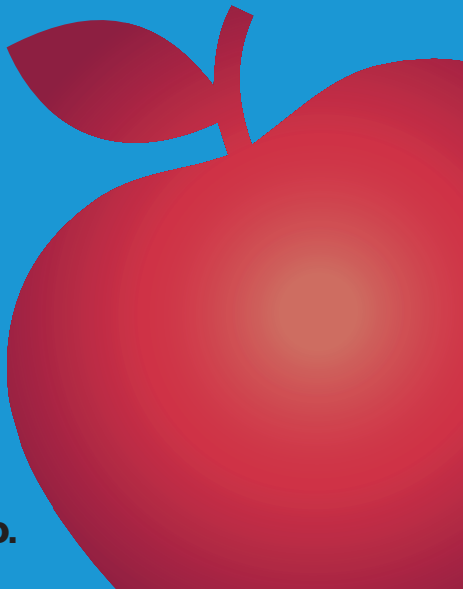


The New Guide

**A Pocket Guide
for Managing
Medical
Symptoms**

Douglas M. Lakin, M.D.

Debra Landau-West, M.S., R.D.



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Douglas M. Lakin, M.D. &
Debra Landau-West, M.S., R.D.

Paradise Valley Medical Clinic
9977 N 90th Street, Suite 180
Scottsdale, AZ 85258

douglakin@doctordoug.com
480.614.5800

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FOREWORD (Written by my dad for the Original Guide)

What do you do when you find yourself in a medical emergency? How do you handle a medical problem that arises?

Doctor Doug Lakin has been board certified in internal medicine, and has practiced it since 1990. During that time he has been at the forefront of computerized medicine. He is a graduate of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore. He is constantly on the Internet staying connected to his individual patients.

This book summarizes what he has learned over the years in his practice of medicine. The book offers solutions to many medical problems that may arise. Dr. Lakin has been recognized by his peers as one of the best doctors in Phoenix. So, here is a recognized expert telling you how to handle most medical situations in a book that you should always keep handy to reference. You will be glad you possess it.

Sincerely,

Mervyn Lakin, MD

DR. DOUGLAS M. LAKIN BIO

Dr. Lakin is a graduate of ASU's Barrett Honors College, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He has been a general Internist in private practice in Scottsdale, Arizona for the past 28 years.

DEBRA LANDAU-WEST BIO

Debra Landau-West, M.S., R.D. has been in private practice since 1979. Debra trained at Arizona State University and Emory University. Debra specializes in eating disorders, but her practice covers a broad base of clientele including diabetics, those with gastrointestinal distress, athletes, individuals suffering from allergies and people who just wish to enjoy improved health and stamina.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Patients,

This guide is one in a series of books meant to provide simple answers for day-to-day health questions. It is my effort to pass on 55 years of wisdom accrued as the child of a physician and as a Johns Hopkins-trained internist with over 30 years in practice. I hope this advice is useful to you and your family. It's actually meant for my own.

Doctor Doug

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***Section One:
General Health Care***

Notes

Home Medical Kit

Recommended Items

The following is a recommended list of over-the-counter supplies to keep handy in your medicine kit for run-of-the-mill medical issues that will crop up from time-to-time.

- **Sudafed** (pseudophedrine), 30 mg tablets... for congestion and drainage associated with infection or allergies
- **Chlor-Trimeton** (chlorpheniramine), 4 mg tablets... for congestion and drainage associated with infection or allergies
- **Claritin** (loratadine), 10 mg tablets... for allergic reactions of the skin, sinus, or chest
- **Pepcid AC** tablets (famotidine) or **Pepcid Complete**... for upset digestion
- **Milk of Magnesia** or Magnesium Oxide tablets (400mg)... for constipation
- **Advil** (Ibuprofen) 200 mg tablets or **Aleve** (Naproxen) 220 mg... for aches, pains, fevers
- **Robitussin DM** or **Delsym syrup** (guifenesin/dextromethorphan)... for cough
- **Imodium AD** tablets (loperamide)... for diarrhea

- **Cortaid 10** (1% hydrocortisone cream)... for rashes
- **Bacitracin** ointment... for skin infections
- **Band-Aid** adhesive bandages
- **Digital thermometer**

Additional Items

If you want a more complete home medical kit, you can include these items that are of value but less essential:

- **Triaminic Cold and Cough**... for cough and congestion associated with infection and allergies
- **Mylanta/Gaviscon**... for upset digestion and heartburn
- **Glycerin suppositories**... for constipation
- **Tylenol** (acetaminophen--any dose)... for aches/pains/fevers
- **Dramamine** or **Bonine**... for motion sickness, nausea, dizziness
- **Hydrogen peroxide**... to clean infected wounds
- **Gauze** for compresses... (2 x 2 inch or 4 x 4 inch)
- **Aloe Vera gel**... for burns
- **Vanicream** (moisturizing cream)
- **Coban** (stretchy, self-adhering) wrap

- **Sterile saline solution...** contact lens solution is the most readily available form of this

Using Your Home Medical Kit

For Colds and Cough

These medications are for sinus congestion and drainage as well as a cough that can result from drainage. These symptoms are usually the result of viral infections that do not require antibiotics.

- **Sudafed** (pseudoephedrine) 30 mg: Take 1 pill 2-4 times per day.
This little red tablet is super for congestion and drainage. It provides excellent symptom relief and is safe for everyone. It may require a signature for purchase, as the pharmacist keeps it behind the counter.
- **Chlor-Trimeton** (chlorpheniramine) 4 mg: Take 1 pill 2-4 times per day.
This antihistamine is great for allergy relief for a few hours, and is also good for congestion and drainage from colds (viral infections). It is drying (too drying for some), but is safe for everyone in this low dose. Taking it at night is preferred, but not required, as it can make you a little sleepy.
NOTE: This can be hard to find. Walgreens carries this as Walfinate 4mg, or you can find it in Coricidin HBP products (all versions contain chlorpheniramine except for Coricidin HBP Chest & Cough... do not get this particular version).
NOTE: Claritin/Zyrtec/Allegra will not dry up secretions from

an infection; do not use when you have a congestion from an infection. They only dry up drainage from an allergic process.

- **Triaminic Cold and Cough**
This is an all-in-one product and I like it when taken in low doses (1-2 teaspoons). It is safe and effective for congestion, drainage, and cough with cold symptoms.
- **Robitussin DM or Delsym**
These cough syrups can be helpful for mild cough. They do not help congestion. The DM (dextromethorphan) is the only over-the-counter product generally effective for cough. If cough is severe and sleep disturbing, this medication may not be effective. In this situation you will require a prescription strength cough syrup with some codeine or hydrocodone. You will have to contact the office for a prescription.

Fever/Aches/Pains

- **Advil** (ibuprofen 200mg)... 2-3 tablets taken one time, use from 1 to 3 times per day.
This is the preferred anti-inflammatory and is a solid anti-inflammatory dose for fever, aches or pains. Although you can overdo such medications (see individual chapters for safe uses of medications), taken for brief periods of time (3-5 days), Advil and Aleve are safe in almost 100 percent of people, unless you have an aspirin allergy; then use Tylenol as an alternative.

- **Tylenol** (acetaminophen 325mg, 500mg, or 650mg)... 2 pills taken at one time, use from 1 to 3 times per day.

A fine pain and fever medication, but with no anti-inflammatory effect. Doses of 650-1300 mg at a time are effective for most people. May be taken for 3-5 days with no concern.

NOTE: Don't take more than 4000 mg total per day.

For Diarrhea

- **Imodium AD** (loperamide)

This is a very effective medication for diarrhea and can work quickly. For severe diarrhea, take 2 pills immediately and then 1 after each loose bowel movement, up to 8 per day. You can take them one after another if needed, until symptoms resolve.

For Nausea

There are no effective over-the-counter medications for nausea and vomiting, although you can try Bonine or Dramamine if you have them around the house. It is nice to have a prescription nausea medication around if you are prone to developing these symptoms with infections (some people are more prone than others). Suppositories (medication taken rectally) are preferred for nausea and vomiting, so that the medication can absorb into your system despite vomiting. Compazine or Phenergan suppositories

are preferred and used immediately with significant symptoms and then repeated in 4-6 hours if need be.

Suppository facts: These medications look like little torpedoes. The pointed end is not the end to insert into the anus. Insert the flat end. This will allow the body to retain the suppository best as the pointed end will gently 'close the door' once inserted rectally and will prevent it from being expelled quickly.

For Constipation

- **Milk of Magnesia:** (liquid form... or magnesium oxide 400 mg tablets): For urgent relief: 2 tablespoons every 2 to 4 hours until you 'clear out' (or 2 pills of magnesium oxide every 2 to 4 hours until effective)

These are the single most effective medications for immediate relief of constipation and it is the best medication to have around the house for this purpose.

- **Glycerin suppositories:**

These are also quite effective when taken rectally to get a quick resolution of constipation. When taken rectally, the suppository acts as an irritant and generally results in reflexive evacuation and a bowel movement within 30 minutes.

For Indigestion

- **Pepcid AC tablets** (famotidine) or Pepcid Complete: You can take it 1–2 times per day to keep the stomach settled
For indigestion, heartburn, reflux or general 'sour stomach,' I prefer Pepcid AC.
- **Mylanta or Gaviscon:** For digestive upset, sour stomach and heartburn, 2 tablespoons are good for relief. You can dose repeatedly every hour if you need it, but be aware that too much can result in abdominal cramping and diarrhea

For Allergies

- **Chor-Trimeton** (chlorpheniramine) 4 mg or Benadryl (diphenhydramine) 25 mg: 1 pill every 4 to 6 hours
Either of these are great for itching eyes or itching skin, sinus congestion and drainage from allergies, or any allergic reaction to a medication. The only drawback is that some people get very sleepy from these types of antihistamines.
- **Claritin** (loratadine) 10 mg: Take 1 daily
Great for long lasting effect without sedation. Use with seasonal allergy symptoms (nasal drainage, itching eyes, cough and nasal drip), or an allergic skin reaction. Helps suppress allergy symptoms for 24 hours and can safely be taken several days in a row.
NOTE: Claritin and other non-sedating antihistamines (Allegra/Zyrtec) will not dry up secretions from infections;

they only dry up allergic drainage/secretions and will not provide relief if symptoms are due to infection.

- **Cortaid 10** (1% hydrocortisone cream): Apply once or twice daily to affected area
This is a good, general, mild steroid cream for any skin rash or hives. It's safe to apply to all parts of the body (except directly in the eyes).

Topical Medications

- **Cortaid 10** (hydrocortisone cream): Apply once or twice daily
Good for general irritations and itches (see above for rash).
- **Bacitracin ointment:** Apply once or twice daily
This is the best of the over-the-counter anti-infective ointments and is good for scrapes and burns or bites.
- **Hydrogen peroxide**
This is good for topical application to scrapes and wounds or bites. Use it with the initial injury, but it is not ideal to use on a repeated basis. Pouring this on a scrape or bite initially can act to remove bacteria and cleanse debris from the area.

For Motion Sickness (Car/Boat/Airplane)

- **Dramamine** or **Bonine** (meclizine): One pill up to four times per day
Either of these medications is effective for nausea that develops from any type of motion sickness (car, boat, plane). They are most effective when taken 30–60 minutes prior to travel. Dramamine is a sedative; Bonine less so.

Immunizations

Taking preventive measures is what smart people do to live longer. Science has proven the overall benefits of these immunizations and you should give them strong consideration.

Here I list the Who, What, Where, Why, When of these immunizations as well as the....

Costs
Negatives
&
Bottom Line.

Hepatitis A Shot

Who

Anybody who eats out at restaurants (sushi/raw seafood especially) or who travels to Mexico or other undeveloped countries (this is pretty much everyone).

Age range: any age, but over 75...perhaps less important.

What

Two shot series. First shot now (works quickly...in a few weeks).

Second shot in 6-12 months (if you forget...OK to get later than that).

Where

We carry the shot or you can get it at your pharmacy.

Why

You don't want this completely preventable disease. It will make you sick for 1-2 months and you will be out of work for a few weeks at a minimum.

You can give this to other people in your household. It is highly contagious.

There are outbreaks in restaurants and communities. You don't want to have to 'rush' to get the immunization if you were exposed accidentally. It could be too late to prevent infection.

People who have Hepatitis A can give it to you before they are even aware they are ill.

When

Any age is fine. It lasts a lifetime, so getting it when you are younger is a good thing.

Reactions: Very little in way of negatives. Sore arm is mild and systemic reactions are very rare.

Negatives: None.

Bottom Line: I completely recommend this vaccine. It is safe and effective and you don't want to get this infection that is 100% preventable. Get this vaccination.

Hepatitis B Shot

Who

Although everyone is at risk for this infection, no matter the age, if you are older and have not had the shot, you probably don't need to get it.

Children get it as a matter of course among routine immunizations.

If you are very sexually active, you should have this shot as the infection is transmitted through blood exposure and sexual contact.

What

3 shot series.

- 1st shot now
- 2nd shot in 2 months
- 3rd shot 6-12 months from now

Where

We carry the shot or you can get it at your pharmacy.

Why

Hepatitis B can cause both acute and chronic liver infection. The acute infection will make you sick for 1-2 months and you will miss work for a few weeks at minimum.

If you travel to Asia quite a bit, this is worthwhile, or to Mexico or other developing areas.

If you are sexually active and less than perfect with precautionary measures.

When

Any age is fine, but if you are over 50 and not having casual sexual activity, you probably don't need this.

It is suggested at the time of foreign travel, but I don't routinely recommend this unless you are travelling to developing areas and having casual sexual contact in those countries.

Reactions: Very little in way of negatives. Sore arm is mild and systemic reactions are very rare.

Negatives: Not everyone responds to this vaccination; in other words...you get the series of shots but still are not protected.

Bottom Line: If you are sexually active with various partners, it is a good idea. If you travel

repeatedly to developing parts of the world, also a good idea.

Pneumonia Shots

There are 2 pneumonia shots: **Pneumovax 23** and **Prevnar 13**.

Pneumovax is older but not quite as effective. It has a long track record of safety.

Prevnar 13 is newer and more effective, but there is less experience with this to date.

It's recommended that you get both, 1 year apart, in either order, although it is recommended to get Prevnar 13 first, it is not required.

PNEUMOVAX 23

Who

Definitely if you are over 65 you should consider this if you have a chronic health condition that compromises your immune system (diabetes, COPD, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, reduced immunity from other diseases) you should definitely get this.

What

1 shot.

Boosters can be given in 10 years after the first shot if your immune system is very weak (this includes missing a spleen).

Where

Our office or at your pharmacy.

Why

It reduces the potential of serious bacterial pneumonia (the most common type called pneumococcal pneumonia).

If you are a healthy person, pneumonia is in the 'top 5' of serious health threats after age 65.

Reactions: Sore arm is possible, but not common. No other major reactions generally.

Negatives: Not completely preventive. You can still get pneumonia, but this shot makes it less likely that you will be very ill from such and infection.

Bottom Line: If you are over 65 I wholeheartedly recommend this. Although not a perfect vaccine, it is better than 'nothing' against a common but often ignored health issue.

PREVNAR 13

Who

Definitely if you are over 65 you should consider this. If you have a chronic health condition that compromises your immune system (diabetes, COPD, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, reduced immunity from other diseases) you should definitely get this.

What

1 shot. No booster ever. One shot and done.

Where

Currently only available in your pharmacy or our office.

Why

It reduces the potential of serious bacterial pneumonia (only the most common type called pneumococcal pneumonia).

If you are a healthy person, pneumonia is the 'top 5' of health threats after age 65.

Reactions: Sore arm is possible, but not common. No other major reactions generally.

Bottom Line: A new pneumonia shot, but data is strong and favorable, and it's a good idea to get

this shot. Not perfect, but appears to be stronger than the more traditional Pneumovax.

Shingles Shot

(New... Shingrix. Old shot Zostavax... no longer recommended).

Who

Anyone over the age of 50. Definitely important the older you get as shingles risk increases with age. There is no age limit, so even in your 80s this is a good vaccine.

Anyone who has already had the previous shingles shot (Zostavax).

Anyone with compromised immune system (it is a 'dead' virus and cannot cause infection like the Zostavax could).

What

2 shot series.

1 shot now and the 2nd shot in 2-6 months. (You can get it later if you miss the 2nd shot.)

Where

At our office or at your pharmacy.

Why

Shingles is reactivated chicken pox that comes from your own body. It is a painful condition that can last weeks to years.

You have a 33 percent chance of having shingles in your lifetime and 50 percent chance of getting shingles once you are in your 80s.

When

After the age of 50 and more importantly after 60. Risk for shingles increases with age.

Reactions: 1 in 10 chance of feeling like you have the flu after you take the shot. It may make you feel tired/achy for 1-2 days... so be prepared.

Negatives: It is a new immunization and well-studied, but has not been used broadly in the population, so the exact nature of how people react to the shot is not certain at this time. In the studies done to date, the shot is very tolerable and without major side effects (over 10,000 people studied).

Bottom Line: Good idea to get this vaccine, especially if you did not get the previous version (Zostavax). After age 65 it is highly recommended.

After we see the results in a few years, this immunization will end shingles in the U.S.

Tetanus Shot (Td or TdaP)

Who

Anyone who has not had their shot in the past 10 years or who has an injury and sustains a deep cut.

What

Single shot to act as a booster.

Option: Td (Tetanus/diphtheria)... covers both infections. Is generally covered by insurances.

TdaP (Tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis (whooping cough))... covers all three infections. An update of the Pertussis portion of this vaccine is a good idea and prevents an illness that adults carry and children, especially babies, can get.

When

If you are more than 10 years since your last injection or if you were just injured or bitten by an animal.

Where

Our office or your pharmacy/ER/Urgent Care.

Why

Tetanus is extremely rare in the modern civilized world, but only due to massive efforts at immunization.

Tetanus is deadly. You should try to stay up to date on this immunization, or at least reasonably close to the schedule listed above.

When injured it is a good 'excuse' to get it updated.

