THE SECRETS OF LIVING AND REMAINING YOUNG, AND HEALING ONESELF

INTRODUCTION:

According to a recent article in the Los Angeles Times, about two-thirds of Americans take medication of which 43% are self-medicated. One of every two individuals will eventually end up with some kind of cardiovascular disease. Twenty-five percent suffer from arthritis and 54% of individuals over the age 65 suffer from high blood pressure. Still, many suffer from depression, skin cancer, and other ailments. However, the majority would like to change their diet and their life style to be healthier. This article explains many facts and procedures that can help those who wish to be healthier and live a long, full life with less dependency on allopathic medicine.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE:

Most students studying medical and health sciences are not familiar with a more recent branch of medicine, naturopathic medicine. Naturopathic medicine is a New Age approach to the health sciences. This field includes all sorts of orthodox medical treatments as well as manipulative therapies (massage, physical therapy, chiropractic), acupuncture, homeopathy and even unconventional and ancient/futuristic medical techniques such as magnetic therapy, sorcery, etc. When Dr. John Bastyr, the pioneer of naturopathic medicine was asked what naturopathic medicine was, he replied, "Whatever works."

Students seeking naturopathic doctor (ND) degrees need a BA degree with certain prerequisites, such as general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry, general biology, anatomy and physiology. The degree takes three to four years to complete and when finished, the students become ND, which is different than an MD.

There are several schools in the West to study this field: Bastyr University (Washington State), University of Bridgeport (Connecticut), Southwest College (Arizona), National College (Oregon), one school in Canada, and one in Australia.
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Although only a few states recognize ND degrees, they are being recognized more and more. I guarantee this is the medicine of the future. Orthodox medicine treats the physical body. However, naturopathic medicine, usually called holistic medicine, treats the whole person: the physical body, the mind, and the spirit. One in five Americans are afraid and tired of going to the allopathic physician(s) because the physicians examine them for a few minutes and the patient comes out with a prescription which usually treats only their symptoms, or even worse, they are recommended to undertake an invasive procedure, such as major surgery, which irreversibly scars the person for life.

ANDREW WEIL:

One of the most popular holistic physicians is Andrew Weil. He earned his MD degree from Harvard Medical School and started his practice in holistic medicine. As he explains, "he did not want to be done on him what he was trained to do on his patients." In his book, "Spontaneous Healing," he says that most medical terms contain an "anti" term as a prefix, e.g., antidepressant, antihistamine, etc. It is as if they are trained in the field of "anti-medicine." These medications are so strong that they may cause many side effects from dizziness to even death. Besides that, many patients may react to the drug adversely. Also, just simply removing the symptoms of an illness may end up strengthening the disease. If you take an antihistamine when you have sinus congestion, it clears your nose instantly. However, a few hours after the effect of the drug wears off, you will end up with worse nasal congestion.

After receiving his MD degree, he traveled extensively to many parts of the world, visiting Shamans, and other kinds of healers, and learned alternative treatments from them. Now he is the head of the Integrative Medicine Department at the University of Arizona. He prefers to call holistic medicine integrative medicine because it is a combination of both orthodox and alternative.

Some of his major beliefs, which he has introduced into medicine, are as
follows:

1. The effect of a patient's mind on his or her own illness is one of the major factors ignored by the majority of physicians. Also, the belief in getting over an illness is of extreme importance; not only in the patient's mind but also the physician’s, would greatly affect the well being of a patient. This factor and the general effect of mind on body have been ignored by the medical community. Many times physicians’ beliefs in orthodox medicine makes them feel there is no hope for the patients’ condition, which makes the patients lose faith in getting well.

2. The body has a way of healing itself. Considering all the malnutrition, poisons, and pathogens in our environment today, we are healthy most of the time. Except for people with terminal cancer and AIDS, most of us defeat our ailments rapidly most of the time.

An example of the healing power in our system is DNA (a carrier of our genes). When it copies itself, it can correct itself if an error occurs. When the chain of DNA has been formed, certain enzymes producing it will go back and read what has been done. If they find an error, the enzymes remove the erroneous part and substitute an appropriate sequence where it is needed.

3. Unless the patient is suffering from an acute condition, one does not need to use strong and toxic medications which have many side effects. However, there are many herbal
preparations which are much milder with little or no side effects. Although it takes longer for these to exert their intended effects, the effects of using these preparations are much gentler on the body.

To prove this point, one should mention that there have been many herbs that are documented recently to have tremendous benefits:

A. **St. John's wort** is a proven antidepressant, as potent as Prozac, with little side effects and at a much lower price.

