

## **Ten Ways to Reduce Your Doctor Visits**

### **By Forrest Beck, ND**

The American economic landscape, and the world for that matter, has changed dramatically in the last year and will likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future. We are once again entering an era where frugality and self-reliance are capturing mainstream consciousness, rather than being perceived as the sole practices of fringe survivalist groups. We are cooking at home more, having things repaired instead of buying new, doing our own house and lawn care, and traveling shorter distances for vacation. Although an emphasis on self-care and education may not be sexy, fashionable, or even easy, it should be the foundation of any patient-doctor relationship.

With this in mind, I would like to share ten ways that you can gain greater health, thereby reducing the need for frequent visits to the doctor's office. You most likely will be familiar with most of my recommendations, but an honest self-evaluation should help you determine where you can improve. The reward is not only a savings in medical expenses over time, but better overall health.

- 1) **Sleep-** In today's stressful environment, most everyone could use more sleep to help replenish vital energy reserves. Try to go to bed no later than 10 PM to prevent disruption in normal biological clock signals such as melatonin, cortisol, and IL-6 (interleukin 6 is an immune modulator). Sleep in a cool, pitch black room without clocks and other items displaying bright neon lights. Avoid news, stimulating movies and books, before bedtime, as well as caffeine, sweets, and higher carbohydrate meals. Do include adequate protein for dinner and even an apple before bedtime aids in the transport of L-tryptophan across the blood-brain barrier. There are many additional natural sleep aids from 5-HTP and L-tryptophan to melatonin, L-theanine, valerian, passionflower, and rhodiola.

- 2) **Food and Digestion-** Eat to reduce and prevent inflammation, as this is a common source of most chronic disease. Avoiding coffee and tea helps increase stomach acid production which is essential for proper digestion of proteins and fats, as well as absorbing important vitamins and minerals. Heartburn and GERD are generally signs of low stomach acid production, contrary to the advice of conventional doctors. Greatly reduce sweets, alcohol, and high carbohydrate foods like bread, rice, pasta, and pastries. Increase protein (not soy) and fat intake to provide basic building blocks for hormones and energy production in your body. Monitor how often you have a bowel movement (1-3 formed stools per day is optimal) and consider a digestive enzyme, glutamine, fish oil, flax seeds, and probiotics to help normalize function. Lastly, low tannin teas such as fennel and chamomile are good options to commonly caffeinated teas and also are soothing to the digestive tract.
- 3) **Water Intake-** Many people do not drink enough water and substitute coffee and juices instead. This can lead to problems long term with fluctuating blood sugar, digestive disturbances, hormonal disruption, and the effects of chronic dehydration, which are surprisingly far-ranging. Attempt to drink at least 64 oz of water per day and maybe more if you exercise intensely. Sipping warm water in the winter is a frequent substitute to teas that some use.
- 4) **Exercise-** We are meant to be mobile beings and the benefits of exercise are well established. Aside from helping maintain optimal weight and reducing excess weight, both weight bearing and aerobic activity have several attributes. An increase in lean muscle mass helps regulate sugar by increasing insulin sensitivity. In addition, inflammatory cytokines are reduced by regular exercise often helping conditions like arthritis and cardiovascular disease. Aim for 30-60 minutes per day, preferably no later than 7 PM to prevent being 'amped' up before bed.

- 5) **Sunlight and Vitamin D-** Don't be afraid of the sun!  
Humans and mammals in general have a long-standing essential relationship with the sun. Sunlight is nature's source of vitamin D production. In just 20 minutes of mid-day exposure to summer sun, 15-20,000 IU of vitamin D can be manufactured by the body, whereas many multivitamins give you 400 IU per serving. Most people are D deficient in the Northwest and need to supplement between 2,000-5,000 IU of D daily, excluding summer months depending on sun exposure. Attempt to get 10 minutes of mid-day sun per day, then use sunblock if desired or wear more clothing. Obtain a 25(OH) vitamin D test to determine whether you are deficient. Vitamin D helps prevent and treat colds, flus, multiple cancers, asthma, fibromyalgia, and many other things. Google Vitamin D Council for more information.
- 6) **Smoking-** Don't smoke!
- 7) **Manage Stress-** Several things already mentioned should help mitigate the effects of stress. Other suggestions include yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and getting together with friends who share a common interest. L-theanine, rhodiola, a B-complex, B-12 injections, and bacopa monniera may be necessary to defray unproductive reactions to stress.
- 8) **Homeopathy-** Arnica 200c is absolutely indispensable for anything related to trauma. Injuries following a car accident, sprained ankle, pain after an intense workout, and similar ailments will generally be helped by this remedy, though obviously shouldn't replace appropriate medical care. Consult an experienced homeopath for more in-depth treatment of chronic conditions.
- 9) **Hormone Imbalances-** Hormones play an integral role in maintaining health and minimizing some of the detrimental effects of aging. There is too much to say to do justice here, but having a doctor knowledgeable in hormone therapy assess and treat you saves money in the long run by reducing the likelihood of more serious diseases from arising.

- 10)       **Remove Toxins-** Clean up your water supply by buying a charcoal shower filter which removes chlorine. A reverse osmosis or copper-zinc filtration system for drinking water greatly reduces or eliminates bacteria, fluoride, and inorganic/organic contaminants.