character. On September 3, 2004, former president Clinton made the news with reports of chest pains resulting ultimately in his having life-saving heart surgery. Doctors around the country saw a sudden surge in calls from patients with chest pains and heart attack worries. Emergency Medical Associates reported a 76 percent spike in ER patients complaining of chest pains on September 7 alone! While this kind of reaction can put a big strain on our health care system, the Chicken Little effect isn't all bad. President Clinton's openness in discussing his condition and treatment saved the lives of thousands who might never have been diagnosed.

5 minute clinic

7 Things to Do When You Are Diagnosed

1. **Don't panic.** You will undoubtedly feel overwhelmed at first, but whatever the diagnosis, realize that medical technology has never been better. And know that the sooner you move on to treatment, the sooner you will feel better and be able to live your healthiest life.
2. **Don't let your doctor get you down.** It's your doctor's job to give you the facts and statistics about your condition, but remember they are just that—statistics. You're a real, live, breathing person with individual circumstances.
3. **Take time to feel your emotions.** It's okay to be mad, scared, frustrated, and any other emotion you feel. Give yourself time to feel those things and then move on to getting informed, taking action, and getting better.
4. **Get all the information.** Getting informed about your condition, your health, and the available treatments is what will save your life. Don't just depend on one doctor's opinion of how to treat your condition. Use the Internet, read medical journals, go to the experts in the field. Be proactive and take no prisoners. No one's going to do it for you.
5. **Don't make a snap decision.** Don't decide on a treatment plan until you get enough information. And make sure that you have a doctor who is experienced with your condition.
6. **Stay positive.** People who successfully manage health conditions credit a positive attitude with being vital to living well and feeling better.
7. **Live healthy.** Your body needs all its strength, so start eating better, be physically active when you can, and don't neglect the other parts of your healthy life.

By the same token, visiting your doctor on a weekly basis might help you catch some conditions early. But worrying about your health all the time and imagining that every symptom is a disease can make you (and even your doctor) ignore the bigger picture of your health. Looking for miracle cures can waste time, energy, and money on things you don't need that won't really do anything to make you feel better. Seeing your own demise in every celebrity death can lead you to worry about things that might never affect you and ignore actual health risks you might face.

Chicken Little Help Strategies

If you have some Chicken Little traits, try these strategies for refocusing your health energies in a positive way:

- **Understand your overall health picture.** Get a real picture of your health. Know your family risks, your own health history, and your healthstyle choices to understand what's worth focusing on and what may be an unfounded worry.
- **Ditch the mystery.** Fear of the unknown is what makes most of us cringe. Getting the right preventive tests and exams will take away the mystery and help calm your fears.
- **Steer clear of the “quack attacks.”** Instead of wasting time and efforts on miracle cures or gimmicks, talk with your doctor about simple everyday things you can do to feel better and live longer.

And Monroe? He called me at home that night and told me that the emergency room doctor reported that his test results were negative and he had probably just strained his lower back. “But,” Monroe continued, “while I was sitting in the ER waiting area I was talking to another patient there with a rash on his arm. I don't want to worry you, but I've been feeling itchy and I think it might be . . .”

Ostriches

The Ostrich is the Health Character that many people, especially if you're relatively healthy, can easily identify with. The ostrich is a character that buries its head in the sand and hopes for good luck to keep healthy. Self-treaters, ostriches often wait until their feathers are falling out to find out if something's really wrong.

RESOURCE

Reliable Health Information Online

Some great sources for unbiased health information are at www.berkeleywellness.com and www.mayoclinic.com.

Take Maria, for example. She's a classic Ostrich. Maria is thirty-eight years old, married, with three young boys. Maria's little purple monster is one many women would recognize—breast cancer. Like mine, Maria's mother was diagnosed with breast cancer in her forties, and although she was successfully treated, that history sets off a big red flag for breast cancer risk in the daughters of these women. That monster may wear a pink ribbon and go on a lot of walkathons, but it's still there lurking in your closet every day. Maria told me one day how she shuts that closet door and turns out the light . . .

I get too scared hearing all those statistics. I just dread the moment at the doctor when I'm giving my family history and they say, "Any cancer?" As soon as I say, "Yes, my mother had breast cancer when she was forty-two," their face just drops and they start telling me how I've got a one-in-four chance of getting breast cancer and how important mammograms and exams are. I feel like I'm sick already! I know it sounds ridiculous, but I have this superstition that if I go to the doctor or have the test, they'll just find something bad, so I just don't go. Anyway, who's got the time to get sick? I just can't think about that. To tell you the truth, I'd rather tune it all out. I figure I'm going to live the best I can and just deal with it when it happens.