B. **Echinacea** is used as an immune stimulant and has antibiotic properties.

C. **Ginkgo biloba** is a memory booster and helps the condition of Alzheimer patients.

D. **Ginger** is an herb used in cooking which "helps treat the stomach and digestive disorders and boosts the immune system."

E. **Garlic**, containing allicin, is very well known and is used often in cooking. It lowers blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels, reduces the clotting tendency in blood and also acts as an antibiotic.

F. **Aloe barbadensis**, or simply aloe, is used as laxative, soothing agent for burns and ulcers.

G. **Panax ginseng** or Asian ginseng is supposed to increase stamina.

H. **Cranberry** is supposed to prevent urinary infections.

I. **Saw palmetto** treats enlarged prostate.
J. **Goldenseal** is an antiseptic.

K. **Broccoli** contains indole carbinol, which breaks down estrogen (promotes tumor), and beta carotene (also in **carrots** and **egg yolk**), which protects against cancer.

L. **Grapefruit** contains pectin, which reduces blood fat.

M. **Celery** contains phthalide, which reduces cholesterol and causes mild sedation.

N. **Chili or hot pepper** (capsicum or cayenne pepper) contains capsaicin, which is a stimulant and reduces pain after surgery.

O. **Flaxseed** contains linolenic acid (found in fish oil), which reduces tumor formation in the body.

P. **Tomatoes** contain lycopene, an antioxidant that protects against some cancers.

Q. **Blue berries** contain pterostilbene, which reduce cholesterol, and is as active as cholesterol-lowering drugs without the side effects.

R. **Cinnamon** contains an insulin-like molecule, which helps people with type 2 diabetes.

S. **Pomegranate**-fruit extract works against prostate-cancer cells.

T. **Kiwis** work like aspirin to thin the blood and have as much vitamin C as oranges.

U. **Apples** are good against asthma and lung cancer.

V. **Spices** in general have a large amount of antioxidants. They should be used in cooking meals. Two tablespoons of spice (10 grams) have no calories but have as much antioxidants as 10 servings of fruits and vegetables.

W. **Dark chocolate and green tea** contain much antioxidants and other health-promoting chemicals.
The field of "**Nutriceuticals**" is named for herbs and herbal products, which have proven pharmaceutical effects.

**DEEPAK CHOPRA**

Another major and well-known holistic physician is Deepak Chopra. He received his MD degree studying ayurvedic medicine in India. He met and consulted with Maharishi Yogi. Some of his ideas are as follows: Some patients having headaches were divided randomly into two groups. One group was given aspirin and the other a placebo (a sugar pill). When the amount of endorphins produced in their system was measured, both groups showed an increase in endorphin levels. **Endorphin** or endogenous morphine is a compound with similar effects to opiates (heroin, morphine, etc.) and causes decreasing intensity in pain (analgesia) and a feeling of well being (euphoria). Therefore, an increase in endorphin level is representative of a decrease in pain level and increase in well being. When placebo causes a feeling of well being, this is called a "**placebo effect**."

Deepak Chopra says that why there should be a need for a placebo to feel better. Why not have such a mental power, so that by just will power, one can bring about a feeling of well being and heal one's ailments?

One way to increase our "mind power" is to practice chanting, meditation, yoga, prayer, etc., which activates the right brain. Our brains have two lobes: the left brain is logical, objective, scientific, analytical and deductive. Right brain on the other hand is intuitive, subjective, artistic, holistic and inductive. The more one activates the right brain, the more mental and spiritual power one obtains. (The stronger left-brain makes one more analytical).

When meditation came to the West, physicians first considered it useless; then after a while its "calming effect" was accepted. Deepac Chopra and colleagues investigated the presence of dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) in people who had meditated for a long time versus the ones who never did so. The degree of DHEA in the former group was undoubtedly higher than the latter. DHEA is a hormone derived from sex hormones (female estrogen and male testosterone) and as one ages, its amount decreases. Moreover, if older people are given
DHEA, they show an improvement in their youthfulness, e.g., softer skin, more bone and muscle mass, etc. This is why it is believed that DHEA is a gauge for aging. If so, people who meditate remain younger.

**How to Remain Healthier and Younger, and Live Longer:**

Lifestyle can have a great deal of difference in how healthy we are and how long we live. By following certain simple directions, one can greatly increase one’s well being.

1. Eat less red meat, sugar, fats and oils, and consume more fruits and vegetables.

   Avoid artificial ingredients such as artificial sweeteners, artificial fats, etc.