Negatives: You will definitely have a sore arm for a day or two from the injection. Otherwise, no major issues.

Bottom Line: I recommend this get updated at the time of an injury, if it is due.

Also recommend if you have small children or are a new grandparent that you get the Tdap version.

I don't recommend you seek a booster if it's 'due.' Tetanus is exceedingly rare and old immunizations remains generally effective.

Liquids

How Much Per Day?

Minimum

36 oz. (3 soda can-sized servings).

Optimal

48-60 oz. (4-5 soda can-sized servings).

Maximum

96 oz. (8 soda can-sized servings).

For Reference, Starbucks Cup Sizes

- Short: 8 oz
- Tall: 12 oz
- Grande 16 oz
- Venti Hot: 20 oz
- Venti Cold: 24 oz
- Trenta Cold: 30 oz

How to Know if You're Getting Enough?

Signs of Moderate Dehydration

- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Thirst

- Decreases in urine
- Darker urine color (light tea-color)
- Dizziness/lightheadedness

Severe Dehydration Signs (in extreme heat)

- Irritability and confusion
- Very dry mouth
- Little or no urine
- Very dark colored urine (dark tea-color)
- Rapid heartbeat
- If experiencing severe dehydration symptoms that are not improving with drinking liquid, or if unable to drink liquids, go to the Emergency Room

In Arizona Summer Heat Daily Needs Rise

How much liquid is required in summer heat?

Modify above recommendations by:

- Drinking enough water until you have to urinate nearly as often as is normal for you
- Drinking enough that urine color is light/clear

The Best to Drink

From Best to Worst for Hydration:

- Water (tap preferred for its fluoride)
- Modified-water drinks (e.g. Vitamin Water, Gatorade)

- Decaffeinated tea
- Non-caffeinated sodas (e.g. Sprite, Seven-Up, ginger ale)
- Milk

Caffeine

Caffeine and coffee consumption is safe and can be effective to keep you awake and give energy.

But It Can Cause

- Jitteriness
- Irritability
- Disturbed sleep
- Rapid heartbeat
- Lack of dollars (if it's Starbucks :)

Safe Levels

- For adults, about 400 milligrams (mg) is safe, but this varies person-to-person based on sensitivity to its effects

Refer to list below, but that is roughly:

- 10 cans of soda
- 1.2 Starbucks Grandes (straight coffee)
- 2.6 Starbucks Grande cappuccinos or lattes
- 3 regular Dunkin' Donuts coffees
- 4 small McDonald's coffees

- 8 20 oz. Lipton Iced Teas
- 12 16 oz. Nestea Iced Teas
- 10 16 oz. Snapple Iced Teas
- 5 Red Bulls (8 oz. small can)
- 2 Monster/Rock Star (16 oz. large can)

How Much is in Common Drinks

Soft Drinks (12 oz. unless noted)

- Coca Cola: 34 mg
- Diet Coke: 34 mg
- Pepsi: 34 mg
- Diet Pepsi: 34 mg
- Dr. Pepper: 38 mg
- Mountain Dew: 52 mg
- 7-Up: 0 mg
- Sprite: 0 mg

Coffee

- Decaf: 2 mg
- Drip regular (5 oz.): 146 mg
- Starbucks Grande: 330 mg
- Starbucks Grande cappuccino: 150 mg
- Starbucks Grande latte: 150 mg
- Dunkin' Donuts regular: 132 mg

- McDonald's small: 109 mg

Tea

- Brewed (3 minutes; 5 oz. cup): 22-46 mg
- Lipton Iced Tea (20 oz.): 50 mg
- Nestea Iced Tea (16 oz.): 34 mg
- Snapple Tea (16 oz.): 42 mg
- Crystal Light Iced Tea (8 oz.): 11 mg

Energy Drinks

- Red bull (8 oz.): 80 mg
- Monster (16 oz.): 160 mg
- Rockstar (16 oz.): 160mg

Final Notes

- Caffeine content of the most popular energy drinks is not significantly more than what's in other beverages
- Manufacturers of energy drinks have employed reverse psychology, using a "fear factor" to help boost sales. They ARE NOT demonstrably more dangerous than other caffeinated beverages

Food Choices

The Three Food Types

Carbohydrates

- Good sources (whole grain preferred): starchy foods like bread, rice, pasta, potatoes
- Natural sources of simple sugars: fresh fruit, dried fruits
- Less good sources: sugary treats like candy, doughnuts, baked desserts, cakes, cookies, chips
- Tip to remember: 4g of sugar is about 1 teaspoon of sugar

Proteins

- Lean meats: chicken, fish, seafood, steaks, burgers
- Eggs
- Beans: black beans, pinto beans, garbanzo beans (hummus)

Fats

- Dairy: cheese, cream cheese
- Baked goods: cakes, cookies, croissants, doughnuts

- Fatty meats: sausage, bacon, lunch meat (salami, bologna), pepperoni
- Other fats: salad dressing, mayo, guacamole, avocado, olive oil

WHAT THEY DO FOR YOU

- Carbs: main source of energy for the body
- Protein: build up and repair structures in the body, last resort for energy
- Fats: source of high-density energy

Meals

What Each Meal Should Have

- Balanced source of calories between carbohydrates, proteins, and fats
- Avoid excessive simple sugar sources (sweets)
- Keep portion sizes controlled

Breakfast Guidelines

Breakfast is a Very Important Meal

- It jumpstarts your body's metabolism
- It helps you maintain energy through the day

The Ideal Breakfast

The best breakfast has balanced carbs, proteins, and fats. Common breakfast mistakes:

- Orange juice and cereal (too much starch/sugar)
- Smoothies without a protein boost (too much starch/sugar)
- Flavored coffee drinks (too much sugar)
- Plain coffee (no calories)

Consider instead:

- Greek yogurt and granola

- Eggs/egg whites and Canadian bacon/turkey sausage or other lean meat
- Fresh fruit (not fruit juices) like apples, oranges, bananas, melon, and berries

About Snacking

Snacks help maintain constant level of energy, especially if you go a long time between meals.

- They can provide nutrients not eaten at meal times (e.g. more protein and whole grains if you eat some peanut butter toast)
- They can also provide excess calories; be careful not to eat too many calorie-dense foods, even if they're physically small portions
- A good rule of thumb: eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full

Eating Out

Things to Avoid or Minimize

- Chips
- French fries
- Soft drinks—either with sugar or diet
- Fried foods

Common Healthy Options to Eat More of

- Grilled chicken

- Fish (not fried)
- Baked chips
- Roasted vegetables
- Steamed vegetables

Best Options at Fast Food Places

- Oatmeal with milk (available at McDonald's)
- Egg sandwiches (available at many locations including Starbucks and McDonald's)
- Sub sandwich with extra meat and veggies, bottom of the bread only
- Panda Express: Broccoli beef, String bean chicken breast, or Mushroom chicken
- Pizza with veggies...no meat
- Oil and vinegar salad dressing
- Mustard instead of mayonnaise
- Yogurt parfait with fruit and granola (McDonald's)
- Chili (Wendy's)
- Salads with chicken (available at almost all fast food chains)
- Salad with dressing on the side (available at almost all fast food chains)
- Chicken wraps with veggies
- Bowls with beans, rice, guacamole and veggies (Chipotle, Rubio's)

What to Have at Home

Fridge

- Yogurt
- String cheese
- Milk (any type)
- Turkey or beef jerky
- Baby carrots
- Water
- Hard-boiled eggs

Pantry

- Apples
- Raisins
- Plain cereals (e.g. Cheerios)
- Canned soup
- Peanut butter
- Almond butter
- Granola bars
- Protein bars

Exercise & Physical Activity

General Notes

Physical activity is the single most effective method to improve and maintain your health.

Being active through your day via walking, skating, or biking routines is the simplest and most effective way to get healthy activity.

In addition, focused physical exercise is healthy. A minimum recommended amount: 30 minutes, 3 times a week, and includes activities to increase your heart rate and exert your muscles.

- Sporting games (soccer, tennis)
- Running
- Cross-training
- Swimming
- Gym work outs

Tips to Increase Physical Activity

- Walk or ride a bike instead of driving
- Use the stairs instead of elevators
- Park farther from buildings so you have to walk longer to the door
- Participate in sport activities

Sleep

General Notes

- 7-8 hours is usually the recommended amount
- A minority of people can get by on 5 or 6 hours
- If you are “pushing it” and not getting the proper amount of sleep, it is best to return to your normal sleep amount as soon as possible
- If you are a late riser, adjust your schedule to start later in the day
- Alcohol and caffeine can disrupt your sleep, so avoid them if you’re having trouble sleeping

Necessary Things for Proper Sleep

- Comfortable mattress and bedding
- A dark room
No LED screens, computers, charger lights, cell phones, TVs, and cover any lights.
- A quiet room; use earplugs if necessary
- Turn off phone alerts
Especially the storm warning alerts!
- Have a regular, set time for sleeping
- Follow the same ritual (showering, brushing your teeth) before you go to sleep every night

How to Get Your Sleep Back on Track

1. Limit caffeine, one cup in the morning is fine, but maybe not a second.
2. Limit alcohol.
3. Resist any temptation to nap during the day.
4. Make it a goal to get to bed and sleep through the night.
5. Exercise. Even a short walk every day is beneficial for a good night of sleep. Do not exercise right before bed, however. Exercise before bed makes it hard to sleep.
6. Take all distractions out of your bedroom, especially electronics such as your cell phone, TV, or computer.
7. Give up reading before bed.
8. If you can't fall asleep, or if you wake in the night, leave your bed and go sit in another room until you feel sleepy again.
9. Then go back to bed and let that sleepy feeling overtake you.

Travel Medical Kit

This is a more advanced list of medications that is useful for travelers who might be far away from medical care. Here is a short list of medications for stocking your kit:

- Z-Pak (Zithromax)
- Cipro (Ciprofloxacin)
- Lomotil (diphenoxylate/atropine)
- Compazine (prochlorperazine) suppositories
- Hydrocodone
- Valium (diazepam)

Before departure it's wise to familiarize yourself with local health conditions. The Center for Disease Control (cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/) has specific recommendations, enabling you to have a basic awareness and take simple precautions.

For Cough and Colds

Z-Pak: Zithromax is a general antibiotic in the erythromycin family but is easier on the stomach. Antibiotics are not to be used for all coughs

and colds as most are due to viruses and will not be helped by antibiotics.

It is worthwhile to have this around during travel for lingering upper respiratory symptoms that are transforming into a more serious infection in the ears, sinuses, or lungs.

Codeine-containing Cough Syrups (promethazine with codeine or Hycodan/Tussionex): These prescription cough syrups with codeine or codeine-derivatives, are much more effective than over-the-counter preparations and are useful in people who tolerate such. They are stronger and can cause constipation when used repeatedly, so do be aware of these effects. Using a Vicodin (hydrocodone tablet) is also an effective treatment for severe cough if you had those, but not cough syrup, on hand.

For Aches/Pains

Hydrocodone (Vicodin/Lortab): This is a narcotic painkiller and is useful to have around if you will be out of touch with medical assistance. Taken sparingly, for severe pain, it is quite effective, but you need to know that you are tolerant of narcotic medications, as it can cause nausea. (It can also be used for severe cough.)

For Diarrhea

Lomotil (diphenoxylate/atropine): This tiny anti-diarrhea pill is more effective generally than Imodium (loperamide) and good for travel as it works a bit quicker. You take 2 immediately when severe diarrhea occurs and then 1 after each loose bowel movement, up to 8 in a day.

Cipro: Taken for 3 days (twice daily) it can be useful for traveler's diarrhea and is fine to have and use if you are having a very severe diarrheal episode that lingers or overwhelms. Please know that as most diarrheal illnesses during travel are related to stresses and food changes, Cipro is not to be used at the first signs of diarrhea, but rather for more severe cases.

Alternative: Use your Z-pak... that can work for diarrheal illness during travel as well.

For Nausea

Home remedies for nausea are of limited use and can be tried for mild symptoms. Warm tea, flat ginger ale, or ginger root, can provide some degree of relief, as can a cold pack to the forehead or back of the neck. If stronger remedies are required, it is nice to have a prescription around

if you are prone to developing these symptoms with infections (some people are more prone than others to this).

Suppositories (medication taken rectally) are preferred for nausea and vomiting, so that the medication can absorb into your system. Compazine (prochlorperazine) or Phenergan (promethazine) suppositories are preferred and used immediately with significant symptoms and then repeated in 4–6 hours if need be. Check “suppository facts” above in the Home Medical Kit section for proper use.

Anxiety/Stress/Sleep

Valium (diazepam) 5mg: One of the original relaxers, Valium, is effective in many situations that induce anxiety or require assistance with relaxation such as severe stressful family or life events or during long distance travel. Just 5mg... one or two pills at a time, is an excellent relaxer. Do not use if you are driving.

Ambien (zolpidem) 5–10mg: This is very effective to assist with sleeping in difficult or unusual situations that may develop during travel (on a plane or train or in an unfamiliar bed).

Altitude

Diamox (acetazolamide) 250mg: One pill twice a day of this medication is useful when traveling to altitude above 8,000–9,000 feet. Everyone is different as to how well they accommodate to altitude, but these medications are very safe and effective. You take the pills 1 day prior to travel to altitude then for 3–5 days while at altitude. Diamox can prevent headache, nausea and shortness of breath that develops at altitude in some people.

Special Note: If you are traveling to exotic locations (esp. tropical or Southern hemisphere continents), be aware there are diseases not prevalent in the Northern (colder) climates. The medical profession in general is not accustomed to certain symptoms and may not be able to effectively diagnose.

Vitamin Recommendations

As a rule, I do not recommend much in the way of supplemental vitamins for healthy adults. I certainly do not recommend herbal supplements generally. Here are the reasons I am critical of vitamin/mineral/herbal supplements:

Supplementation

The data for supplementation is, at best, mixed, and at worst, there may be supplementation negatives

There is little to no scientific evidence of the benefits of vitamin supplementation, except for specific disease states, which I will list below. Yes, vitamins in their natural forms in foods are beneficial but not isolated as specific supplements.

Vitamin/Supplement Quality May Be Suspect

Regulation of vitamin production is not FDA sanctioned, which means that you are depending on the good graces of the manufacturer to provide the supplements in the quantities that are mentioned and to confirm that the processes of production are safe and without tainting from potentially toxic byproducts or contaminants. Given the concerns about production in foreign

countries, I feel there is legitimate reason for concern.

Possible Negatives of Supplementation

The logic is as follows: Cancer cells grow at a faster rate than normal cells. To grow quickly, cells require the 'building blocks' of cell growth, of which vitamins are a key element. Providing supplementation of needed materials would seem to benefit cancer cells more readily than normal cells, as the cancer cells are growing fast and uncontrolled, while normal cells are growing slower and in a controlled manner.

Vitamin/Supplement Peddlers Mostly Profit Focused

Their ultimate motive is profit and thus they will sell the benefits of their products. They avoid discussing any negatives. They are not objective.

Advertisements for Vitamins Rest on Testimonials.

Hearsay and endorsements rarely involve legitimate scientific validation. When science is invoked, it is generally done so in a non-rigorous context and conclusions from suspect experts and labs are always uncertain. In certain situations, supplementation is valid but it must be analyzed. Here is what I look for when a need for supplementation seems necessary.

Legitimate Supplementation to Consider

Calcium and Vitamin D in the setting of osteoporosis (see “High Calcium Diet” on page 24 of *The Diets MiniBük* by Douglas Lakin, M.D. & Debbie Landau-West, R.D.).

Vitamin B-12 supplementation in pernicious anemia (this must be given as an injection since the oral medication is not well-absorbed in patients who are deficient).

Iron supplementation in the setting of iron deficiency anemia (see “High Iron Diet” page 40 of *The Diets MiniBük* by Douglas Lakin, M.D. & Debbie Landau-West, R.D.).

Lutein in cases of macular degeneration.

Vitamin E (400–800 units daily) in a diagnosis of fatty liver.

Other Supplementation...Less Proven

Omega 3 fatty acids (fish oil, 1000– 3000mg daily) may be helpful in heart disease, atrial fibrillation, high cholesterol.

Glucosamine chondroitin (1500mg daily) for osteoarthritis in the knees, hips, and hand joints.

Coenzyme q10 (10–100mg daily) in the setting of

treatment for cholesterol with statins (as statin drugs may deplete this vitamin).

Milk thistle may be useful in liver disease (200mg total per day in divided doses...3 times per day).

Dressing Wounds

Treating an open wound properly is very important in preventing infection and speeding the healing process. There are variations in wounds that develop due to trauma, burns, injury or surgery and thus there are various treatment approaches.

It is impossible to tell you which dressing is most appropriate for your injury, but this is a list of various dressings that you can use to help heal a wound. You will likely need an evaluation to know which dressing(s) to use, but it is helpful to have a list of needed supplies. Below are the various dressings we provide in the office for wounds. In particular, skin wounds are slow to heal and a difficult issue as we get older, so dressing them right is key to proper healing. Before you begin... assemble your materials.

It's advisable to use non-sterile gloves in most settings, but washing hands with soap and water before and after dressing changes can be done instead if gloves are not readily available and if infectious issues are not known to be a concern.

Wet to Dry Dressing

This type of dressing is used when there is a minor amount of material to be removed from the wound area due to excess weeping of the area, development of undesired scabbing, or overlying irregular tissues (grumous) material that is preventing complete healing.

The wet to dry dressing is a 'debriding' dressing that removes extraneous surface material. This material adheres to the moist gauze, then dries out and sticks to the gauze, allowing removal when the dressing is changed.

Materials

- Gauze pads (2 x 2 or 4 x 4)...these can be sterile or nonsterile
- Sterile saline (bottle) or contact lens solution
- Kling wrap (gauze bandage rolls)
- Paper tape

Instructions

1. Wash hands then soak gauze pads with saline solution and wring.
2. Apply moistened gauze directly over wound.
3. Cover moist gauze pad with a dry gauze pad.
4. Wrap with Kling/gauze.