This Ostrich behavior, while very common, is not just dangerous, but deadly. The worst part is that Maria's fear is keeping her from doing the very things that could save her life one day. A history of breast cancer in your family is not a death sentence, but ignoring that risk could very well be.

Now here's what the Ostrich overlooks. It's true that statistically the average woman has a one-in-eight chance—about 13 percent—of getting breast cancer during her lifetime. If you have a close relative who's had the condition, those chances go up to about one-in-four—around 25 percent. But that also means that the average woman has an 86 percent chance of *not* getting breast cancer. That's seven out of eight women who won't get breast cancer in their lifetimes. And even Maria, at 75 percent, is much more likely to hear good news than bad when she visits the doctor—if she visits the

RESOURCE

Unbiased Health Reporting

Check out Consumer Reports' On Health newsletter. Subscribe at www.consumerreports.org/cro/health-fitness/index.htm.

doctor. By ignoring her risk and avoiding preventive visits and screenings, she lowers her odds for early diagnosis, positive treatment, and even survival, if breast cancer ever does surface. On the other hand, even if Maria does get a breast cancer diagnosis and is proactive in her treatment, the odds are heavily in her favor that she'll go on to live a long, healthy life. That's where the Ostrich has it wrong. Avoiding your health instead of taking action doesn't make it go away and may, in fact, make your worst fears come true.

Ostrich Help Strategies

If you find the Ostrich familiar, try these strategies to help you get more involved in your health before it's too late:

- **Get a Health Buddy.** Find someone (another Ostrich is great) to be your Health Buddy. Work together to develop plans for your health and then give each other encouragement to stick with your plan. Schedule checkups together, help each other take a health assessment, and offer support along the way.
- **Don't just hope for the best, find it.** Hoping for the best is just silly when it comes to your health. Finding out your risks won't make them any more risky, but it will let you know what you can do to minimize them and live your healthiest life.
- **Don't turn off the noise, just turn it down.** Don't ignore every health story you see or avoid the subject when it comes up. Being informed is never a bad thing; just try to keep it all in perspective.

The Bulldog

Weary after a day packed with patients, Dr. Natalia Meeks looked at her appointment schedule for tomorrow. Seeing a name she recognized at the top of the list, she shouted out front to Betty, her receptionist, "Is Mr. Reilly really my first appointment of the day tomorrow?"

"Yep," Betty shouted back. "You know he says that the first appointment is the best of the day because that way you won't keep him waiting and you'll be fresh."

"I'll be fresh all right," Dr. Meeks thought. It wasn't that she disliked Mr. Reilly; in fact, as far as patients went, he could be pretty

interesting. It was just that his appointments took up a lot of time, and often she felt like she'd been a little bullied after he left, without really doing much for his health. "Better not schedule anyone else for that early-morning slot, Betty."

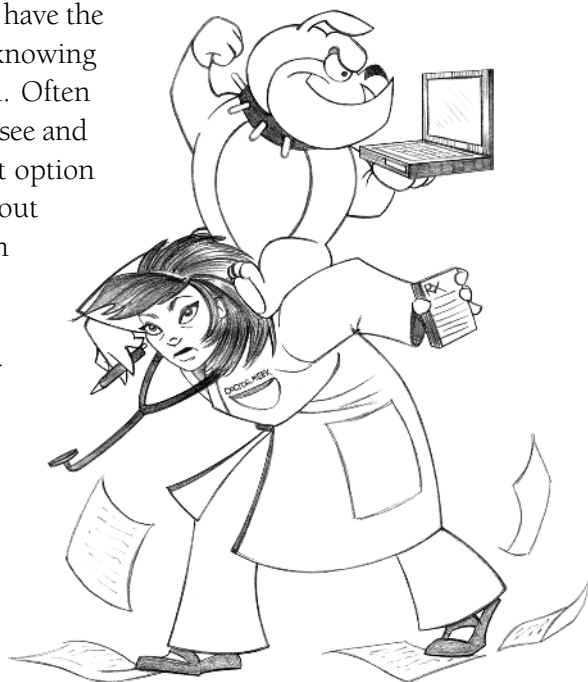
"Already done, Dr. Meeks."