   Instead, use more natural nutrients. Try to avoid eating fast foods. It is very easy to

   broil chicken or fish and it doesn't take more than one half an hour to prepare

   a good healthy meal. Rather than using cans and ready-made meals, try to

   cook from scratch and include a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables.

   There are good oils, which contain omega three and omega six fatty acids. These are called essential fatty acids because the body cannot synthesize them and have to be obtained from food. Supplements of these fatty acids should be taken if you are not eating fish daily. The supplements are called EFA (for essential fatty acids), or

   simply fish oil would do.

2. **DO NOT SMOKE!** Cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive chemical,
and while smoking, very poisonous compounds such as carbon monoxide are formed. All these chemicals are carcinogens that damage internal surfaces of the lungs. Besides cancer, smoking promotes respiratory diseases such as asthma and emphysema, and increases the risk of heart disease. Smoking tobacco is the worst habit of the 20th century. The best way not to smoke is never to start.

3. Exercise every day, even if it is just for a few minutes. It has been shown that walking one half hour a day, three days a week, decreases the chance of early death from conditions such as cancer and cardiovascular disease by 50%.

Exercise keeps you healthier by burning more calories, increasing the health of your cardiovascular system, helping digestion, and promoting muscular health.

Also, it causes the release of a morphine-like substance, endorphin, which brings about calmness and a small amount of euphoria. These conditions make one sleep better and feel a lower amount of stress.

Three kinds of exercises that are essential are:
a. Stretching, which makes one more supple and tones the tendons.

b. Aerobics, which help the lungs and cardiovascular system.

c. Weights - by using low weights and repeatedly moving, your muscles become stronger and you feel younger.

Try to exercise, as explained above, 3 to 4 times a week. Also, walk briskly for one half-hour 3 to 4 times per week. By doing so you can feel the difference in your health.

4. Take food supplements: The food supplements are vitamins, minerals, essential amino acids, essential fatty acids, antioxidants, etc. The reason for the need for supplements is mainly that in the industrial age with all the fast foods and shortage of major nutrients in the diet, one needs to supplement his/her food to live healthier and longer. Besides, with the use of pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilizers, the produce does not have as many nutrients as when grown organically. Even when the factors mentioned are not considered, one needs to consume a great deal of each produce to get the needed amount of nutrients, which is not possible. Since I take 1000 mg of Vitamin C and a multivitamin/mineral/antioxidant every day (all sustained released, meaning that they release their nutrients slowly over a 24 hour period), I have not had a major cold for the past 10 years. One antioxidant, which is not a part of regular antioxidant package is alpha lipoic acid. This supplement should be taken as well for better health.

RDA values (Recommended Daily Allowances) are the amounts of nutrients below which nutritional deficiencies could occur. However, for optimum health, a higher amount of vitamins and minerals are needed.
One reason for this higher value is that certain nutrients such as Beta Carotene, vitamin A and vitamin E, for fatty tissues act as antioxidants, as does vitamin C for aqueous (water) mediums. Antioxidants quench the poisonous free radicals. Free radicals are any compound with a single electron. Electrons are usually arranged in pairs. Any single electron is extremely unstable and reacts with anything around it to neutralize itself and turn into an electron pair. These free radicals are very useful for attacking foreign organisms, such as bacteria and viruses, and are produced in large numbers during infections. However, they are very poisonous for normal tissues and should be overcome with antioxidants.

Antioxidants are especially useful against cancer, and autoimmune diseases such as arthritis.

Certain herbs are useful for optimum health. Some cultures, such as Persians, eat fresh herbs with meals as the fourth food group, (bread, cereal, pasta, / fruits and vegetables / meat and dairy). These common herbs include basil, mint, parsley, coriander leaves, radishes and green onions.

Make sure you are not allergic to these herbs, otherwise you may have from small to severe complications after eating them. Some signs to look for might be indigestion, excessive gas and bloating, rashes etc. I am personally allergic to mint, which causes indigestion and excessive gas.

5. Drink a lot of fluids everyday. Generally most adults need 8 cups of fluids per day. Try to drink mostly water, filtered water, if possible. Avoid soft drinks. They contain too much sugar. Also, avoid soft drinks with artificial sweeteners.

In hot weather, and during exercise, more fluids are needed than in cool days. Nursing mothers and pregnant women need more water. Also, as one ages, the feeling of thirst cannot be understood as easily as for young people. Therefore, an older person may need fluids but might not realize it. This is why the middle aged and older persons should go on drinking water even if they do not feel thirsty.