- Use tape to close.
- Change dressings in the mornings and again in the evenings.
- Wrap and dispose used dressings in trash not meant for recycling.

Topical Antibiotic Dressing

Materials

- Gauze pads (2 x 2 or 4 x 4)...these can be sterile or nonsterile
- Coban wrap (a self-adherent elastic wrap that functions like a tape, but sticks only to itself; available in any pharmacy)
- Topical antibiotic (one of the following):
Bacitracin ointment—over-the-counter
Bactroban (muporocin) ointment—prescription
Silvadene Cream—prescription

Instructions

- Apply one of the topical antibiotics to the wound with your finger or a Q-tip.
- Apply a gauze pad over the wound.
- Wrap with Coban tape.
- Change dressing once a day.
- Dispose of used dressing in trash not meant for recycling.

Non-Stick Dressings

Materials

- Gauze pads (2 x 2 or 4 x 4)
- **Adaptic covering** (this is a Vaseline covered mesh dressing material that can sometimes be found in the pharmacy or ordered by the pharmacist; each Adaptic dressing is in an individually wrapped package)
- **Coban wrap** (self-adherent elastic wrap that functions like a tape, but sticks only to itself; available in any pharmacy)
- **Topical antibiotic** (one of the following):
Bacitracin ointment—over-the-counter
Bactroban (muporocin) ointment or cream—prescription

Instructions

- Apply one of the topical antibiotics to the wound with finger or Q-tip.
- Apply Adaptic covering (cut to size).
- Apply gauze pad.
- Wrap with Coban tape.
- Change dressing once a day.
- Dispose of used dressing in trash not meant for recycling.

Drying Dressing

This type of dressing is used when there is more significant material to be removed from the wound area due to excess weeping of the area, undesired scabbing that is preventing deeper healing, or overlying irregular tissues (grumous) material that prevents complete healing.

Materials

- Silvadene cream or Bactroban cream—(both prescription medications)
- Gauze pads (2 x 2 or 4 x 4)
- Coban wrap (self-adherent elastic wrap that functions like a tape, but sticks only to itself; available in any pharmacy)

Instructions

1. Apply a small amount of Silvadene cream or Bactroban cream over the entire wound, using your finger or Q-tip.
2. Cover with gauze pad.
3. Wrap with Coban material.
4. Change dressing once a day.
5. Wrap and dispose used dressings in trash not meant for recycling.

***Section Two:
Getting Hurt***

Notes

Cuts and Puncture Wounds

What to Do at Home

1. Compress the area and stop the bleeding.
2. Clean the wound. Gently rinse with soap and water, cleaning the wound thoroughly. Any soap is fine. If using soap would be too painful, just rinse the area thoroughly with water (you do not need sterile water).
3. If the wound is dirty, you can use hydrogen peroxide to clean the wound more thoroughly. You may use for the first cleansing, but do not use repeatedly as it irritates and injures the skin and tissues, preventing healing over time.
4. Cover with a band-aid or with a gauze pad and tape or Coban self-adhesive wrap. You can put a small amount of topical antibiotic on the wound.
5. Observe for development of infection over the next 24–72 hours. Symptoms of infection include: increasing pain, warmth, pus (white milky liquid material draining from the wound), and increasing tenderness over the injured area.

6. If wound becomes moist or macerated, remove any occlusive covering (band-aid) and change to a wet-to-dry dressing (see section on Dressing Different Types of Wounds.)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the injury is more than 1/4 inch deep (depth of a pencil eraser) and not easily brought together with an adhesive bandage
- If the cut exposes white fatty material or deep red muscle tissue
- If bleeding continues to leak slowly from the wound for more than 20 minutes despite strong compression on the area
- If the cut becomes more painful, warm, or tender, or if redness progresses away from the injury more than two inches (this is a sign of infection and requires medical attention and antibiotics)
- If the cut is very dirty due to contamination from a dirt-covered object that pierced the skin, get a tetanus shot within 48 hours if it's been more than five years since your last tetanus shot

How Long to Recover

- For most wounds, a scab should form within 1-2 days, and new skin within 7-10 days; if not, consider seeing your doctor
- Tetanus shots are not required for anyone who has had their series of tetanus shots in the past, even if it has been more than 10 years since your last shot; if it has definitely been more than 10 years since your last tetanus shot, you should get a booster tetanus shot as soon as feasible, within the next few days

Bites and Stings

Animal Bites

What to Do at Home

- Clean the wound: Gently rinse with soap and water, cleaning the wound thoroughly. Any soap is fine. If using soap would be too painful, just rinse the area thoroughly with water (you do not need sterile water.)
- Apply topical antibiotic: Bacitracin is the preferred over-the-counter topical antibiotic
- Cover loosely with gauze
- Observe for development of infection: symptoms of infection include: increasing pain, warmth, pus (white milky liquid material draining from the wound), and increasing tenderness over the injured area

When to Seek Medical Attention

- If bitten or scratched by a cat (these are always potentially infectious); cat bites/scratches will need antibiotics in virtually all cases
- If bitten deeply by dog or human; especially if bitten on the hand, see your healthcare provider for evaluation and treatment

- If bitten by an undomesticated or unknown animal
- If the bite becomes more painful, warm, or tender, or if redness progresses away from the injury more than an inch (width of a quarter); this is a sign of infection and requires medical attention and antibiotics

How Long to Recover

For most wounds, a scab should form within 1-2 days, and new skin within one week. If not, consider getting this wound checked.

Scorpion Stings

Most Common Symptoms

- Intense burning pain on the skin
- Deep pain in the bitten area
- Numbness and tingling in the area adjacent to the sting

What to Do at Home

- Pain increases for 2 to 6 hours before subsiding and is the only treatable symptom; the scorpion venom will dissipate in time, recommended pain medications are Tylenol, Aspirin, Advil, or Aleve

- Ice may also reduce the spread of the venom and provide some topical relief
- Kill that scorpion!!!!

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If you have confusion, dizziness, back pain, blurred vision, or shortness of breath go to the Emergency Room.

How Long to Recover

- Pain should improve greatly after 2 to 6 hours, though it may increase progressively before decreasing
- Pain and local numbness near the sting can persist for a day or two to a mild degree, but will decline with time; be patient, this goes away, but is annoying until it does

Spider Bites

Most Common Symptoms

- Paleness at the site first, then redness and swelling
- Pain at the site
- Itchiness at the site
- Spider bites occur almost always as one single bite; if there are multiple bites, they are likely not spider bites

- A spider bite has occurred when you see a spider bite the skin; otherwise, what is presumed to be a spider bite is likely NOT A SPIDER BITE but some other injury/irritation/skin reaction

What to Do at Home

1. Apply ice or take pain medication for the pain. Recommended: Tylenol, Aspirin, Advil, or Aleve.
2. Take Benadryl for any itchiness, or apply hydrocortisone cream to the skin.
3. Observe for signs of tissue death (necrosis). This is unlikely and may take several hours to days to appear. It is characterized by a progressive change of the tissue around the bite which include: increasing pain, blanching or whiteness of the bite area, skin becoming 'mushy,' blackness to the surrounding tissues (which may occur over several hours to days), oozing of blood-tinged fluid.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the bite gets larger, more painful, and darker in color and you notice black skin with a crust on top that falls off (tissue death); this could be a sign of a bite from a brown recluse
- If muscle spasms occur after about 40 minutes around the site, along with pain, this could be a sign of a black widow bite

- If you have trouble breathing go to the Emergency Room

How Long to Recover

- Most spider bites heal in a few days
- A bad bite, as from a brown recluse or a black widow, may take 6 to 8 weeks to heal; seek medical attention for these more serious bites

Bee, Wasp, or Hornet Stings

Most Common Symptoms

- Acute pain and redness that develops over immediately at the site of the sting (sometimes there can be a delay of several minutes)
- Severe itching over the bite and surrounding tissues

What to Do at Home

1. Remove the stinger if you can.
2. Ice the area for pain relief, or take Tylenol, Aspirin, Aleve, or Advil.
3. For itchiness, take an antihistamine such as Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec, or Allegra. You can take a long-acting antihistamine like Claritan or Zyrtec and then add in Benedryl in addition, if you need more itch relief.
4. You can also apply hydrocortisone cream to the skin.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If the area remains hot, red, and warm for over a day and increases over time. This could be a sign of infection that requires antibiotics. Infections from stings happen only rarely.

How Long to Recover

Pain and redness should go away over 4–24 hours.

Snake Bite

Go to the Emergency Room immediately.

Burns

Minor/First Degree Burns

Most Common Symptoms

Redness and pain over the skin involved.

What to Do at Home

1. Apply cool compresses, or rinse the burned area in cool water for pain relief. Do not use ice, as it may cause more damage.
2. Wash gently with soap and water.
3. Apply aloe vera gel, Vaseline, or a burn gel. All are available at the pharmacy.
4. Observe for signs of infection. These include: increasing pain, increasing warmth, pus (wound draining white milky liquid material), and increasing injured area tenderness.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- Highly unlikely to be needed
- If signs of infection develop, such as: increasing pain, increasing warmth, pus (white milky liquid material draining from the wound), and increasing tenderness over the injured area

How Long to Recover

Most first degree burns heal within 3-7 days.

Second Degree Burn

Most Common Symptoms

Blistering (liquid filled bubbles), redness, pain, swelling of the skin.

What to Do at Home

- Apply cool compresses, or rinse the burned area in cool water for pain relief; do not use ice, as it may cause more damage
- Wash gently with soap and water
- Apply aloe vera gel, Vaseline, or a burn gel; all are available at the pharmacy
- Observe for signs of infection: symptoms of infection include increasing pain, increasing warmth, pus (white milky liquid material draining from the wound), and increasing tenderness over the injured area
- Do not rupture the blisters; sometimes the blisters will rupture on their own (if this happens, squeeze the liquid out of the blisters and apply a small amount of topical antibiotic and cover with gauze and tape or Coban self-adhesive wrap and change this daily until healed)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If area involved is larger than 6 inches (approximately the surface area of a mobile phone)

- If the burn is on the face
- If skin shows no signs of healing after 5 days
- If signs of infection develop, including: increasing pain, warmth, pus (white milky liquid material draining from the wound), and increasing tenderness over the injured area

How Long to Recover

Most second degree burns heal in 7 to 10 days.

Third Degree Burn

Most Common Symptoms

- Whiteness or charring/blackness of skin
- Skin that may be numb

What to Do at Home

Apply cool compresses and seek immediate attention at the Emergency Room.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

Always seek medical attention for a burn of this type and go to the Emergency Room.

How Long to Recover

- It varies
- You will require specialty care at a burn/wound center

Other Skin Issues

Bruising

Most Common Symptoms

- Purple or red discolored skin lesions
- Size can vary from the size of a dot to an area covering many inches

What to Do at Home

Check for medications that can cause bruising. Eliminate if possible. These include:

- Blood thinners: aspirin, Plavix (clopidogrel), Coumadin (warfarin), Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa
- Steroid containing topicals: Nose sprays (Flonase and similar), steroid creams (Cortaid and prescription steroid creams)
- Vitamins & Supplements: Vitamind E, fish oil, Omega 3 fatty acids
- Cosmetic skin creams and body lotions contain 'aspirin like' substances and can also lead to bruising

When to Seek Medical Assistance

In general, bruising is not a sign of a serious condition, but if you think bruising is unexplained and excessive and if you have other bleeding as

well, some bloodwork should be done to check platelet levels, kidney, and liver function.

How Long to Recover

- Bruises fade over a few to several days
- There are no topical creams that hasten resolution

Skin Tears

Most Common Symptoms

- Tearing of skin occurs as people age and the support tissues of the dermis diminish in strength
- There are no supplements that help make the skin stronger

What to Do at Home

- Rinse the skin with cool tap water
- Gently push the flap of skin back over the open area, using your finger or a Q-tip to reapproximate it
- Place a small amount of topical antibiotic ointment over the area and then cover with Adaptic (Vaseline covered gauze); wrap a cover over this and change it daily until healed

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If bleeding will not stop or if the area in question is very large (larger than a computer mouse) and you cannot manage to dress the area properly
- Ask the Emergency room staff not to use Steri-strips if possible and try the above method (if steri-strips are used then seek attention the following day for follow up of the wound to initiate a method for remove the steri strips to prevent late complications from steri-strip application)

How Long to Recover

- Skin tears take about 1-2 weeks to fully heal

Joint Injuries

General Principles

The first treatment for a joint injury is RICE: Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate.

Rest: Reduce or eliminate activity or pressure on the joint involved. This may involve getting a sling, wrap, or brace.

Ice: Cool the joint topically with ice at intervals of 20-30 minutes at a time. Make sure the ice is very cold, but not enough to cause a skin burn. Do be careful of this.

Compress: Wrap the joint with an ACE bandage or elastic sleeve to reduce swelling in the first 24 hours.

Elevate: Keep the joint above heart level if possible. This will decrease swelling and pain and will assist with a more rapid recovery.

Joint Overuse or Irritation

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain when using the joint
- Pain after using the joint (up to 12 hours after the activity)

- Pain that prevents movement of the joint
- Swelling of the joint (compare to the joint on the other side)
- Warmth of the joint
- Redness over the joint area

What to Do at Home

- Take a break from the activity that causes you pain; try alternative activities that do not cause you pain
- R.I.C.E. method
- Avoid activity on the injured joint until it is fully healed (this will be longer than you think, probably 1-2 weeks minimum)
- Use anti-inflammatory medications on occasion or for a few days if needed on a regular basis: Tylenol 650-1000mg three times per day, Advil (Ibuprofen) 600mg three times daily, Aleve (Naproxen) 220mg twice daily

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you do not recall injuring the joint, but still it is quite painful; this could be gout or some other inflammatory arthritis
- If your pain is very severe and is not resolving over a few days

- If the pain does not go away despite resting the joint for a week

How Long to Recover

Most joint injuries will improve in 24–48 hours and then will generally resolve in 5–7 days. Try to be patient and give it this amount of time.

How to Prevent

- Use proper form and equipment when exercising, including well-fitting shoes
- Replace your shoes once or twice a year if you exercise often
- Run on a treadmill instead of pavement
- If you don't exercise regularly and want to start, ease yourself into it; do not try to do too much too soon
- Do a variety of exercises that work different parts of your body
- Don't exercise for too long or at too high of an intensity for your current physical condition

Tendonitis

Most Common Symptoms

- Irritation and pain areas adjacent to a joint such as the knee, ankle, wrist, elbow, or shoulder (resulting from inflammation/injury to the thick cords of tissue that attach a muscle to bone)
- Limited range of motion of a joint due to pain or swelling of adjacent tissues

What to Do at Home

- Take a break from the activity that causes you pain; try alternative activities that do not cause you pain
- R.I.C.E. method
- Avoid activity on the injured joint until it is fully healed
- Use anti-inflammatory medications on occasion or for a few days if needed on a regular basis: Tylenol 650-1000mg three times per day, Advil (Ibuprofen) 600mg three times daily, Aleve (Naproxen) 220mg twice daily

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you do not recall injuring the area, but it is still quite painful

- If your pain is very severe and is not resolving over a few days
- If the pain does not go away despite resting the area for a week

Ankle Injuries

Ankle Sprain

Irritation and pain in the ankle most often occurs from twisting or inverting (bending inward) the ankle joint when walking or participating in sports.

Most Common Symptoms

- Swelling of the ankle joint, primarily on the outside portion of the joint
- Mild Bruising
- Tenderness over the ‘outside’ of the joint
- Mild to severe pain in your ankle

What to Do at Home

- R.I.C.E. method
- Reduce walking and weight bearing
- Use crutches if the sprain is severe and significantly painful with walking. You can get crutches at the a nearby Walgreens/CVS
- If pain is severe and requires crutches for more than 48 hours

How Long to Recover

- Most ankle sprains heal in 1-3 weeks

- Don't try to use your ankle before it's fully healed. You may reinjure it and prolong your recovery
- Consider using your ankle if it feels as strong and flexible as your uninjured ankle and does not hurt when you walk, run, or jump

How to Prevent

- Wear shoes that fit well and provide support (e.g. tennis shoes)
- Warm up and stretch before doing any exercise
- Stop what you're doing if your ankle starts hurting
- Be careful when walking, running, jumping, or playing sports, especially on uneven surfaces

Ankle Fracture

Most Common Symptoms

- Severe pain in the ankle and unable to bear weight at all (zero)
- Severe swelling, as large or larger than a softball/grapefruit
- Severe bruising
- A bone sticking out of your skin

What to Do at Home

If you think you have a fracture, seek medical assistance.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you can't put weight on your ankle
- If you have severe pain that doesn't go away even with R.I.C.E. method above and pain medications
- If you can't move your toes
- If you can't move your ankle at all
- If your ankle is numb
- If your foot is cold or blue

How Long to Recover

- Most fractures heal in 4-8 weeks
- Be careful not to injure your ankle again before it is fully healed

How to Prevent

- Wear shoes that fit well and provide support (e.g. tennis shoes)
- Be careful when walking, running, jumping, or playing sports, especially on uneven surfaces

Knee Injuries

Knee Strain

Knee strains occur most often during sporting activities or exercise. Typically, a misstep or rapid stopping motion or change in direction of running will cause an off-balance strain of the knee joint and minor injury to the supportive tissues surrounding the knee joint. Sometimes, too much repetitive routine activity can cause the knee to be painful.

Most Common Symptoms

- Swelling
- Mild to moderate pain in your knee with movement
- Mild Bruising

What to Do at Home

- R.I.C.E. method
- Take anti-inflammatory medication. Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day

- You may use crutches if limited walking is very painful. You can get crutches at a nearby Walgreens/CVS
- Reduce activities for at least a few days and reduce the amount of walking you do in general
- When you resume activity and exercise, do so slowly and in a graduated manner. Do more walking in your day-to-day life as a first step
- Graduate to sporting and exercise activities. Swimming, biking, cross-training, elliptical machines are good first starts. Running is to be avoided until the knee feels nearly 100% normal

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If you have pain in your knee that remains significant and is not improving after a week, seek medical assistance. A doctor will evaluate your knee for serious injury and possibly perform an X-ray it to determine the next treatment steps.