Mr. Reilly is a Bulldog. Determined not to be at a disadvantage, he charges into the doctor's office armed with Internet stories, pages from medical journals, and his own diagnosis and treatment plan before Dr. Meeks can even put on her stethoscope. Instead of viewing his doctor as a partner in his health, he sees her merely as someone to sign his prescriptions, order up the tests he wants, and validate his diagnoses. Whenever Dr. Meeks sees one of those drug ads on television that ends with someone walking in a field while the narrator says, "Ask your doctor if this drug is right for you," she always smiles and thinks of Mr. Reilly, because he will definitely ask if the drug is right for him—even if he doesn't quite know what it is for.

The Bulldog's strategy is that a good offense is the best defense—being aggressive about your health is the only way to get good care. It's understandable where this philosophy comes from. Left on our own to manage our health, many of us have had to become our own health advocates. Doctors no longer have the time or the opportunity to be your family doctor, knowing your history and anticipating what you might need. Often you're on your own to determine which specialists to see and when, what procedures to have and which treatment option to choose. If there's one lesson to be learned about health in the twenty-first century, it's that you're in charge whether you like it or not.

The easy availability of medical information helps bring out the bulldog in us all. Added to the old reliable sources of magazines, television, and newspapers comes the ability to search the archives of medical journals, universities, and scientific organizations online, helping many patients know more about their conditions, new drug therapies, and the latest research results than their doctors.

But the old proverb "A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing" is never more true than when



Internet 9-1-1

Fewer than half of the consumers who say they researched health conditions on the Internet came away with a better understanding of their health condition or how to treat it. Try some of these tips for better success on the Internet.

1. Make sure search terms are more restrictive.
 - Search for *hypertension + weight* instead of just *blood pressure* to find out how your weight affects your blood pressure.
 - Use Advanced Searching to restrict the date and get more current information.
2. Go directly to Web sites you know are reliable.
 - Universities (hopkinsmedicine.org)
 - Hospitals (mayoclinic.com)
 - Medical journals (jama.ama-assn.org)
 - Government entities (nih.gov, fda.gov, cdc.gov, healthfinder.gov)
3. Look at foreign sites for a new perspective on a health issue.
 - Canada (hc-sc.gc.ca)
 - Britain (patient.co.uk)
4. Understand that sites (especially commercial ones) may omit some information, such as:
 - certain treatment options
 - new or controversial treatments
 - homeopathic options
 - treatments contrary to their bias

it comes to your health. There's a fine line between taking charge of your health and biting off more than you can chew. A good doctor will be a partner in your health and can use her years of practical experience to help you put things in perspective, make a levelheaded evaluation of tests and treatments, and dig through the mountains of information and marketing to find what's right for you.

Bulldog Help Strategies

If you find some Bulldog surfacing in your dealings with doctors and other health professionals, try these strategies to help smooth things out:

- **Find a doctor you respect.** Having a doctor you intimidate or don't trust won't do either of you any good. Find someone you respect to form a mutually beneficial relationship.
- **An ounce of skepticism is worth a pound of cure.** Don't believe everything you read on the Internet or see on television about health. Always ask yourself what they are selling you to understand where the information is coming from.
- **Patient, don't heal thyself.** You do need to manage your own health, but don't do it without getting professional advice. A good doctor will use experience and expertise to recognize when symptoms hint at something more serious and help you keep your health in check.

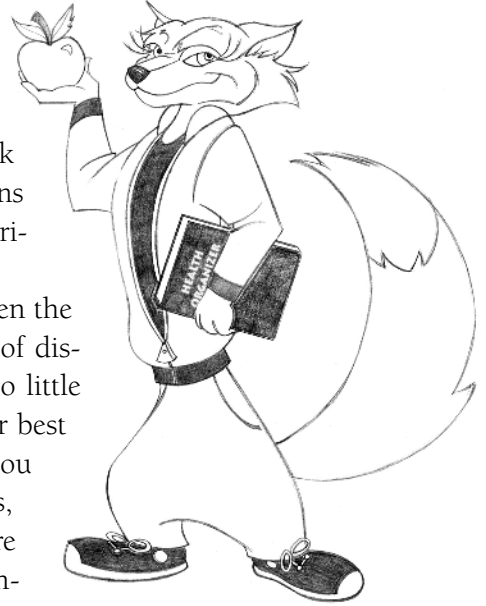
The Fox

The Fox is the health consumer we'd all like to be. Well informed and well prepared, the Fox understands her health conditions and how to manage them to live life to the fullest. Her relationship with

her doctor is one of mutual trust and respect. She understands that while he is the coach, sketching out plays and giving direction, she is ultimately on the field as the quarterback, and it's up to her to carry the

ball to the goal line. The Fox has a plan for her health that includes not only preventive screenings and regular checkups, but goals for her overall health, eating, exercise, and lifestyle choices. She approaches any health challenges she might face with an informed, positive outlook to find out as much as she can about the treatment options available in order to evaluate which treatments fit her priorities and her life.