Avoid using chlorinated water (for drinking and bathing). Chlorination disinfects water and since chlorination became widespread, many problems such as typhoid fever, cholera and dysentery have been virtually eliminated. However, it has been shown that chlorine reacts with certain
organic compounds in water and results in formation of carcinogens. Rats swimming in chlorinated water developed more cases of cancer compared to the control group. Use a filter for drinking water and a shower filter for bathing and you will feel the difference after a short period of time. It cannot hurt you to be extra cautious. However, make sure the filter has been changed periodically since a contaminated filter can cause more harm by releasing the collected poisons than using regular water.

6. Take in fresh air as much as possible. Walk in open areas and outdoor parks often. Open the windows of your rooms, especially bedrooms, for a few hours every day. Also, it could be helpful to use an air filter in your car (especially if you drive in polluted areas). If you have respiratory problems such as asthma, you may want to also include an air filter in your house. I am certain that in a decade or so, water and air filters will become essential commodities. Even if no major pollution is threatening you in the area you live, there is much pollen, dust particles, microscopic organisms such as mites, and radon (a radioactive gas formed from disintegration of uranium which seeps off the walls in certain areas and is the second major cause of lung cancer, smoking being the first) can be removed by using an air filter.

7. It has been shown that moderate alcohol consumption, one drink for ladies and two for men, lowers the risk of heart attacks by raising HDL cholesterol levels. Lipids including fats, oils, and cholesterol are not water-soluble and they are carried in blood (which is mostly water) in a micelle form made up of lipids and proteins called lipoproteins. This makes them mix with water as soap suds do. The major lipoproteins are "low density lipoproteins" (LDL) or bad cholesterol, and high-density lipoproteins (HDL) or good cholesterol.

The reason LDL is called bad is due to its function: deposit cholesterol wherever it is needed to produce steroid hormones or wherever it is not needed, as in blood vessels, which causes arteriosclerosis. For the same reason HDL, having the function of vacuuming up cholesterol, is considered good.

More important than total cholesterol is the ratio of HDL to LDL, good to bad cholesterol. The higher this ratio, the better it is. Moderate alcohol consumption raises HDL, thereby raising the HDL to LDL ratio. This lowers the deposits of plaques inside the blood vessels, thereby lowering the chance of
heart disease, particularly heart attacks.

In low amounts, alcohol aids digestion and acts as a sedative, relaxing the person, and in most cases, making the person happier. However, large amounts of alcohol increase the risk of certain cancers, liver disease, and mental dementia. In higher doses, it also makes the consumer more aggressive and violent.

8. Never stop or slow down your activities, even if you are retired or do not have much work. Just some mild mental activity such as reading, and physical activity such as walking (especially when you observe and appreciate your surroundings like kids do), will keep you younger longer. It has been shown that an older person who is rather healthy and works at a job will grow old and pass away shortly after retirement. The reason is simply lack of activity.

9. Avoid too much stress. Stressful conditions cause the release of certain hormones or other chemicals in the body. One of these hormones is adrenaline that puts the person in a state of fight or flight. Either one has to fight for his/her life or flee from the danger. This is a survival instinct. However, too much stress would channel your energy into an unnecessary survival feat and stop maintenance of your body. You can also reduce stress by meditation, yoga, and similar tasks. Also, listening to music, having plants and flowers around you, and associating with pleasant friends or even pets can help you.

   Music is an essential activity. Different kinds of music could be useful for different activities. A soothing, calm music is useful when you do mental activity or when you want to relax. Be sure to condition your mind with the same kind of music when you do a specific activity. When you do school homework, for example, always listen to the same music. By listening to this music, you subconsciously reinforce that specific activity. On the other hand, rhythmic and faster music would be nice when you do a physical activity.

   Flowers and plants unconsciously communicate a feeling of well being and energize you. A house with no living thing in it could give you a morbid feeling. The more you are around people you love, the more fun life will be for you. Even pets such as dogs, cats, birds and fish can give you a more lively feeling. Take enjoyable vacations once in a while. They could rejuvenate you. Everyone needs a break once in a while. If you do all the activities mentioned, and still you cannot relax, make sure to see a specialist.

10. Make sure you rest and sleep enough every day. Just as lack of activity is
harmful, overexerting oneself is as harmful, if not more. Each individual has a need for so many hours of sleep every night and it varies from one person to another. If you cannot get enough sleep at night, try to compensate for it the next evening, otherwise you end up harming your system irreversibly. It has been shown that most people have six-hour cycles every day. If you work hard during one cycle, you need to relax for a short period before starting the next cycle. Just sitting in a comfortable chair and closing your eyes, or doing a brief period of meditation will do the job.