How Long to Recover

- Most knee strains will improve significantly within three days. If that is the case, you can observe the injury and follow the steps above
- Don't try to use your knee before it's fully healed. You may reinjure it and prolong your recovery

- Consider using your knee if it feels as strong and flexible as your uninjured knee and does not hurt when you walk, run, or jump

How to Prevent

- Warm up and stretch before doing any exercise
- Stop what you're doing if your knee starts hurting significantly
- Avoid repetitive activities like treadmill or running. The repeated pounding is particularly bothersome to the knee
- Be careful when walking, running, jumping, or playing sports, especially on uneven surfaces

Torn Meniscus or Ligament of the Knee

Most Common Symptoms

- Severe pain
- Major/Significant swelling, larger than a softball
- Hearing a pop or snap (or feeling these) when the injury occurs
- Feeling that the knee is unstable and will not support you without giving way
- Very noticeable grinding or crunching as you bend the knee or walk on the leg
- Unable to straighten your leg
- Locking of the knee, preventing movement

What to Do at Home

- R.I.C.E. method
- Use crutches...bear as little weight as possible
- Severely restrict activities, as you will be unstable and prone to falling

When to Seek Medical Assistance

Always seek medical attention for the above injuries. You can wait to get an urgent appointment or go to the Emergency Room if pain is intolerable.

How to Prevent

- Warm up and stretch before doing any exercise
- Stop what you're doing if your knee starts hurting
- Be careful when walking, running, jumping, or playing sports, especially on uneven surfaces

Wrist Injuries

These most often occur when playing ball or racquet sports, or from falling. Typically overuse, repeated activity, or a minor fall will cause pains and perhaps some minor swelling. A severe fall can lead to major swelling and pain and a fracture needs to be considered in that setting.

Wrist Sprain

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain with movements
- Swelling, mild
- Tenderness and warmth around your wrist
- Bruising

What to Do at Home

- R.I.C.E. method
- Use anti-inflammatory medication; Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day
- An ACE bandage wrap can be used or an elastic sleeve to provide compression and to limit movement

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the pain in your wrist does not improve in three days
- If you cannot move your wrist or grip items like normal after a week

How Long to Recover

- Most wrist sprains heal in a few days to a week
- Do not use your wrist like normal until you can move it without pain, grip things without pain, and it feels similar to the healthy wrist
- Your wrist may be stiff for a while after the injury, even when healed

How to Prevent

- Avoid overuse; if you develop pain during activity, then curtail that activity
- Avoid playing sports or activities on slippery surfaces to prevent falling

Hand Injuries

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain in your hand that increases when you grip or squeeze
- Swelling
- Tenderness over knuckles or fingers
- Bruising
- A finger that looks crooked and cannot be straightened
- Difficulty moving your fingers or thumb
- Numbness in your hand
- Unable to make a grip

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you suspect you've broken a bone in your hand (a common situation is punching a person or object and feeling pain near the knuckles)
- If you've been bitten by an animal, including cat or dog (often, antibiotics are needed; see section on animal bites)
- If you cannot move your fingers
- If your hand feels completely numb

- Unattended fractures can result in long-term disability and limited hand function... seek medical attention

How Long to Recover

Mild hand injuries will heal in a few days, but if broken, then bones heal in 6–8 weeks.

How to Prevent

- Avoid overuse; if you develop pain during activity, then curtail that activity
- Avoid playing sports or activities on slippery surfaces to prevent falling

Shoulder Injuries

The shoulder is prone to injury from falling with an outstretched arm, playing racquet sports or throwing a ball (snowboarding too), or when doing a straining movement against too much or unexpected resistance (either lifting weights or pulling/pushing on something). Shoulder injuries come in three major varieties: dislocated shoulder, muscle or tendon strains, or rotator cuff tear.

Dislocated/Separated Shoulder

Most Common Symptoms

- Sudden onset of intense pain in the shoulder with immediate desire to prevent movement
- Pain is severe and any motion will create significant discomfort
- Significant swelling

What do at Home

- Ice the shoulder
- Put a sling on if possible (see how to make a sling out of a T-shirt at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-vV7jzTX_M)

- Use anti-inflammatory medication. Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If you suspect you have a dislocated shoulder, seek medical assistance immediately. The shoulder will need to be put back in place and can be done at the Emergency Room after they give you pain medication or sedation.

How Long to Recover

- Lingering discomfort may go away in 1-3 weeks
- Use of a sling may be necessary for a few days

How to Prevent

Be careful when playing sports or doing any other activity that may result in a blow to the shoulder or a fall with the arm outstretched.

Shoulder Strain

Most Common Symptoms

- Dull aching in your shoulder
- Discomfort when moving the arm, especially when reaching above your head, to the side, or behind your back (brushing hair, putting on seat belt)

- No swelling or bruising should be noted
- Pain when sleeping on the shoulder

What to Do at Home

- Rest the arm, and reduce activity
- Ice the area involved; cool topically with ice at intervals of 20–30 minutes at a time and make sure the ice is very cold, but not enough to cause a skin burn (do be careful of this; do not apply ice directly to skin, but use a cloth to separate)
- Use anti-inflammatory medication. Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2–3 tablets... 2–3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1–2 tablets... 1–2 x per day

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the pain does not improve in 3 days
- If the pain increases with time
- If you cannot move your arm

How Long to Recover

Your shoulder should improve significantly in 1–2 days and then progressively better after that.

How to Prevent

Warm up and stretch before starting a sport or activity that requires you to reach above your head repeatedly or use shoulders extensively.

Muscle Injuries

Muscle injuries happen when you put too much tension on your muscles or the tendons attached to them. You might lift something too heavy or play a sport without warming up first. There are different degrees of muscle injuries. A strain is the least severe. Not many of the muscle fibers tear. Pulling a muscle means more fibers have torn, while a muscle tear is the most severe.

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain over the area that and pain with movement
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Mild weakness of the injured muscle
- Difficulty in using the muscle

What to Do at Home

- RICE method. Rest. Ice. Compress. Elevate (see RICE section)
- Ice the area involved; cool topically with ice at intervals of 20–30 minutes at a time (make sure the ice is very cold, but not enough to cause a skin burn...do be careful of this; do not apply ice directly to skin, but use a cloth to separate)

- Use anti-inflammatory medication; Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day
- Apply heat after the first 24 hours
- Rest your injured muscle; don't do the activity that injured it in the first place, and avoid any other activity that brings you pain

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the above treatments don't reduce your symptoms within 48 hours
- If heat, redness, or increasing swelling develops over the area
- If you have a fever

How Long to Recover

Most muscle strains heal within a few days to a week.

How to Prevent

Stretching and warming up prior to activities can help prevent these injuries.

Neck Injuries / Neck Pain

Most Common Symptoms

- Mild-moderate pain in the muscles surrounding the neck
- Mild-moderate pain in the neck with movement
- Stiffness of neck movement preventing you from looking left and right easily
- Tingling in arms or fingers (indicates some nerve irritation)

What to Do at Home

1. Use anti-inflammatory medication. Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day.
2. Ice the area involved. Cool topically with ice at intervals of 20-30 minutes at a time. Make sure the ice is very cold, but not enough to cause a skin burn. Do be careful of this. Do not apply ice directly to skin, but use a cloth to separate.
3. After the first 24 hours you can use heat intermittently to the area if it was injured. If the pain occurs without injury, then begin with heat at the start.

4. Gentle stretching of the neck after first 24 hours.

When to Seek Medical Attention

- If there is tingling or numbness going down the arms that persists more than 48 hours
- Weakness of the arms or hands
- Difficulty with walking or balance coinciding with onset of the neck pain

How Long to Recover

Generally, symptoms improve in 24 hours and resolve in 3-7 days.

How to Prevent

- Gentle neck stretching can help prevent irritation and pain
- Find neck stretching exercises at: doctordoug.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/exercises-cervical-exercises.pdf

Low Back Injuries / Low Back Pain

Most Common Symptoms

- Mild-moderate pain in the muscles surrounding the low back
- Mild-moderate pain in the low back with movement (bending and stretching)
- Stiffness of the back with movement preventing you from bending over easily or from getting up from a sitting or laying position

What to Do at Home

- Use anti-inflammatory medication. Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day
- Ice the area involved; cool topically with ice at intervals of 20-30 minutes at a time (make sure the ice is very cold, but not enough to cause a skin burn, do be careful of this, and do not apply ice directly to skin, but use a cloth to separate)
- After the first 24 hours, you can apply heat intermittently to the area for 45 minutes at a time
- Gentle stretching of the back after the first 24 hours

When to Seek Medical Attention

- If there is tingling or numbness going down the legs
- Weakness of the legs or feet
- Difficulty with walking or balance coinciding with onset of the back pain

How Long to Recover

Generally, symptoms improve in 24-48 hours and resolve in 3-14 days.

How to Prevent

- Gentle back stretching can help prevent irritation and pain
- Find back stretching exercises: doctordoug.com and click the library button

Getting Sick

Skin

RASHES

Most Common Symptoms

- Red patches of skin that can be the size of pencil erasers or larger (size of a mobile phone)
- They can occur anywhere on the body
- The patches may be itchy, but are not painful
- The skin may be raised slightly

What to Do at Home

- Apply a cortisone based cream once or twice daily (like Cortaid 10 or Hydrocortisone 1%)
- If itchy, you can take an anti-histamine pill: Claritin 10mg once daily or other once daily antihistamines; Benadryl 25mg (diphenhydramine) can be used for severe itching either alone or in combination with the Claritin
- Do not wash excessively; avoiding soap over the involved area is best
- Wear loose, lightweight clothing

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you have a rash that keeps coming back or that persists and is enlarging over several days
- If the rash spreads to the face or palms of the hands/soles of the feet
- If rash is associated with fever (over 100 degrees)
- If your rash develops after you start taking a medication

How Long to Recover

- Rashes can last from days to weeks
- Consistent use of the above measures is important
- Some rashes come from chronic conditions like eczema and may flare up periodically throughout your life; use 1% cortisone cream each time you have a rash, so long as it is responsive to the treatment after a few days

How to Prevent

- Avoid harsh soaps and detergents; Dove soap (bar... not liquid) is a very good choice
- Avoid hemicals or fabrics that give you rashes
- Avoid excessive heat and humidity

- Keep your skin dry, especially where warm, moist folds of skin rub against each other (groin, under your arms, under your breasts, between toes)
- Wear loose, lightweight clothing

BLISTERS

Most Common Symptom

- Raised skin filled with fluid.

What to Do at Home

- Cover your blister with a bandage
- Do not pop blisters; the skin over the fluid helps prevent infection
- Avoid the irritant that caused your blister (tight shoes, etc.)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If blisters appear without an obvious cause (this may be a sign of an infection)
- If you have a lot of blisters on various parts of your body and don't know the cause

How Long to Recover

Most blisters go away on their own within a few days.

How to Prevent

- Wear comfortable shoes (most common location)
- If you feel a blister forming, cover the area with a bandage to prevent more friction

SUNBURNS

Most Common Symptoms

- Red skin
- Skin that's painful to the touch
- Blisters
- Peeling, itchy skin
- Flu-like symptoms: fever, chills, nausea, headache, muscle weakness (severe/extensive sunburn)

What to Do at Home

- Apply cold compresses to your skin
- Take a cool bath
- Apply creams or gels that contain aloe
- Take painkillers for the pain, if necessary (Tylenol, Advil or Aleve can reduce pain)
- Drink water to avoid dehydration
- Avoid the sun until your sunburn heals
- When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you have a fever 100.4 degrees or higher
- If you have shaking chills
- If you have severe pain
- If sunburn blisters cover 20% or more of your body
- If you have signs of dehydration: dry mouth, thirst, reduced urination, dark-colored urine, dizziness, go to the Emergency Room

How Long to Recover

- Most sunburns improve in 2–4 days
- Full recovery may take 5–7 days

How to Prevent

- Avoid the sun between 10am and 4pm when the sunlight is strongest
- Wear protective clothing when in the sun: hats with brims, long-sleeved shirts, sunglasses that block UV rays
- Wear sunscreen that's at least 30 SPF; make sure your sunscreen blocks UVA and UVB rays
- Wear sunscreen, even when it's cloudy
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours, or more frequently if you're sweating or swimming

HIVES

Most Common Symptoms

- Pink-to-red slightly raised skin in bumps or patches associated with severe itching
- Swelling of the affected area can occur

What to Do at Home

- Apply cool compresses or cloths
- Try to stay in a cool area; heat can make hives worse
- Wear light, loose-fitting clothes
- Take antihistamines: Claritin 10mg daily or Benadryl 25mg up to four times per day; Benadryl is better for severe itching. Claritin is better for 24-hour coverage (you may take both if hives are severe)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you feel dizzy
- If you start wheezing or have difficulty breathing
- If your chest feels tight
- If your tongue, lips, or face starts swelling, go to the Emergency Room

How Long to Recover

- Hives may go away in a few hours or a day or two
- Some cases of hives last a long time, six weeks or more and can recur; if your hives last more than a few days, it is worth having them checked by your doctor

How to Prevent

Avoid anything you're allergic to: chemicals, insects, foods, medications.

COLD SORES

Most Common Symptoms

- A single blister (clear-to-red fluid-filled bump) or multiple blisters on the lips or near the lips, or in the mouth
- Painful, tender sores
- Increasing over time

Rarer Symptoms

- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Swollen lymph nodes

What to Do at Home

- Most cold sores are due to HSV (Herpes Simplex Virus), as exposure to HSV I is common
- Abreva topical, applied multiple times a day, may help reduce symptoms slightly
- Apply ice or cold washcloths to help with pain

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- Any outbreak of oral blisters can be shortened with oral medication; contact your doctor
- Oral medications (Acyclovir, Famvir, Valtrex) can shorten the duration of symptoms; take the pills as soon as symptoms develop to get the best response

How Long to Recover

- Cold sores resolve in a few days to two weeks
- Cold sores can occur occasionally or frequently

How to Prevent

- Avoid kissing someone with an outbreak of cold sores (open sores on or near their lips)
- Also avoid sharing makeup or food with an infected individual
- Don't have oral sex with anyone who has active genital herpes; the viruses that cause cold sores and genital warts are related

WARTS

Most Common Symptoms

- Flesh-colored or light brown bumps with an irregular surface texture that are on your skin
- They are the size of a pencil tip or they can be larger (size of a pencil eraser or larger)
- Warts may be smaller, smoother, and flatter than you think

What to Do at Home

- Some warts go away on their own without treatment
- Don't pick at your warts; they may spread
- Consider covering your warts with bandages
- Keep your skin dry
- Don't brush, comb, or shave skin with warts; that may help them spread
- Wash your hands after touching your warts

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the warts bother you
- If they aren't going away
- If you have warts in your genital area

How Long to Recover

- Treatment with liquid nitrogen to freeze off warts can be done by a physician; dead tissue usually falls off in a week but can take longer
- If left untreated, warts generally won't go away, but they can occasionally spontaneously resolve in a few weeks

How to Prevent

- Don't touch anyone else's warts
- Don't pick at or irritate yours; they may spread

ACNE

Most Common Symptoms

- Bumps or pimples on your face, neck, chest, back, or shoulders
- Small, red, tender bumps
- Bumps filled with pus
- Large, solid, painful lumps beneath your skin
- Painful, pus-filled lumps beneath your skin

What to Do at Home

- Wash your face gently, excess scrubbing can make acne worse
- Remove makeup regularly; it's okay to wear it (oil-free makeup doesn't clog pores and cause acne)

- Try over the counter products and medications (products that contain benzoyl peroxide are most effective)
- Try not to let your hair, hands, or objects (like cell phone screens) touch your face or wherever you get acne
- Wash off sweat from sports or hot summer day
- Don't pick or irritate your pimples or zits; it may cause scarring

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If your acne doesn't go away
- If your acne is severe
- If your acne bothers you

How Long to Recover

- Acne can be persistent
- If you find a treatment or combination of treatments that works for you, your acne may clear up in a few weeks

How to Prevent

- A regular skin routine with gentle soap, regular washing, and use of benzoyl peroxide containing creams/lotions

Yeast/Fungal Infections

Most Common Symptoms

Red, irritated, slightly moist rash in the skin folds of the underarms, breasts, groin area, genital area, or in the inter-gluteal fold (between the cheeks of the buttocks).

What to Do at Home

- Do not use soap (there is no way to sterilize the area and generally speaking, your skin is happiest when it has some non-threatening germs around, as is the normal situation)
- Wash with plain water or Cetaphil liquid cleanser (cetaphil is available over-the-counter at any pharmacy; avoiding soap will prevent dry skin and further irritation in the area)
- Dry thoroughly (probably the best way to do this is to use a blow dryer on medium heat; alternatively, you can pat the area dry with a dry towel or allow to air dry if you have the luxury of time and privacy)
- If the above measures are not proving effective, then Lotrimin, topical antifungal cream that is over-the-counter, can be used

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If the above measures are not effective the treatment with stronger medication or pills may be in order. See the doctor.

How Long to Recover

This skin rash improves in 1-2 weeks, generally.

How to Prevent

- Avoid excessive use of soap in skin folds (when you wash, make sure folds of tissue are thoroughly rinsed and then dried gently and thoroughly)
- Avoid unnecessary antibiotics as these predispose to yeast and fungal skin infections

MRSA-Resistant Staph Infections

Antibiotic resistance is becoming an increasing problem as antibiotic use has increased in both humans and in animals (for food production). Among the most important and common of the resistant germs is MRSA (pronounced 'mer-sa'). This stands for Methicillin Resistant Staph Aureus, a common skin bacterium that is resistant to many common penicillin-based antibiotics that have been used in the past.

MRSA is widely present, with two percent of

people carrying the germ on them at any time. Exposure is more common during activities that involve crowds; dormitory living, athletic centers, or being in contact with groups of people. Certainly, people recently discharged from the hospital are more likely to have been exposed, and to carry this germ. MRSA can cause infections of various organs in the body, but in over 90 percent of the time it is related to skin infections.