But even for Foxes, health isn't an idyllic paradise. Even the best Foxes among us must exist in a health care world of disjointed organizations providing too much marketing, too little prevention, and too many mixed messages. Despite your best efforts to be an informed, take-charge health consumer, you will run into the doctor who doesn't present all the options, the lab that screws up your test results, the miracle cure you've just gotta try. In 2005, Dick Pettingall, CEO of Minnesota's largest hospital group, called for health officials to start rethinking how our health care system is run. "On 9/11, 3,000 people died tragically, but 45,000 died needlessly in hospitals last year and where's the call to action? We have to stop repairing and start redesigning the system." The key is to not get discouraged, get on top of your health, and realize that you must take charge of your health. You are the best-qualified and most motivated candidate for the job.



A Brand-new You

You may have parts of all of these characters or some more than others. Your Health Character may change depending on the situation. I've seen moms who are the fiercest Bulldogs you'd ever run into when it comes to their kid's health, but bury their head in the sand about their own well-being, and Foxes who have a great diet and exercise plan, but haven't had a checkup in ten years. What's important is to examine how you feel about your health, face your fears, and figure out what you're willing to do to feel better and live longer.

I can't guarantee that you'll never get sick or that you'll live to be a hundred. I can't even tell you that you'll enjoy going to the doctor! But I can promise you that if you use the eight prescriptions in this book, you'll change not only the way you feel about your health, but

also the way you feel about your life. You'll approach your health in a completely different way. You'll find a new source of peace and power.

Most importantly, you'll be ready for any health challenges you or your family members face. You'll understand how to decide what's important, be empowered to demand the care you deserve, and feel the confidence and strength to make the decisions to keep you and your loved ones healthy and protect your lives.

It's surprising to note that people with different health conditions share some common side effects—emotional, not physical, as you might think. For example, one out of five people who are hospitalized with a heart attack will experience depression in the months that follow their attack, even if their prognosis is excellent and they can resume normal activities. This depression actually puts them at higher

risk for another heart attack. Many people with diabetes experience depression, anxiety, and even panic as they cope with the daily demands their condition requires. These emotional conditions are caused by many complex feelings—believing that a condition is somehow your fault, fearing the unknown, and feeling out of control of your destiny, among others. As you discovered in your Health Fears Appraisal, a lot of fears can be hiding unanswered in your mind: How will this condition affect my life? Will I ever have my old life back and be able to do all of the things I love? Will I be able to work and pay my bills? How will my family handle this? Why did this happen to me? And, of course, will I die?

While these subjects may make you uncomfortable and you might want to “just not think about it,” keeping those fears locked away is exactly what that little monster loves to eat. Shutting those fears in the closet lets the monster keep getting bigger, feeding on your fears, getting more and more powerful, until he grows into something truly scary.

Acknowledging and facing your fears can free your mind and let you move forward to take

Pop! Quiz.

Strange Health Facts

1. Standing up too quickly after a meal can make your blood pressure drop. True False
2. Eating an orange with a steak is a good way to get more iron in your body. True False
3. Drinking water can prevent a heart attack. True False
4. One in four people sneeze when exposed to light. True False
5. Most heart attacks occur at night. True False

Answers

1. True. And it can cause dizziness and light-headedness, especially if you're age fifty or over.
2. True. Vitamin C helps your body absorb iron.
3. True. Men who drink at least five glasses of water a day have a 54 percent lower chance of dying from a heart attack than men who drink only two glasses. Tea, juice, coffee, and beer don't count!
4. True. Strange, but true.
5. False. Most occur between eight and nine in the morning.

your health back from that monster. Releasing your fears from the closet will release you and let you stop believing that you can't control your health, stop thinking that nothing you do will keep you from getting sick, and will empower you to take charge of your health and claim your health power, especially when you need it the most.

Even though medical news makes the headlines nearly every day, many of us ignore our health until something goes wrong, relying on doctors and the health industry to manage our health for us. In reality, millions of people unnecessarily get sick and die every year because they didn't take steps to do what they could to take charge of their health. From medical mistakes to drug reactions to undiagnosed conditions, we face a barrage of risks to our life and our well-being by not being proactive. How many of these seven mistakes are you falling prey to? Answer true or false to each statement in the box on pages 44–45.