11. Anytime we get a chance, we should spend some time chanting, meditating, doing yoga, or even praying. Regardless of what system we choose (religious or spiritual), these activities stimulate the right brain and give one more mental and spiritual strength, thereby one remains healthier and younger. It has been shown statistically that people who do any of the above activities, including going to church, are healthier than the people who do not.

12. Even if you feel old, feeble, and vulnerable, make yourself believe that you are still young. The more belief you have in being old, the faster you grow old. Deepac Chopra believes that we can live up to 300 years, and the reason that the average life span is generally 70 is that people set themselves into a belief that they should grow old and eventually die around 70.

13. There are certain natural supplements which can aid a person to remain younger and healthier longer:

   a. **DHEA:** As mentioned earlier, this is a youth hormone and by taking it in moderation one may bring back some of the youthful conditions.

   b. **Melatonin:** Melatonin is a pineal gland hormone and when we sleep, its concentration increases. However, during aging, the amount of melatonin in the body decreases and thereby it could be considered a "youth hormone" and could possibly facilitate youthful-ness.

   c. **Human Growth Hormones (HGH):** This hormone helps the growth of the growing child. As we reach a certain age, the amount of growth hormone diminishes until it is almost absent. If HGH is injected into an aging individual, it preserves his/her lean body mass and skin tone, boosts the immune system and improves the cardiovascular system.

   At night, HGH will increase for everybody. However, taking sugar at night decreases the amount of HGH and rids you of its benefits.
d. **Testosterone**: Testosterone is the male sex hormone and as we age, its amount decreases. Injections of this hormone to an older person will improve his/her energy and libido, and maintains muscle and reduces total cholesterol. However, it is more proper for men since women start growing facial hair and get male characteristics.

e. **Estrogen/Progesterone**: In many women, menopause brings about certain symptoms such as hot flashes, mood swings, night sweats, and sleeping difficulties. The cause is fluctuating levels of hormone due to menopause. For that, hormone - replacement therapy (HRT) is used. The women are given estrogen (a female hormone) alone or in combination with progesterone (another female hormone). It has recently been shown that estrogen causes higher incidence of breast cancer, cancer of uterus, hypertension, gallstones, and migraine headaches. Although combining progesterone to estrogen reduces the above risks, still some women try to avoid HRT. For this reason certain women try to use natural estrogens (phytoestrogens) which can be obtained from alfalfa, angelica (dong quai), black cohosh, blessed thistle, blue cohosh, cramp bark (squaw vine), damiana, gotu kola, licorice root, red raspberry leaf, sarsaparilla, unicorn root, and yarrow.

Remember to take these supplements only after consulting with a holistic practitioner. You have to make sure that these are appropriate for your condition.

14. Taking medication is very much time dependent. Other activities may be so as well. Cycles of sun, moon and seasons could affect the outcome. One is very familiar with his/her changes during life span. As we grow, certain genes get activated, others deactivated, producing certain characteristics that would require a different diet, activities, etc. However, could one think that time of the day, the month, the season, year, etc., have influence on us, especially on our activities?

For people suffering from asthma, one mid-afternoon dose of medication (steroid) would be better than taking it at any other time. Heart attacks and hypertension are much more common early in the morning. Blood cholesterol levels rise during winter and therefore there will be more occurrences of heart
attacks. Even surgery for breast cancer is better when done midway through the menstrual cycle and survival rates are much higher than operations at any other time.

Try to experiment on yourself. If possible, change the time for exercise and other activity or taking medications, and see the outcome. See what time is better for each activity. You do not have to always continue doing activities at certain times. There may be a better outcome if you make certain changes.

15. Vanity is a major issue these days. To lose weight, many people, especially women, are taking diet pills and going through liposuction. Avoid these procedures as much as possible. Remember that Phenfen, the diet pill, caused serious health problems and even caused death in certain cases. Unless you are obese, you should not try to reduce weight by diet pills and other invasive procedures. Try to lose weight by eating less and moderate exercise. Remember that most models that look anorexic are not adored as so beautiful. There are people with moderate weight who are appreciated more. Also, many members of the opposite sex may have tastes that appreciate heavier people. Not everyone should be thin.

Also, avoid cosmetic surgeries as much as possible. Do not do such great harm to your body just because you may look a little better. Your body is all you have and it should be treated with respect. If you are getting older, accept it and try to improve your appearance by the grace of your age rather than cosmetic surgeries to make you look just a few years younger.

16. Do not be fanatical about any of the above. Remember that moderation is the best virtue. As one of the holistic doctors said: “even be moderate in moderation.”