Most Common Symptoms

- Large boils or furuncles (large zits or bumps), which look like large red nodules without a white center (they can occur anywhere on the body)
- The boils or furuncles persist, enlarge, and multiply in an area despite patience, washing, and a trial of routine antibiotic pills

What to Do at Home

- Warm/hot compresses (these can help but generally don't resolve the infection on their own)
- Squeezing the infected lesions; (this can help by breaking up the underlying infection and tissues)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- MRSA infections usually require antibiotics, and over-the-counter antibiotics are not effective; it's best to see your doctor

- Your doctor might prescribe topical antibiotics, like Bactroban, or oral antibiotics, like Bactrim (Sulfa) or Doxycycline (tetracyclines); you'll take them for 7-14 days, and if those don't work, you might have to undergo stronger prescription antibiotic treatment or IV antibiotics

How Long to Recover

MRSA infections persist for several weeks despite proper treatment. The boils become progressively smaller and less painful, but a lump in the skin can persist for months.

How to Prevent

- Wash your hands regularly and often, especially after you have tended a MRSA infected skin lesion
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered
- Do not touch other people's wounds or bandages
- Do not share personal items such as towels and razors
- Wash clothing with a little extra detergent and dry them using the 'hot' setting on the dryer
- Use hand sanitizer often

Upper Respiratory Infections

Sore Throat

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain in the back of the throat
- Redness of the throat
- White patches (pus) on tonsils in the back of the throat
- Fever above 100 degrees
- Difficulty swallowing
- Tenderness/swelling of glands in the neck
- Ear pain

What to Do at Home

- Salt water gargling
 1. Dissolve 1 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water.
 2. Gargle for 15 seconds and spit.
 3. Repeat during the day every 2–4 hours to relieve pain.
- Pain relief medications: Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2–3 tablets... 2–3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1–2 tablets... 1–2 x per day, or Tylenol 650–1000mg four times per day

- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If symptoms consist only of a sore throat and there is no cough and sinus congestion; this is much more likely to be strep throat
- If you have a severe sore throat and were recently around someone diagnosed with strep throat
- White pus on the tonsils associated with sore throat and fever
- If symptoms persist for longer than 5 days

How Long to Recover

- Common viral syndromes last from 1–7 days
- Strep throat will remain symptomatic after antibiotic begins for 1–2 days and then should slowly improve over the next 3–5 days
- Stay home from school/work for 24 hours after antibiotics are begun (if you require treatment)

How to Prevent

- Washing hands or using hand cleanser regularly
- Avoid exposure to people you know have been diagnosed with strep

The Common Cold/Viral Respiratory Syndrome

Most common symptoms

Combination of the following symptoms:

- Runny nose
- Sinus congestion
- Sore throat
- Low grade fever (99-100.4)
- Cough, with or without mucous (color white or green—OK)
- Muscle aches

What to Do at Home

Symptomatic treatment for the most bothersome symptoms.

Sore Throat:

- Salt water gargling
 1. Dissolve 1 teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water.
 2. Gargle for 15 seconds and spit.
 3. Repeat during the day every 2-4 hours to relieve pain.
- Pain relief medications: Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day, or Tylenol 650-1000mg four times per day

Sinus Congestion and Drainage:

- Use a decongestant such as Sudafed 30mg, 1-2 pills up to four times per day, or use a drying antihistamine such as Chlortrimeton 4mg, up to four times per day; other cold medications (over the counter) can be used
- Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra **WILL NOT WORK** for congestion symptoms from an infection; **DO NOT USE**

Cough:

- Steam: Either in the form of a hot, steamy shower or using a steaming pot of water by covering with a towel and putting your head under the towel; both methods will provide humid air to the irritated air passages and soothe the cough
- Cough Syrup: Robitussin DM or Delsym cough syrup can be used to suppress cough; Dextromethorphan is the active ingredient you want in your cough syrup

Aches, Pains, Fever:

- Use anti-inflammatory medication; Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day, or Tylenol 650-1000mg four times per day

- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If fever is over 102 degrees and symptoms are worsening
- If cough produces blood tinged mucous
- If confusion is associated with the above symptoms
- If you get a rash with the above symptoms

How Long to Recover

- The common cold is a viral infection that will generally take from 1-3 days to improve and then from 5-7 days to completely resolve
- Plan on resting for the first three days, and then your activities are 'as tolerated.'

How to Prevent

- Avoid people who you know are significantly ill
- Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently

The Flu

This is a specific viral illness that has similar and overlapping symptoms with common cold/respiratory viruses but is unique in that it is much more virulent (symptoms are significantly

worse). This infection is specifically seasonal, typically in Arizona from October until March with a peak in December, January, and February.

Most Common Symptoms

They consist of the same set of symptoms as the common cold/rival respiratory syndrome, but they are worse.

- High fever (often over 102 degrees, but can range from 99s to 104+)
- Aching muscles throughout the body
- Pain in the muscles around the eyes with movement of the eyes
- Sore throat
- Sinus congestion
- Severe cough
- Excessive mucous production (sinus and chest)
- Headache
- Occasionally diarrhea

What to Do at Home

Symptomatic treatment for the most bothersome symptoms.

Sore Throat:

- Salt water gargling
 1. Dissolve 1 teaspoon salt in glass warm water.

2. Gargle for 15 seconds and spit.
3. Repeat during the day every 2–4 hours to relieve pain.

- Pain relief medications: Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2–3 tablets... 2–3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1–2 tablets... 1–2 x per day, or Tylenol 650–1000mg four times per day

Sinus Congestion and Drainage:

- Use a decongestant such as Sudafed 30mg, 1–2 pills up to four times per day, or use a drying antihistamine such as Chlortrimeton 4mg, up to four times per day; other cold medications (over the counter) can be used
- Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra won't work for congestion symptoms from an infection; **DO NOT USE**

Cough:

- Steam: Either in the form of a hot, steamy shower or using a hot pot of water and covering with a towel and put your head under the towel (both methods will provide humid air to the irritated air passages and soothe the cough)
- Cough Syrup: Robitussin DM or Delsym cough syrup can be used to suppress cough; Dextromethorphan is the active ingredient you want in your cough syrup

Aches, Pains, Fever:

- Use anti-inflammatory medication; Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2–3 tablets... 2–3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1–2 tablets... 1–2 x per day, or Tylenol 650–1000mg four times per day
- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If fever is over 102 degrees and symptoms are worsening after 2–3 days
- If cough produces blood tinged mucous
- If confusion is associated with the above symptoms
- If you get a rash with the above symptoms
- Flu medications (Tamiflu/Xofluza) can shorten the course of symptoms (it is particularly effective if started soon after onset)
- Tamiflu can also be given to household members to prevent infection, especially if they are at high risk with infection

How Long to Recover

- The flu is a viral infection that will generally take from 3–5 days to improve and then from 7–10 days to completely resolve; sometimes symptoms will linger longer

- Plan to be away from school/work for first three days, after that activities are ‘as tolerated’

How to Prevent

- Avoid people who you know are significantly ill particularly during the flu season
- Strongly consider getting the FLU SHOT (an immunization given from late summer through the winter that can markedly reduce your chances of getting the flu. Not perfect preventing the flu, it’s the best option available: the older you are, the more important the flu shot is, as flu is more concerning in older patients, those with medical illnesses like diabetes, COPD, heart disease, pregnancy)
- Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently

Strep Throat

Most Common Symptoms

- Sore throat—severe
- Fever that can be mild (99-100 degrees), or one over 101 degrees

When to Seek Medical Assistance

1. Strep throat is a bacterial infection that requires antibiotics to resolve.

2. See your doctor for a strep test and proper treatment.

3. If you test positive, you will be given a prescription. Strep throat is uncommon in adults; more often seen in children and adolescents.

4. If your sore throat is accompanied by other symptoms, including sinus congestion, drainage, cough, or chest congestion, the you are unlikely to have strep throat. You can be treated for a more general respiratory infection or use home remedies for a sore throat. (See above section on Sore Throat)

How Long to Recover

With appropriate antibiotics, you will generally improve in 48 hours and symptoms will be completely gone in 5–7 days.

How to Prevent

- Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently
- Stay out of school/work for 24 hours after you begin antibiotics

Bronchitis

Most Common Symptoms

- Significant cough accompanied by yellow mucus (other colors like brown or grey may also indicate infection)
- Generally, fever is present, but not always; fever will be lower 99-101 generally
- Your illness is worsening and has lasted over 5 days without improving
- Wheezing sounds (musical sounds) with deep breathing or coughing

What to Do at Home

- Cough suppressants (Robitussin DM or Delsym): take 2 teaspoons as indicated on the bottle to prevent excessive coughing
- Drying antihistamines (Chlor-Trimeton 4 mg, or Benadryl 25 mg): take 1 pill 1-4 times per day for relief of congestion and drainage (these are best taken later in the day or at night, as they tend to make you tired)
- Mucus elimination agents: Mucinex has mixed results, but some people do find it effective; taking 2 pills twice daily can help mucus thin out and resolve more quickly, but this varies from person to person

- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the symptoms described above persist for three days without showing signs of improvement
- If cough and yellow mucous is progressively worsening over the first three days
- If you feel short of breath
- If you have significant wheezing

How Long to Recover

- With appropriate antibiotics, you will generally improve in 48 hours and symptoms will be completely gone in 7-10 days
- Mild coughing may persist for a few weeks

How to Prevent

Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently.

Pneumonia

Most Common Symptoms

- Significant cough accompanied by yellow mucus (other colors like brown or grey may also indicate infection)

- Fever over 100 degrees is typical; it can reach over 104 degrees
- Shaking chills
- Your illness is worsening and the above symptoms have lasted over two days without improving
- Wheezing sounds (musical sounds) with deep breathing or coughing
- Shortness of breath

What to Do at Home

- Cough suppressants (Robitussin DM or Delsym): take 2 teaspoons as indicated on the bottle to prevent excessive coughing
- Drying antihistamines (Chlor-Trimeton 4 mg, or Benadryl 25 mg): Take 1 pill 1-4 times per day for relief of congestion and drainage; (these are best taken later in the day or at night, as they tend to make you tired)
- Mucus elimination agents: Mucinex has mixed results, but some people do find it effective. Taking 2 pills twice daily can help mucus thin out and resolve more quickly, but this varies from person to person
- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If the symptoms described above persist for one to two days without showing signs of improvement
- If cough and yellow mucous is progressively worsening over the first two days
- If you feel short of breath
- If you have significant wheezing

How Long to Recover

- With appropriate antibiotics, you will generally improve in 2-4 days and symptoms will be completely gone in 7-10 days
- Mild coughing may persist for a few weeks
- Plan on being off school/work for 1-5 days

How to Prevent

Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently.

Sinus Pressure/Congestion

Most Common Symptoms

- Pressure behind the cheeks, nose, forehead, and sometimes the ears
- Drainage of mucous from the nose that is persistent and requires frequent blowing of the nose

What to Do at Home

Symptoms can be relieved through different medications.

- Decongestants (Sudafed 30 mg): Take 1 pill one to four times per day for relief of congestion and drainage. This is best taken earlier in the day or afternoon as it can keep you awake
- Drying antihistamines (Chlor-Trimeton 4 mg, or Benadryl 25 mg): Take 1 pill 1–4 times per day for relief of congestion and drainage. These are best taken later in the day or at night, as they tend to make you tired
- Mucus elimination agents: Mucinex has mixed results, but some people do find it effective. Taking 2 pills twice daily can help mucus thin out and resolve more quickly, but this varies from person to person. I generally do not recommend this medication very much

Sinusitis

Most Common Symptoms

- Severe sinus pressure (pressure behind the cheekbones, nose, or forehead) that worsens when you lean forward

- Discolored drainage of mucous from the nose that is persistent and requires frequent blowing of the nose. Yellow, brown, bloody mucous is suggestive of bacterial infection
- A fever (over 99°F)
- Very little sore throat or cough

What to Do at Home

Symptoms can be relieved through different medications.

- **Decongestants** (Sudafed 30 mg): take 1 pill one to four times per day for relief of congestion and drainage (this is best taken earlier in the day or afternoon as it can keep you awake)
- **Drying antihistamines** (Chlor-Trimeton 4 mg, or Benadryl 25 mg): take 1 pill 1–4 times per day for relief of congestion and drainage (these are best taken later in the day or at night, as they tend to make you tired)
- **Mucus elimination agents:** Mucinex has mixed results, but some people do find it effective; taking 2 pills twice daily can help mucus thin out and resolve more quickly, but this varies from person to person (I generally do not recommend this medication very much)
- Drink good amounts of clear liquids (anything you can see through)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If your symptoms match those of sinus pressure and are accompanied by a high fever and have persisted for more than three days, you may have sinusitis; antibiotics are required to treat this bacterial infection
- It is nearly impossible to diagnose sinusitis on examination at the office, so treatment with antibiotics is based on educated guesswork

How Long to Recover

You will generally improve in 2–4 days and symptoms will be completely gone in 7–10 days.

How to Prevent

Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently.

Ear Pain or Ear Fullness

Most Common Symptoms

- Ear pressure and pain
- Ear congestion
- Decreased hearing (but not loss of hearing)

What to Do at Home

- Decongestants (Sudafed 30 mg): take 1 pill one to four times per day for relief of congestion and drainage (this is best taken earlier in the day or afternoon as it can keep you awake)
- Drying antihistamines (Chlor-Trimeton 4 mg, or Benadryl 25 mg): take 1 pill 1–4 times per day for relief of congestion and drainage (these are best taken later in the day or at night, as they tend to make you tired)
- Pain relief medications
 - Tylenol: Take 2 pills up to four times a day (not to exceed 4,000 mg total per day).*
 - Advil: Take 2-3 pills two to three times a day (not to exceed 2,400 mg total per day).*
 - Aleve: Take 1-2 pills two times a day (not to exceed 1,000 mg total per day).*

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you have intense ear pain
- If you are around young children who have documented ear infections that are being treated with antibiotics
- If your ear symptoms are accompanied by sore throat, cough, chest congestion, **then you are unlikely to have an ear infection that requires treatment with antibiotics**

How Long to Recover

You will generally improve in 2–4 days, and symptoms will be completely gone in 7–10 days.

How to Prevent

Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently.

Digestive System Issues

Nausea, Vomiting, and Diarrhea

(Known as Acute Gastrointestinal Illness).

Most Common Symptoms

- Nausea (feeling sick to the stomach)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

What to Do at Home

Settle your stomach by drinking flat Coca-Cola (shake an open bottle to expel carbon dioxide); drink ginger ale, take Emetrol (over-the-counter sweet syrup); you can also try ginger root.

Consume liquids to prevent dehydration. Clear liquids are best, including:

- Plain water
- Gatorade (or similar electrolyte solutions); sugar-free or zero calorie versions are not recommended, as calories help treating the illness
- Tea
- Cranberry juice or white grape juice
- Apple juice (mixed half and half with water)
- Chicken soup broth, matzo ball soup, or ramen

- Popsicles
- Ice chips melted in your mouth

Eat light foods if possible. Consuming liquids is most important and the only requirement during the illness. Light foods will help but should only be attempted if you're likely to keep them down.

- Plain toast
- Crackers
- Plain noodles/ramen
- Macaroni (no cheese)
- Plain rice
- Bananas
- Applesauce

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you experience intense abdominal pain, and if that pain continues for several hours, this could be a sign of a more serious condition
- If you are unable to keep any liquids down at all, this will lead to dehydration, and you will need to be given fluids and electrolytes at the hospital
- If your vomiting does not stop after 4 hours, your doctor can prescribe medications that may help

- If diarrhea continues for more than 3–4 weeks (diarrhea that does continue for about 3–4 weeks is normal, though that may seem odd; if it goes on longer, it's best to go to the doctor to make sure something more serious isn't going on)

How to Prevent

- Avoid expired food, food that's been sitting out too long, or food that has been in the refrigerator longer than recommended
- Cook all food thoroughly
- Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently

Abdominal Pain

Abdominal pains are very common and everyone will have them at some time in their life. If it persists long enough or is intense enough, it will make you consider seeking medical attention. Abdominal pain can occur all on its own, or in association with other symptoms. This makes a big difference, because pain that is associated with diarrhea is much less likely to be something that will ultimately be serious than say pains that are accompanied by nausea or vomiting.

Types of Abdominal Pain

The most common of the abdominal pain syndromes that occur, are best understood by the locations where they are felt or their pattern:

- Right upper quadrant: Above the navel and to the right
- Right lower quadrant: Below the navel and to the right
- Left lower quadrant: Below the navel and to the left
- Left upper quadrant: Not associated with particular abdominal pain syndromes
- Epigastric pain: Pain around the navel/belly-button area
- Colicky pain: Pain that comes in waves

Likely Problems

Right upper quadrant abdominal pain that is severe and colicky (comes in waves) can be gallbladder pain and is a concern if very intense (7 or above on the pain scale) and associated with nausea and vomiting. Milder symptoms can be associated with a more lingering course, so if symptoms persist for over a day or two, it's best to be seen by the doctor.

- Gallbladder issues are much more common in women than men
- The older you are, the more likely your gallbladder is to become an issue

Right lower abdominal pain that is severe and persistent can be appendicitis. If intense (5 or more on the pain scale and lasting several hours without relief, it is a reason to be checked. Nausea and vomiting can be associated with pain in this area. Certainly you will lose your appetite and feel a bit bloated or constipated. Diarrhea is rarely seen here, if ever.

- Appendicitis is very common in children and college-aged students
- Appendicitis can be more difficult to diagnose the older you get as the symptoms can be more variable

Right lower quadrant colicky pain (cramping pain that comes in waves) can be a sign of a kidney stone and should also be considered. Typically, with this pain you will get waves of pain that are 7 or above on the pain scale and the pain will generally cause you to want to move around to find a comfortable position. If you want to just 'sit still' this is typically not a kidney stone pain. Associated blood in the urine

also helps with diagnosis of a kidney stone. For women, consideration is given to issues related to the pelvic organs (uterus or ovaries), particularly if there is vaginal discharge or unanticipated vaginal bleeding.