Start Today

Before moving on to the next prescription, I want to talk about getting started on your health. Have you ever found yourself saying, “Tomorrow I'm going to . . . start eating better; start exercising; give up smoking; take better care of myself”? Well, I'm going to ask you to do something radical when it comes to your health. Stop talking about tomorrow. Do you know what happens in your mind when you say, “Tomorrow I'm going to . . .”? Tomorrow arrives and what does your mind think about? Tomorrow. Your mind isn't focused on what you're doing today.

I'm going to ask you to flip that statement around. When you find yourself saying, “Tomorrow I'm going to . . .,” I want you to stop and instead say, “Today I will . . .” Think for a moment about the power of that statement.

“Today I will.”

Not sometime, but today. And not “I'm going to”—“I will.” Now here's the great part. Since you're committing to doing it today, it's going to force you to do things that are reasonable—things that you can start doing today. Because too often taking better care of our health gets put off until tomorrow, then tomorrow, then tomorrow, until the tomorrow comes when we wake up and we've got a health condition or we're sick. Your body can't wait until tomorrow; it's

The 7 Biggest Health Mistakes: Are You Making Them?

1. I am not prepared for emergencies.

True False

Most people don't have time to think about their health and safety every day. By keeping your critical information updated and on hand, you'll have what you need in case of a natural disaster or medical emergency or for everyday medical care.

2. I don't manage my medications.

True False

It's estimated that 1.5 million people are injured every year by medication mistakes. Managing your medications is essential to protecting your health. First, make a list of all your medications, both prescription and over-the-counter. Second, always follow medication directions. Third, check every prescription or medication you are given to make sure it's correct. Last, if you have any side effects, get medical attention right away.

3. I don't have a plan for my health.

True False

Not knowing and not caring about your health isn't an option anymore. You've got to get the facts about your health and your condition, take action to get the care you need, make healthier choices, and make staying healthy a top priority in your life.

4. I don't have a written family and health history.

True False

Your health and family history is key to gauging your risk for nearly every health condition, from heart disease to diabetes to obesity. Doctors are too busy during office visits to ask, so it's up to you to bring it up. Do some research, keep a written record, and go over it with your doctor at your next visit.

5. I don't communicate openly and honestly with my doctors.

True False

"Most patients hide confusion from their doctors because they're too intimidated to ask for help," according to former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona. Find doctors you trust and give them honest, complete information. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and make sure you understand the answers.

6. I don't know where my health dollars go.

True False

You're being asked to foot the bill for more and more of your care. Not understanding how much you really pay for care and not allocating your budget to the right places means your money isn't being well spent and you're not taking care of your health the way you

The 7 Biggest Health Mistakes : Are You Making Them?

should. Prevention doesn't just protect your body, it protects your bank account as well, warding off financial ruin from unexpected emergencies and illnesses.

7. I will worry about my health tomorrow.

True False

Don't play the waiting game. Don't wait to get a preventive test. Don't wait for a condition to get worse before seeing your doctor. And most importantly, don't wait for someone else to take care of your health. There is no one else who cares the way you do. Take the power, take the reins, and take charge.

trying to function today. "Tomorrow I'm going to" is what stalls you, waiting for perfection. "Today I will" is what moves you on to progress. That doesn't mean you don't have long-term goals, but you don't have to solve every problem, you don't have to make monumental changes, you just have to start . . . today.



10 Things You Can Do Today to Be Healthier

1. **Drink more water.** Water nourishes every part of your body. And think how many calories you'll save by drinking water instead of soda or sugary drinks.
2. **Find out what your blood pressure is.** Stop at the drugstore or use an in-home test. This is one of the easiest measures to take and is a big indicator of your overall health.
3. **Write down one important thing about your health.** Your vital information, your health history, your family history: pick one and get started.
4. **Make a new friend.** Being a loner is not good for your mental health. Say hello to someone new and make their day, too!
5. **Turn your TV off for the day.** Not only will you be encouraged to get off the couch, but you'll avoid sensational health stories and commercials for fattening foods.
6. **Make an appointment for your yearly checkup.** If you've already got one scheduled, give yourself a pat on the back.
7. **Take a walk around the block.** You'll get vitamin D from the sunshine, breathe in fresh air, and get your blood flowing.
8. **Eat in.** Pack your lunch or eat at home. You'll save money and cut back on calories.
9. **Add three fruits and veggies to your day.** You want to shoot for six to eight servings, but adding three today will get you halfway there.
10. **Give someone you love a hug.** Physical contact is what feeds the soul. Everyone should get (and give) at least one good hug a day!