- Ovaries can cause pain during ovulation (middle of cycle); this is called mittelschmerz (pain at other times during the cycle may suggest cysts on the ovaries or Pelvic Inflammatory Disease an STI)

Left lower abdominal pain that is severe and persistent. The major concern here is diverticulitis. This is typically a persisting and near constant pain in the abdomen that can last for hours or days. It is associated commonly with constipation and difficulty moving the bowels. The pain is moderately severe (5 and up on the pain scale). Kidney stone pain may arise in this area if the pain comes in waves. For women, consideration is given to issues related to the pelvic organs (uterus or ovaries), particularly if there is vaginal discharge or unanticipated vaginal bleeding.

Diffuse cramping abdominal pains associated with nausea and vomiting. When severe and intense (7 or more on the pain scale) consideration is given to small bowel obstruction. In this

situation, the small intestine gets trapped under an adhesion (scar) from a previous surgery on the abdomen, or it will get trapped in a hernia. The pain is colicky and severe—generally causing a person to writhe around in pain when intense.

Colicky left or right lower abdominal pains: consider kidney stones. This is listed above but is important as it is so common. Pain is colicky (comes in waves), is severe (7+ on the pain scale) and is accompanied by periods of complete, or near complete pain resolution, only to have the pain return. Kidney stone pain ‘respects the midline’ meaning that it’s either all on the right side...or all on the left side, but it will not be on both the right and left sides during one attack. So...if the pain stays ‘sided’...this is a consideration. If the pain ‘generalizes’ across both sides of the abdomen, it is not a kidney stone.

Epigastric pains: Acid stomach irritation or ulcer is the most common cause of mid-abdominal pain that is mild or moderate in nature (pain scale 2-6). The pain from these conditions is constant, or comes and goes in mild manner, not with intensity like a ‘colicky pain’ as indicated above. The pain can be improved with eating or worsened with it (either is possible).

What to Do at Home

Mild abdominal pains: For milder pains of the abdomen of various sorts that are less than 5 on the pain scale and which only a few hours, the general recommendations include:

1. Keep the diet light...focus on clear liquids, not solids.
2. Use a low level heat from a heating pad on and off (30 minutes at a time with 30 minutes of rest).
3. Tylenol or Advil for mild pain relief.
4. Use Pepcid AC to reduce acidity and relieve the work of digestion.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If abdominal pains are severe
- If you are becoming dehydrated because you can't keep liquids down
- If you experience severe abdominal pains for several hours

Constipation

A person's own knowledge about bowel movements is fairly limited. Variations in bowel movement pattern, form, and color is commonplace. It is also rather common for people to think that

their bowel movement pattern is unusual or even a sign of serious health issues. Generally, this is not the case but rather the result of something that alters your bowel motility. That includes:

- Change in diet
- Lack of physical activity
- Travel
- Medication changes
- Medical conditions that develop

Bowel movement frequency and consistency vary in most people. Although there are those lucky few who are perfectly regular, moving their bowels daily and readily, most of us will have more variation than that. This is completely normal and should not be a cause for concern. The normal range of bowel movements is anywhere from four times per day to once every five days. Most people are happy to know what is considered within the normal range.

Most Common Symptoms

- Difficulty emptying your bowels
- Feeling bloated, full, and uncomfortable

What to Do at Home

Add more fiber to your diet. Fiber is the non-digestible component of fruits and vegetables. The body cannot break down fiber, as it does proteins, carbohydrates and fats. As such, fiber passes through the colon and enhances the amount of fluid in waste material (feces) and enhances the transit of the feces through the 24-foot length of the intestines. It is recommended getting 25 grams of fiber daily; most people get less than half of that. Fiber-rich foods include:

- High Fiber Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta:
- Bran Cereal (any cereal with more than 5 grams of fiber per serving)
- Whole Grain/Whole Wheat Bread
- Oatmeal
- Whole Grain Rice/Wild Rice
- Whole Grain Pasta
- Graham Crackers
- Quinoa

High Fiber Fruits

(1/2 cup servings unless indicated):

- Prunes, 5 dried
- Raisins
- Figs

- Apple, unpeeled
- Avocado, 1/2
- Dates, 3
- Pear, 1 unpeeled
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Mango
- Orange, 1 medium
- Raspberries

High Fiber Vegetables:

- Brussels sprouts
- Artichokes
- Pumpkin, canned
- Potato, with skin
- Sweet potato
- Kidney beans
- Mushrooms, canned
- Carrot
- Rhubarb
- Spinach, cooked or raw
- Broccoli
- Green peas

Increase physical activity. Even a small change

such as the commitment to take a 15-minute walk sometime during your day, every day, will help prevent internal sluggishness.

Drink more liquids. If you are having constipation, then ingesting more liquids makes sense. Increase an additional 16 ounces (2 cups) more than your usual liquid intake to make certain you're not developing dehydration.

Look at the medications and supplements you take. Although constipation can be a side effect of any medication, some are more apt to slow bowel movements. Generally, medications are not the major cause of constipation, but they should be considered or adjusted. The list of supplements and medications to be aware of constipation as a side effect include:

- Iron tablets
- Calcium supplements or antacids with calcium (Rolaids, Tums)
- Pain medications (narcotics)
- Antidepressants (amitryptiline/nortryptiline only)
- Prozac, Zoloft, Celexa, Lexapro (the SSRI class of medications) do not generally result in constipation

Take fiber supplements. Fiber supplements, also termed bulk-forming laxatives, are mild and fine for ongoing use if needed. Fiber increases the bulk of the bowel movement and enhances the amount of fluid in the bowel. By doing this, it makes it easier for the bowel movement to move through the colon. To increase the fiber content beyond what is readily available in foods, many people use fiber supplements. These are commonplace and known to all of us. The various supplements have different sources of fiber and thus provide different amounts of fiber. These include:

- Bran fiber
- Psyllium husk
- Metamucil (psyllium based)
- Citrucel (methylcellulose)
- FiberCon (polycarbophil)
- Benefiber (guar gum)

Use stool softeners. These are mild and approved for ongoing use if needed. I recommend Colace/Surfak (docusate sodium 100 mg) to enhance the amount of liquid that remains in the bowel movement to make the bowel movement easier and quicker. Take one or two pills per day.

Use osmotic agents. Osmotic agents keep more water in the matter that is moving through your intestines and bowels. MiraLAX is a powder that dissolves in any liquid. Made of PEG (polyethylene glycol). Taken in small amounts regularly, it will draw more water into the bowel movements and quicken the pace. MiraLAX is mild and approved for continual use when necessary. Some osmotic agents, such as Milk of Magnesia or magnesium oxide pills, bring moderate to strong and fast-acting relief. They are only for short-term use; more frequent use is for severe underlying issues that require ongoing treatment. This is only acceptable when approved by a physician. Milk of Magnesia or magnesium oxide pills use the properties of magnesium salts to draw large quantities of fluid into the intestines and create rapid movement of the feces through the colon.

Use stimulants. Moderate in strength, stimulants are OK for short-term use. They may be appropriate for ongoing use but only if given the go-ahead by the doctor. These medications act as irritants to the bowel and cause contraction of the muscles within the bowels, moving the bowel

movement along more rapidly. These medications include:

- Ex-lax
- Sennakot
- Senna teas
- Swiss Kriss (herbal laxative)
- Dulcolax (pills and suppositories)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- Seek medical attention if this is completely different than your normal pattern and it does not resolve in a few weeks with the above measures
- If associated with significant bleeding that persists for more than a few days

How to Prevent

- Increase your liquid intake
- Increase physical activity
- Add fiber to your diet and make use of the remedies described above (occasional use of stronger products like Milk of Magnesia, magnesium oxide, or is fine, but seek medical attention if you are using the stronger supplements frequently)

C. DIFF INFECTION

C. diff Infection is shorthand for an antibiotic-induced diarrhea caused by the bacteria *Clostridium difficile*.

This germ is becoming increasingly common as the cause of persisting, recurring, difficult-to-treat diarrhea. Mostly found in older patients who have been hospitalized and on IV antibiotics, it is spreading in the community among special populations (nursing home residents) but also can be seen among the general public.

This is another infection that is an increasing problem due to the overuse of antibiotics.

C. diff diarrhea is characterized by severe and persisting watery bowel movements occurring after a course of antibiotics (either oral or IV form). Although diarrhea is not uncommon after antibiotics due to the effects on the normal bowel bacteria (flora), this diarrhea is much more severe, often causing extremely urgent liquid bowel movements or even accidents in your underwear.

Recognition/Diagnosis

Think of C. diff diarrhea if you have persisting diarrhea lasting more than 2 weeks after you complete a course of antibiotics or if you have diarrhea that is so extreme it results in accidents during the day or at night-time.

The diagnosis can be confirmed by a stool test for C. diff toxin, but this test is imperfect. Under suspicious conditions I will often treat empirically.

Treatment

There are two primary treatments for C. diff diarrhea and they are both antibiotics that preferentially eliminate the C. diff bacteria and allow normal intestinal bacteria to remain safe. These medications are:

- Flagyl (metronidazole)
- Vancocin (vancomycin)

Flagyl (metronidazole): is inexpensive but many people find it causes nausea. As a result this is often the 'first line' therapy, but many times you will have to stop this antibiotic due to intolerance of side effects. That said, it is still very safe and if it works for you...great.

Vancocin (vancomycin): is an expensive antibiotic

but is wonderfully effective for treating *C. diff* and has virtually no side effects.

To get around cost issues we often have a liquid form made up by the formulating pharmacies (Civic Center Pharmacy, Avella Pharmacy). This is much less expensive.

Treatment regimens are 10—14 days typically, but many patients have persisting symptoms and require either a second round of antibiotics or a prolonged tapering regimen of antibiotic in which you use the medication for several weeks or months in a gradually declining dose.

Sachromyces boulardii: This ‘good’ germ, a type of yeast, can help in resolution of a bout of *C. diff* diarrhea and can also prevent future infections. It provides a competitor to the *C. diff* germ, enhancing the body’s own protection mechanisms.

This product is now over-the-counter in the form of Florastor. It is generally available at pharmacies and grocery stores.

Prevention

To prevent spreading and future bouts of *C. diff* do the following:

- Wash your hands regularly and use an alcohol-based cleanser often
- Try not to share the bathroom of the patient during the first few weeks of treatment; otherwise, a thorough cleaning with bleach-based products of the toilet and basin area is critical
- Avoid additional courses of antibiotics for infection; take antibiotics only if essential for curing a highly probable or documented infection
- Florastor (*Sachromyces boulardii*) daily may be protective, but this is not proven

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Most Common Symptoms

- Chronic diarrhea (more than five bowel movements per day, or watery/soft bowel movements)
- Abdominal bloating
- Abdominal pain that varies from day to day in intensity and location in the abdomen
- Excessive gas
- Chronic constipation
- Nausea
- Cramping discomfort

These symptoms typically occur spontaneously,

although they can occur when you're stressed. They can last from days to weeks or months (sometimes years).

What to Do at Home

- Use bulk agents, like fiber (recommended: a high fiber diet, Metamucil, Citrucel)
- Try pro-biotics (recommended: Align, Culturelle, Florastor)

There is one side issue that should be mentioned. In the latest research, there has been an increasing incidence of histories of sexual abuse in childhood and adolescence noted in patients with IBS. Although some people may feel this is just another example of false memories confusing another issue in people's lives, the premier researchers in this area are convinced that there is a connection in many patients between their symptoms and their past, which adds a psychological component to treatment for IBS. If you have tried the remedies I've listed here but have not achieved relief, do not be surprised if it is recommended that you see a therapist for help.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If there is significant bleeding associated with bowel movements

- If there is a marked change from your baseline symptoms
- If you've never had a formal evaluation and been given the diagnosis with more certainty (IBS is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that testing has been done to eliminate other causes and IBS is the remaining diagnosis provided)

Rectal and Anal Issues

Itch or Irritation

What to Do at Home

- Do not use soap (this may come as a surprise, but remember, your bottom area has germs and there is no way to sterilize the area and generally speaking, your bottom is happiest when it has some germs around, as this is its normal situation)
- Wash your bottom area with plain water or Cetaphil Liquid Cleanser (this product is available over-the-counter at any pharmacy; avoiding soap will prevent irritation in the area and it will keep skin in the area from getting dried out)
- Dry your bottom thoroughly (probably the best way to do this is to use a hair blow dryer on medium heat; alternatively, you can pat the area with a dry towel or air dry by leaving your underwear off and let nature dry things up)
- Try small amount cortisone cream (Cortaid 10)

If you have been following these three rules for a few days and nothing is working, then using a small amount of steroid/cortisone cream is fine. Best to apply a small amount to the fingers and

then while the bottom is moist after a shower, apply the cream. Then dry the area as instructed. This approach is over 90 percent likely to fix your bottom irritation, no matter what the cause. In fact, it works on the groin areas as well and should be tried if you have irritation in that area as well (or for women with mild irritation in or around the labia).

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If the above approach does not fix your problem, you may have a yeast or other fungal infection that may require medication.

How to Prevent

- Avoid excessive washing of the backside area with soap; this will dry and irritate the area
- Avoid scented toilet paper

Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the rectal area and can occur inside the rectum (bottom portion of the colon; internal hemorrhoid) or outside the anus (the opening from the rectum; external hemorrhoid). Typically, they occur during times of changes in bowel habits, in particular with constipation or straining to move the bowels.

That said, they might come on out of the blue or related to other issues that irritate the backside (sitting for prolonged periods, sitting on an irritating surface). Some women experience them during pregnancy, and afterwards.

Most Common Symptoms

- Bleeding is common; drops of blood in the toilet bowl, blood on the outside of the stool, or blood when wiping with toilet tissue
- A swelling or protuberance that you can feel with your finger in the anal area
- Pain around the anus area

What to Do at Home

1. Follow the basic rules described under the itch/irritation section.
2. Soak in a bath of plain warm water. Warm water in the bathtub (or use a sitz bath—a plastic tub that fits over the toilet bowl) will provide immediate relief that is impressive. Do this one to several times a day—as often as you need. You cannot do this too much. Do realize that sitting in a hot tub, Jacuzzi or swimming in the warm water of a pool is not good for hemorrhoids and will cause increased symptoms due to the chemicals in the water.

3. Apply a topical cream such as Anusol HC (prescription) in a small amount to the inflamed area around the rectum. This works much better than Preparation H (an over-the-counter product that I think is not very effective). You can try a mild cortisone cream such as Cortaid 10, which is available at any pharmacy or grocery store.

4. Keep the bowel movements soft. Use either a softener such as Colace (docusate sodium), Metamucil (fiber product), or MiraLAX (over-the-counter constipation aid) to keep bowels moving easily. This prevents straining at movement, which can perpetuate the hemorrhoids.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If bleeding is bothersome, a prescription from your doctor may help (these are Anusol HC suppositories and are sometimes necessary for more vexing cases of irritation or bleeding)
- If symptoms continue despite these efforts, it is time to go in for a check and possible referral to a proctologist (rectum/bowel specialist)

How Long to Recover

- Hemorrhoids last from days to weeks
- Pain should resolve in a few days, same with bleeding

- Swelling or noticeable protuberance can last weeks or longer (this is not a worry)

How to Prevent

- Keep your bowel movements regular
- Use higher fiber foods to prevent constipation
- Get more physical activity
- Drink more liquids

Urinary Tract Infections (Bladder Infections)

Most Common Symptoms

- Frequent urination
- Burning, painful sensation during urination
- Cloudy urine
- Blood in the urine
- Fever

When to Seek Medical Assistance

Antibiotics are required to treat a UTI, and testing a urine sample for infection can confirm the diagnosis, so seeing your doctor is a must. Your doctor will likely prescribe an antibiotic, such as:

- Keflex (cephalexin)
- Cipro (ciprofloxacin)
- Macrobid (macrobid)
- Amoxicillin

Doctors also often prescribe an anesthetic called Pyridium (phenazopyridine), which provides immediate relief by acting directly on the surface tissue of the bladder. It does turn the urine orange, so be aware of that. A UTI requires an antibiotic to go away, so treatment with just Pyridium will not work.

How Long to Recover

- After starting antibiotics, you should see improvement within 12–24 hours
- Symptoms should be markedly improved by 48 hours; If not, call your doctor, as you'll need a different antibiotic

How to Prevent

No perfect prevention method exists, but you can take some actions:

- Urinating after intercourse
- Taking a single dose of an antibiotic after intercourse
- Taking daily antibiotics to prevent recurrent infections

Some factors increase risk of a UTI. They include:

- Previous UTI
- Sexual intercourse
- Lack of hormones or hormone imbalance

Other Infections / Conditions

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)

Most Common Symptoms

- Pinkish hue to one or both eyes
- Mild mucous production and matting of the eyelids
- Eye irritation

What to Do at Home

- Use eye drops to relieve irritation (recommended: over-the-counter antihistamine drops, like Naphcon A)
- As this is caused by a virus, antibiotics aren't necessary and won't work

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If you note significant pus (whitish material) gathering in eye. You may need antibiotic drops.

How Long to Recover

Symptoms improve in three days and usually resolve within one week.

How to Prevent

- To prevent spreading the infection, do not share towels or pillows with other people

- Also, wash your hands regularly; this infection is very contagious

Mononucleosis

Most Common Symptoms

- Severe sore throat (pharyngitis) that lingers from several days to 2-3 weeks
- Fever
- Markedly swollen glands in the neck region
- Persistent fatigue from weeks to a few months

What to Do at Home

- Mono is a viral illness that will resolve with time; there is no specific treatment
- Rest and good diet can help make the symptoms less bothersome
- Tylenol or Advil can help reduce symptoms of fatigue and ache/discomfort

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If above symptoms persist for a few weeks you should seek medical assistance for a diagnosis (this is done via a blood test)
- Further, your doctor may recommend reduced activity to recuperate fully from the disease

How Long to Recover

- Mono fatigue generally lasts a few weeks, but sometimes it can last a few months
- Activities during this time, including study and schoolwork, needs to be minimized; excuses from class may be medically necessary

How to Prevent

- Mono is contagious, but casual contacts are unlikely to get mono
- Close contacts can catch mono from kissing (it is called by some the 'kissing disease') but that occurs in less than 50% of couples

Meningitis

Meningitis is a severe and dangerous infection of the central nervous system, affecting the tissues and fluids surrounding the brain. This type of infection does occur more commonly in young adults, and it is important to recognize for early detection and treatment.

Most Common Symptoms

- Headache
- High fever (over 101 degrees typically, but can be over 104 degrees)

- Light sensitivity (need to cover eyes in daylight or avoiding light/sun exposure)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Sore throat
- Neck stiffness or pain
- Rash

What to Do at Home

Meningitis is always a severe infection that requires medical attention. If you think you have meningitis due to the above symptoms being present, seek medical assistance immediately in the Emergency Room.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

If the above symptoms are present, always seek medical attention.

How Long to Recover

This varies from several days to a few weeks.

How to Prevent

- Meningitis vaccination can prevent certain types of meningitis. Menactra®, Menveo®, and MenHibrix®
- Wash your hands and use alcohol-based hand cleansers frequently

Headaches

Most Common Symptoms

- Pain in the scalp or head area
- Pain in the head that radiates into the neck
- Nausea (associated with migraine headaches)
- Light sensitivity (unable to tolerate bright lights/sunshine)

What to Do at Home

- Headache medication like Excedrin Migraine, 1-2 tablets every 6 hours, can be helpful
- Use other anti-inflammatory medication; Advil (Ibuprofen 200mg), 2-3 tablets... 2-3 x per day or Aleve (naproxen 220mg), 1-2 tablets... 1-2 x per day
- Ice the area involved, or apply heat to the area
- Rest, shut your eyes, relax and try to sleep; this can help resolve the headache

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If severe nausea is associated with the headache
- If you do not routinely get headaches and you get an extremely severe headache that is out of character for you and it does not respond to the above measures

- If you have a rash on your body that developed at the time the headache began
- If you have high fever (over 101 degrees)

How Long to Recover

Headaches typically resolve in 1-12 hours.

How to Prevent

- Good diet, exercise, and rest tends to reduce headaches
- Reduce stress as much as possible
- Take medication as soon as you develop headache symptoms; this can minimize the degree of head pain during a spell

Dizziness

Most Common Symptoms

- Poor balance
- Spinning sensation (vertigo)
- Nausea
- Vomiting

What to Do at Home

- Rest
- Drink clear liquids, if you can tolerate them

- You can try Bonine (meclizine) and over-the-counter medication that can help with dizziness

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If associated with a severe headache or high fever
- If persisting nausea and vomiting and dehydration develops

How Long to Recover

Dizziness tends to be intermittent and lasts a few to several days and then resolves.

How to Prevent

No strategy is known to work but head-turning exercises may be helpful.

Head Turning Exercises:

- By doing formal exercises, one can get the brain used-to the abnormal vertigo sensations; the nerves from the inner ear become habituated to the movement and lose their excitability
To do head turning exercises: Sit down comfortably in a chair.
- Begin by tilting your head straight back, and then to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat this movement slowly, 10 times.

- Next, tilt your head downward and touch your chin to your chest, and
- bringing it back to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat this maneuver slowly, 10 times.
- Next turn your head to the right (touching your chin to your right shoulder if possible), then back to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat 10 times in the row.
- Finally, repeat this process turning the head to the left.
- Do this exercise 3-4 times each day.

Diabetes Wisdom

Diabetes is elevated blood sugar (glucose). It results when your body does not make enough insulin (a failure in the pancreas), your body resists insulin (due to too much fat...meaning you weigh too much) or due to a combination of both of these factors.

Eight percent of the US population has diabetes, 25 percent have pre-diabetes.

Diagnosis

Testing for elevated blood sugar and finding a glucose level of over 140 after fasting or post-meal sugar levels consistently over 200.

Elevated blood sugar over an extended period of time requires a special blood test (called a glycohemoglobin...a 90 day glucose average), and for that reading to be over 6.0.

Symptoms

Generally, when diagnosed, most people have no symptoms of diabetes. They do not know they have it, but rather are told they have it based on blood test results as mentioned above.

Symptoms can be a sign of diabetes and these symptoms are known as the “Polys,” as in:

- Polyuria (frequent urination).
- Polydypsea (excessive thirst).
- Polyphage (excessive eating that results in weight loss, not weight gain).

Other symptoms of diabetes relate to complications from the disease (vision changes, tingling in hands or feet) but these are rarely seen at diagnosis, so they are not usually considered related to diabetes if you are recently diagnosed.

Treatment

Diet: the cornerstone of treatment

Losing 5-10 pounds alone can result in a dramatic improvement in blood sugar. The focus of diabetes care is about diet:

Balancing the diet: Spread calories out through the day (3 meals and 2 snacks). Do this by reducing portion sizes of carbohydrates/starches. Eat more lean meats as a protein source.

Reducing the diet: Less calories in total food consumption. Less calories from starches, in particular, limiting white bread, potatoes, pasta, white

rice. Less simple sugars in the forms of soda pop, other sugary drinks and candy.

Adjusting the diet: Choose more green vegetables. Choose more complex carbohydrates (whole grains). Avoid processed foods in favor of natural foods (and know how to shop because packaged foods found in the ‘middle’ of the grocery store are replaced by natural foods found on the perimeter of the grocery store).

Exercise

Burn calories with exercise. Do 30-60 minutes, 5 days a week. It can have a profound impact, but do what you can, when you can.

Just make it a habit to get exercise.

Active muscles burn sugar more effectively.

Exercise reduces fatty tissue and makes insulin more effective.

Medications

There are five basic ‘classes’ of pills for treating diabetes, and two forms of injectable medication.

Pills:

- Metformin (Glucophage).
- Glimeperide (Sulfonylureal).

- Actos (TZD).
- Januvia/Onglyza (DPP4 Inhibitor).
- Farxiga/Jardiance (SGLT-2 Inhibitors).

Injectibles:

- Byetta/Bydureon/Victoza/Trulicity/Ozempic (GLP1 Analogs).
- Insulin (various forms).
- GLP1/Insulin pre-mixed combinations.

Metformin: This medication has been around for over 50 years and is extremely safe. It reduces the body’s own sugar production in the liver.

PROS: Safe, inexpensive, does not cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia); may have anti-cancer properties; can lead to weight loss.

CONS: Cannot be used with kidney issues and is less than ideal for patients over 80 years old (although can be used over 80 years old).

Sulfonylureals (Glimeperide, Glyburide, Glipizide): These medications are also over 50 years old and are very safe. They reduce blood sugar by enhancing insulin production from the pancreas.

PROS: Safe, inexpensive, strong.

CONS: Can cause low blood sugar

(hypoglycemia). Kidney issues can limit usefulness.

Actos: This medication is 20 years old. It works by enhancing the body's sensitivity to insulin.

PROS: Just has gone generic; very effective; can improve cholesterol parameters; does not cause hypoglycemia.

CONS: General safety is established, but some questions of long-term safety-even at this late date (risk of bladder cancer); requires blood monitoring when you begin the medication.

DPP4 Inhibitors: These medications are the new pills and have been around for eight years. They appear safe and work by increasing hormones that enhance insulin effects.

PROS: Appear safe; pill form of the GLP-1 medications (but not as effective).

CONS: Expensive.

SGLT-2 Inhibitors: These medications are the newest pills and have been around for three years. They appear to be generally safe and work by increasing sugar excretion by the kidneys.

PROS: Appear safe, demonstrated heart benefits.

CONS: Expensive, frequent and urgent urination can be a bother, experience remains limited in identifying the best patients for this medication.

GLP1 Analogs (Byetta/Bydurion, Victoza, Trulicity, Ozempic): These medications work by enhancing insulin effects. They mimic hormone GLP1 that assists insulin in controlling blood sugar.

PROS: Weight loss is generally occurs; safe.

CONS: Injection; will cause some degree of nausea; expensive.

Insulin: Insulin is the exact hormone lacking in diabetes. The genetically engineered hormone is provided through a very fine needle injection.

PROS: Safe; virtually identical to your body's own hormone.

CONS: Expensive; injection; can be associated with weight gain.

Monitoring: There are two ways to monitor your progress in treating and controlling your diabetes.

1. **The Scale:** If you are overweight, then losing weight is the simplest key to treatment. Monitoring your weight and accomplishing weight loss is the single most important thing you can do.

2. **Goals:** If you can return to 'normal body weight' diabetes can often be eliminated, but losing 5-10 pounds can have a major impact and will improve your blood sugar.

Blood Glucose Monitor: These simple devices are quite accurate and virtually painless. Monitoring sugar is done regularly at first, but often can be done only occasionally, once diabetic control is obtained.

Testing the blood first thing in the morning, prior to eating, is the most important time to check. Other times are prior to meals and prior to bedtime.

Occasionally, checking a blood sugar 30 minutes after eating will allow one to see how much certain foods affect the blood sugar.

Goals: Fasting (morning) blood sugar should be under 140, preferably 120 or below.

Before meal sugars should be under 140, but definitely under 200.

Glycohemoglobin (also called HBA1C): This is a 90 day average for your blood sugar and is measured by a different scale than the other blood sugar testing. It is performed by a routine blood test or a special finger stick blood test done only in the office.

Glycohemoglobin levels:

- 6.0 and below is normal, and is the most excellent control
- 6.1—6.9 Excellent blood sugar control
- 7.0—8.0 Solid blood sugar control
- 8.0—10.5 Too high. Levels of 10.6 or greater are severely out of control and must be lowered

A glycohemoglobin below 8.0 is a definite goal for all diabetic patients because control that results in numbers of 8.0 and below result in less overall complications of diabetes over the years.

Some patients will use this as their preferred test for monitoring so that they can perform limited glucose testing at home. This is quite acceptable.

Hypoglycemia: Hypoglycemia is low blood sugar (below 80) and can result from treatment of diabetes. This is the result of overactive medications, either pills or shots.

Hypoglycemia symptoms include: shakiness,

tremor, confusion, cold sweating, general weakness.

Treatment: Eat something sugary quickly. Sugared soda, fruit juice, candy, sugar itself (or glucose tablets) readily resolves low blood sugar and the symptoms associated with it.

Prevention: Reduce your medication or eat at proper intervals to avoid low blood sugar.

General Goals for the New Diabetic Patient

Education: Diabetes is a lifelong illness. It is critical that you understand your condition, it's treatment and proper diet. This book provides only a cursory introduction. More resources can be found at:

<http://doctordoug.com/health-information-for-our-patients/recommended-medical-resources/>.

Diet: Learn about carbohydrates and balancing your diet to both lose weight and reduce blood sugar excursions.

Lose weight: If you are overweight, the single most important way to get your diabetes under control is lose weight. If you can possibly return to a normal weight, this is the best possible treatment

as it often can result in the complete resolution of diabetes. Of course, if you gain the weight back, you will get your diabetes back as well, so you will never be without the potential for diabetes.

Losing 5-10 pounds will make a difference in your blood sugar, but losing even more is better.

Monitor glucose: Check your blood sugar regularly until you have an understanding of your general levels. Start off with checking before breakfast (fasting), before lunch, before supper and before bedtime. Reduce to twice daily (fasting and before supper); then reduce to once daily (fasting only). If control is generally present, checking sugar once or twice a week, fasting, is reasonable.

Glycohemoglobin: Check this every 3 months after beginning treatment (this is done at the office). Once control is clear, then you can check this every 6 months.

Dry Skin (Xeroderma)

Most Common Symptoms

- Dry skin
- Skin flaking

- Diffuse mild itching without rash

What to Do at Home

- Use Dove bar soap in the shower or Cetaphil Liquid Cleanser
- Use Cetaphil Eczema Calming Body Moisturizer

How Long to Recover

- It will take 1 week of consistent use of the above products to see results.

How to Prevent

- Use the above topicals.

Nosebleeds (Epistaxis)

Nosebleeds can occur for a variety of reasons, but a spontaneous nosebleed is not a worrisome issue, just bothersome. Irritated mucosa (tissue lining the nasal cavity/sinuses) is the general cause of such bleeding. Do not worry about cancer or other dangerous possibilities; just treat the bleeding and that is all the attention that is required.

When Your Nose Starts Bleeding

- Sit down and gently squeeze the soft portion of the nose between your thumb and finger (so that the nostrils are closed) for 5-10 minutes

- Lean forward to avoid swallowing the blood and breathe through your mouth
- Wait at least 5 minutes before checking to see if the bleeding has stopped
- You can place a cotton ball in your nostril after soaking it in a topical decongestant spray (i.e. Afrin) or you can just spray Afrin in the nostril that is bleeding; it may help to apply cold compresses or ice across the bridge of the nose
- If bleeding continues for more than 30 minutes despite the above efforts, go to Emergency Room

After a Nosebleed

- Avoid blowing your nose
- Sneeze with your mouth open
- Avoid picking or putting fingers in your nose
- Stop taking intranasal medications
- Take it easy
- Avoid aspirin or medicines containing aspirins. They thin the blood; a single aspirin pill can thin the blood for up to a week
- Avoid smoking, it irritates the nasal surfaces
- Moisturize the nostrils afterward with a miniscule amount of Vaseline, or Ponaris nose moisturizer (available on Amazon.com)

Aspirin

Safe Use

Aspirin is a very effective and useful medication. It is useful both as a treatment for inflammation and pain conditions, as well as a preventive for heart attack and stroke in people at risk.

The key to safe and proper use is making sure you stay within appropriate dosing guidelines. Here are the pros and cons of aspirin use:

Pros:

- Effective for pain relief.
- Effective for heart attack, stroke prevention.
- Reduces colon polyp and colon cancer rates if taken regularly.

Cons:

- Can irritate the stomach when used for even a few days.
- Can bother the kidneys when used in higher dosages over extended periods of time.
- Can cause excessive bleeding or bruising if trauma occurs.

Taking Aspirin Properly

Dosing: Total aspirin intake should not exceed 4000mg in a day. This includes all forms of aspirin that may come in cold preparations or pain medications. Proper dosing: 650mg, up to 4 times daily (not to exceed the 4000mg maximum above).

Monitoring: Take with food if possible, but fine to take on an empty stomach if need be.

If taking regularly for longer than 1 week, take with Prilosec 20mg daily or Prevacid 15mg daily, or a prescription equivalent of these proton pump inhibitors (PPI) medications.

I recommend that anyone over the age of 60 who takes aspirin regularly use a stomach-protecting medication to prevent ulcers. PPI medications such as Prilosec or Prevacid are effective.

(Pepcid or ranitidine are not effective for ulcer prevention in usual dosages.) If you are taking aspirin for longer than 3 months, check kidney function through blood work.

If you are taking a dose over 1000mg per day on an ongoing basis, it is recommended that you assess kidney function twice yearly as a precautionary measure, via the blood.

Tylenol/Acetaminophen

Safe Use

Tylenol is an effective and useful medication. It is found in many pain relievers, both alone and in combination with other medications.

The key to safe and proper use is making sure you stay within appropriate dosing guidelines.

Tylenol is a very dangerous medication if taken in excessive dosage. It is particularly capable of injuring the liver when taken in massive doses with intention to harm oneself yet, it can be used safely if you use your head. It has its own set of pros and cons:

Pros:

- Effective for pain relief.
- Does not bother the stomach.
- Does not interact with other medications, including Coumadin (warfarin).

Cons:

- Not effective for inflammation.
- Long-term use can bother the kidneys (over several months time).

Taking Tylenol/Acetaminophen Properly

Dosing: Total Tylenol/acetaminophen dosing should not exceed 4000mg total in a day. This includes all forms of acetaminophen that may come in cold preparations or pain medications.

Proper dosing: 500—1300mg per dose, up to 4 times daily (not to exceed the 4000mg maximum above).

Monitoring: If you take the medication regularly for more than 3 months, I recommend a test of kidney and liver function to confirm safety.

Ongoing use: If you take Tylenol continually, then twice-yearly blood testing is appropriate for safety.

Safe Use of Anti-Inflammatory Medications

Advil, or ibuprofen and Aleve, or naproxen, are among the most important medications doctors use and recommend on a regular basis, and they are potent over-the-counter medications.

They are great for a myriad of conditions and can be used effectively and safely if used properly. Below I will list the pros and cons of these medications, and the proper way to take them.

Pros:

- Great for relieving inflammation both short term and long-term.
- Great for various musculoskeletal pains.
- Probably prevents colon polyps and colon cancer.
- Probably prevents Alzheimer's dementia to a small degree.

Cons:

- Can be irritating to the stomach, causing ulcers (this is particularly a concern in women over 60 and if used continuously for over a week).
- They have an associated risk of stroke and heart attack (this is very small, but statistically present).
- Long-term use can bother kidney function and requires monitoring if used for over one month.

Taking Anti-Inflammatory Medications Properly

Take with food if possible, but it is fine to take on an empty stomach if need be. Correct dosages are as follows:

Advil/ibuprofen: 400—800mg at a dose, up to 3 times per day (maximum daily dose 2400mg).

Aleve/naproxen: 220—440mg at a dose, up to 2 times per day (maximum daily dose 1000mg).

If taking for longer than 1 week, take with

Prilosec 20mg daily or Prevacid 15mg daily (or a prescription PPI medication). I recommend that anyone over the age of 60 who takes these medications regularly use a stomach-protecting medication regularly, to prevent ulcers in the stomach. PPI medications such as Prilosec or Prevacid are effective. Pepcid/ranitidine is not effective. If taking for longer than 3 months, check kidney function through blood work. If you are taking these medications on an ongoing basis, it is recommended that you assess the kidney function twice yearly as a precautionary measure.

Coumadin/Warfarin

Safe Use

Coumadin (warfarin is the generic name) is a blood thinner that works by blocking the effects of Vitamin K in the liver. Vitamin K allows for production of clotting factors—Coumadin blocks this effect. Coumadin begins to work 3—5 days after first starting the dose. Prior to that, it can cause alterations in the Protime (blood test for blood thickness that is monitored for Coumadin), but it will not actually thin the blood. Coumadin is used to prevent blood clots in:

- Atrial fibrillation (Protime best scores between 2.0 - 3.0).
 - Pulmonary embolism—blood clots in the lungs (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
 - DVT (Deep Venous Thrombosis)—blood clots in the legs (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
 - Congestive Heart Failure (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
 - Peripheral Vascular Disease (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
 - Strokes (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
 - Mechanical Heart Valve (Protime 2.5 - 3.5)
 - Post-operative blood clot prevention (Protime 2.0 - 3.0)
- When you begin Coumadin, at first, blood level testing is frequent until your baseline is established
 - If you have consistently perfect Protime scores, you can go to every other month testing
 - Home monitoring can be arranged if you are interested—ask us about this

Know Your Coumadin Dose By Color

- 1mg = Pink.
- 2mg = Purple.
- 2.5mg = Light green.
- 3mg = Brown.
- 4mg = Blue.
- 5mg = Peach.
- 6mg = Teal/Dark Green.
- 7.5mg = Yellow.
- 10mg = White.

Facts and Recommendations for taking Coumadin

The Protime Blood Test. The name of the blood test for monitoring Coumadin is called the Protime. It is a finger stick, not a vein draw. Results are given as a ratio of normal blood clotting versus blood clotting in your body on Coumadin. Normal people have a Protime score equal to 1.0. Generally, monthly Protime blood tests are appropriate.

Special exceptions are:

- If you are demonstrating wide fluctuations in the Protime scores

Coumadin Diet Recommendations

I do not make any specific recommendations and dietary restrictions. We will adjust your Coumadin dose to your diet. That said, if you eat a very large and unusual quantity of Vitamin K-containing vegetables then a check of your

Protime may be indicated. Vegetables High in Vitamin K:

- Brussels sprouts
- Collard greens
- Green onions
- Kale
- Mustard greens
- Parsley
- Spinach
- Swiss chard
- Turnip greens

Coumadin and Other Medications

Coumadin does interact with other medications often, but the amount of interaction tends to be mild. Testing the Protime if you are on an antibiotic for a week is a reasonable thing to do, but is not required. Often the pharmacist will mention interactions of other medications with Coumadin. This is rarely a concern.

Aspirin: Aspirin is not to be used with Coumadin unless you ask specifically and get the ok. We do combine them on occasion in patients with heart disease, but only for specific purposes.

Tylenol: This is fine to combine. No worries.

Tylenol is the preferred mild pain medication for patients on Coumadin. If you use high dosages (4000mg daily) for over a week, then checking the Protime blood test is sensible, as Coumadin can interact with high dosages and repeated use of Tylenol.

Advil or Aleve: Generally, these medications are avoided when you are on Coumadin, but they can be used at times. Generally, this should be under medical direction. If you choose to use these medications, the safest way to do so is to take a stomach protector pill like Prilosec or Prevacid. This will prevent excessive bleeding in the stomach. Ranitidine (Zantac) and famotidine (Pepcid) will not prevent such bleeding and are not used as a stomach protector in this situation generally.

Safe Use of Direct Oral Anticoagulants... DOACS (Eliquis, Xarelto, Pradaxa)

Direct anticoagulants are the latest addition to the blood-thinning pharmacopeia. They work by directly blocking clotting factor activity and in so doing, thin out the blood to prevent clotting.

These medications are equally effective as

Coumadin and in many instances are safer as regards bleeding and complications. They are also much more expensive.

Blood testing is not required to determine the effectiveness of these medication, but dosing is based on the condition being treated as proven by scientific studies. Dose adjustments are based on various factors such as weight, age, and degree of kidney function.

The medications work immediately. As such, they provide a simple and fast way to initiate full anti-coagulation when needed and have simplified the outpatient treatment of many conditions that require urgent blood thinning.

DOACS

- Atrial fibrillation
- Pulmonary embolism—blood clots in the lungs
- DVT (Deep Venous Thrombosis)—blood clots in the legs
- Strokes
- Post-operative blood clot prevention

They **CANNOT** be used in patients with mechanical heart valves (tissue heart valves are safe.).

DOACS vs. Coumadin

Pros:

- DOACS offer ease of dosing, no need to monitor, and no diet restrictions.

Cons:

- DOACS appear very safe and in many instances superior to Coumadin, but they are lacking in as much experience over time.
- There are now antidotes for each of the DOAC blood thinners. These are used very rarely as studies demonstrate the DOACS have less bleeding complications and threat to life than Coumadin. Data is still coming in on this topic and that could change, but at the present time, it appears that DOACS are safer.
- They are costly.

Kidney Safety

This is a simple list of ways to keep the kidneys healthy, particularly if you have some reduced function that has been noted on blood testing. Avoid excess pain medications. Too much Tylenol, Advil, Aleve or any other NSAID (anti-inflammatory medication) can have negative effects on the kidneys. When used in high dosages for a short term, there can be temporary

reductions in kidney function that occur but which will reverse upon stopping the medications. Long-term usage of such medications, for months or years, can have lingering negative effects on the kidney function. I recommend:

- Use the least amount of these medications that is effective
- Use for the shortest time that is effective
- Do not avoid these medications if they are very effective in treating your symptoms—just make sure you use them safely

Proper doses for pain medications are as follows:

Tylenol (acetaminophen): No more than 4000mg daily on average, over the long-term. Try to use the least possible and do note that Tylenol is present in other pain pills including Vicodin (hydrocodone) and Percocet (oxycodone) among others.

Advil (ibuprofen): No more than 2400 mg daily on average, over the long-term. Do be aware if you are over 60 then consider a stomach protector (such as Prilosec) if you are taking these for longer than 2 weeks continuously.

Aleve (naproxen): No more than 1000mg daily on average, over the long-term.

X-Ray Dye Testing

Although uncommon as a kidney irritant, these injections can negatively affect the kidneys and can cause reduced kidney function. Using dye with testing is often necessary with CT scanning, but do ask if it is necessary and avoid it when possible. Note that MRI injections do not have this negative effect on kidney function.

Colonoscopy Preparation

Avoid certain colon preparations that have a potential to reduce the kidney function. These include Fleet's Phosphosoda and Visicol (20+ tablets combined with high volumes of liquid). Both of these preparations can injure the kidneys so I recommend avoiding them and using the 'big jug' which is either GoLYTELY or NuLYTELY.

About Shingles

Shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is reactivated chickenpox virus in a nerve from the spine. It manifests itself as a unilateral (one-sided) rash of red spots/tiny blisters. Shingles is a reactivation of an infection in your own body—it is not caught from someone else. The cause of shingles is the chickenpox virus from childhood, but why reactivation occurs is unknown. It can be

related to a suppressed immune system due to medication or illness, but in an otherwise healthy person, there is no definite explanation, and no testing is needed to look for an explanation. Risk for shingles over your lifetime is 30% if you have had chicken pox.

There is virtually no risk of ‘catching’ shingles from someone else or of giving it to someone else. Shingles is generally not contagious unless a person is directly exposed to skin that has erupted with shingles and who has never had chicken pox. This is very unlikely, so for all practical purposes shingles is not contagious.

Recognition & Treatment

How do you know if you have shingles? Pain associated with a rash that occurs in a strip-like distribution on only one side of the body is ‘classic’ for shingles. Sometimes, pain will precede the rash by a few to several days. Often, after the rash occurs, pain increases. Early treatment is best. As soon as it is diagnosed, I treat with an antiviral medication in pill form. Topical antiviral creams are not effective. The medications are Acyclovir, Famcyclovir and Valcyclovir. All are effective. Acyclovir is generic and less expensive but has to be taken 5 times per day. Famcyclovir

and Valcyclovir are taken three times per day. They may be slightly better than Acyclovir. These medications are extremely safe and there are no major side effects to mention. They are taken for 1 week only and then stopped, even if the rash is still resolving.

Shingles Pain Relief

The pain from shingles is different than other pains as it is a neuralgia—a nerve pain. For this type of pain you can use the following medications: Tylenol, aspirin, Advil or Aleve—these standard pain pills can be effective but are rather weak and may not work well enough.

Narcotic pain pills, such as Vicodin/hydrocodone or Percocet/oxycodone—these are strong prescription pain pills and are often needed for treatment.

Tricyclic medications (amitriptyline/nortriptyline)—these medications quell pain from the nerve and are particularly good for nighttime pain.

Neurontin/gabapentin and Lyrica/pregabalin—these medications are similar and also are good for nerve pain in particular.

How Shingles Runs Its Course

Courses are variable, but these general observations are true:

- Rash tends to last 2—3 weeks until it resolves, but gets significantly better after 1 week
- Pain tends to increase with time and will linger for several weeks
- The first 4 weeks is when it's most painful generally, but this varies a great deal and some pain can linger over the longer term, but this is relatively rare

Shingles Vaccine

There is a new shingles vaccine called Shingrix. It is 90% effective and is given a two-shot series.

Bone Health-Treating/Preventing Osteoporosis

With recent concerns about bisphosphonate medications such as Fosamax, Actonel and Boniva, there is a greater emphasis on alternative approaches to bone building, using supplements for calcium and Vitamin D.

Medications

Bisphosphonate medications (Fosamax/Actonel/Boniva/Reclast IV): These medications have come under fire, primarily for the concerns of negative

effects after prolonged use (over 10 years). It appears that after that period of time, the benefits of the medication wane and there are negatives that develop (decreased bone strength resulting in spontaneous fractures.) This said, using the medication for less than 5 years, or from 5—10 years appears to be safe and helpful.

Remember, initial research has shown a 50 percent reduction in bone fracture from these medications and the concerns about the negatives do not eliminate these benefits that are proven in multiple scientific studies.

Prolia: This injectable medication has a 10 year safety record and has shown demonstrated effectiveness in maintaining bone strength. The shot is given every 6 months for up to 10 years. It is well-tolerated. The criticisms for bisphosphonates as regards to negative effects after 10 years, are unknown with this medication. There is reason to believe they share a similar long-term side effect profile.

Calcium in the Diet

Diet or diet and supplements would ideally yield 1500mg per day, although lower amounts are still acceptable.

Our first focus is on foods that naturally contain calcium in solid quantities. To get a list of calcium rich foods, please see a copy of the *MiniBük, Diets by Doug the Doctor & Debbie the Dietitian: A Self-Help Pocket Guide for Managing Medical Symptoms*, available from my office.

Calcium Supplements

If you are unable to adjust your diet to increase calcium intake, and if you can tolerate calcium supplements, these are an acceptable method for achieving increased calcium consumption. Recent studies have questioned whether there is a minor statistical heart risk for people taking calcium supplements. If you have significant heart disease, it is best to avoid calcium supplementation.

There are many calcium supplements available, each with various claims of superiority. Calcium basically divides up into two categories: calcium carbonate and calcium citrate. Calcium citrate (Citrical brand) is the best and most easily absorbed of the calcium supplements and as such, is my preferred recommendation. Taking the Citrical 250mg tablets 2 at a time, 2—3 times per day is the ideal calcium supplement.

Calcium carbonate (OsCal, TUMS) is a solid form of calcium but may not absorb perfectly. That said, generic forms of calcium carbonate are known to be difficult to dissolve, and in fact many will not absorb at all, yielding an ineffective calcium supplement. If you choose to take them, use 500mg at a time; up to 1500mg daily is recommended.

Do be aware that calcium can cause digestive issues, either gassiness or constipation. Reduce the dose if this occurs.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is easily absorbed and the manufacturer is not as important as it is for the calcium supplement. There are only a few manufacturers of the various vitamins worldwide.

Dosing is 1000-5000 units daily, but no more. These are over-the-counter dosages. There are few side effects from Vitamin D and it will help the body absorb calcium to its maximum. Dosing of 50,000 units weekly by prescription is another option and should be considered only in patients with documented low vitamin D levels.

Exercise

In addition to supplements, exercise is a key ingredient in keeping bones healthy. Exercising is the first key, as noted in *The Keys Minibük* (that is the first book in this series), so doing exercise that stresses the bones (weight bearing exercise such as running, bicycling, cross-training, ball sports) are effective exercises that will build bone.

Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol poisoning usually occurs when people binge drink. For men, binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks within two hours. For women, it's defined as consuming four or more drinks within two hours.

Signs of Alcohol Poisoning

- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (ten seconds or more between each breath)
- Pale or blue-tinged skin
- Low body temperature

- Loss of consciousness
- Difficulty or inability to wake up

What to Do

1. Call 911
2. Recall or determine what the person drank and how much
3. Do not leave an unconscious person alone
4. If the person is vomiting, try to keep them sitting up. If they must lie down, turn their head to the side to keep them from choking

Drug Overdose

Signs of an Overdose

Symptoms vary depending on the type of drug taken. If you suspect someone has overdosed, call 911 regardless of their symptoms.

What to Do

1. Call 911
2. Recall or determine what the person took and how much
3. If the person is acting strangely or violently, do not interfere; keep yourself safe

Additional Resources

For More Detailed Health Information

Mayo Clinic:

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
(CDC):

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus:

<https://medlineplus.gov/>

WebMD:

<http://www.webmd.com/>

***Section Three:
Sexual Health***

Notes

Introduction

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are often called STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections) because the infections are mostly curable if diagnosed and treated. They do not become diseases if treated. Don't wait to get treatment if you think you have one. And don't wait to get tested if you think you might be infected.

Consent

General Notes

- Consent is an agreement or permission for something to happen
- In a sexual context, both people agree to engage in sexual activity
- Communication is key for consent
- Consent can be verbal or nonverbal, though verbal communication can be clearest
- Consent should happen every time you engage in an activity and should be specific; agreeing to kiss someone is not the same as agreeing to let that someone take off your clothes
- Also, consenting to something once does not mean you have consented for every time in the future; agreeing to have sex with someone one day does not mean you have agreed to have sex with them the next day
- You can change your mind at any point; tell your partner that you're uncomfortable and explain why; talk about it and do what makes you comfortable

How to Ask for Consent

- “Is this ok?”
- “Do you like this?”
- “Do you really want to?”
- “Do you want to stop?”

How to Give Consent

- “Yes, it’s ok.”
- “I’m open to trying.”
- “Yes, I want to.”
- “No, I don’t want to stop.”

Consent is Not

- Refusing to acknowledge “no”
- Assuming certain clothes or certain actions (like kissing or flirting) means that person consents to anything more
- Assuming that silence means “yes”
- Engaging in sexual activity with anyone under the legal age of consent (18 in Arizona)
- Engaging in sexual activity with someone who is unable to give consent, such as someone who is drunk or high
- Intimidating or scaring someone into engaging in sexual activity

- Assuming consent in the past means that person consents now

Signs Your Partner Wants to Slow Down

- They hold their arms tightly around their body
- Their muscles are stiff
- They start crying
- They turn away
- They push you away
- They stop responding

How to Slow Things Down

- “No.”
- “I want to stop.”
- “I’m not comfortable with this anymore.”
- “That’s enough for now.”
- “I need to go to the bathroom.”

Final Notes

- Engaging in sexual activity with someone who does not consent to it is sexual assault
- If you’re not sure if someone has consented or is on board with what’s going on, ask them

Safe Sex

General Notes

- Having safe sex means taking measures to protect yourself and your partner against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies
- Condoms protect against most STIs as well as unwanted pregnancy
- However, it's best to have two forms of birth control: condoms and another method (oral birth control, intrauterine device, or an implantable device)
- STIs can be spread through bodily fluids or skin-to-skin contact
- If you are sexually active, you should get tested for STIs every time you have a new partner; if you suspect you've been infected, you must be tested for STIs

Birth Control

What Kinds Are There?

Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

- A doctor can place an IUD inside your uterus to prevent pregnancy
- Some are made of copper
- Others continually release small amounts of hormones to prevent pregnancy
- IUDs usually last from 5 to 10 years
- When placed correctly, IUDs typically have a failure rate of 0.2% to 0.8%; that means between 2 and 8 women out of every 1,000 women get pregnant while using these devices

Implants

- A doctor can place a thin rod under the skin of your upper arm to prevent pregnancy
- The rod, like an IUD, continually releases hormones that prevent you from getting pregnant
- They usually last about 3 years
- Typically, only 5 in 10,000 women get pregnant while using an implant

Oral Contraceptives

- Women can also take a pill every morning to keep from getting pregnant
- Contraceptive pills contain hormones that prevent pregnancy
- Some contain estrogen and progestin (such as Yaz), while others contain only progestin (sometimes called the mini-pill)
- You should take contraceptive pills at the same time every day for them to be most effective
- Typically, about 9 in every 100 women get pregnant while taking oral contraceptives
- Read the directions and pharmacy insert that comes with your medication to be sure you are using the pills effectively; oral contraceptives are far less effective when not taken correctly

Barrier Methods

- Barrier methods, such as male condoms, female condoms, or diaphragms, prevent pregnancy by keeping male sperm out of the vagina
- It's best to use a barrier method along with another method
- Typically, between 12 and 21 women per 100 women get pregnant if using only barrier methods

Condom Dos and Don'ts

- Do not use expired condoms
- Latex or plastic condoms work best
- Open the package carefully so you don't rip the condom
- Don't use two condoms at once. It makes it more likely they will rip
- Don't keep condoms in hot places (like a car)
- Don't reuse condoms
- Don't use torn condoms
- Don't continue to use a condom if it tears while having sex; take it off and put a new one on

Effectiveness from Most Effective to Least

- IUDs or hormonal implants
- Oral contraceptives
- Barrier methods

Emergency Contraception

- If a condom breaks or another birth control method fails, you can use emergency contraception methods to prevent pregnancy
- The most effective form of emergency contraceptive is getting a copper IUD implanted within 5 days after unprotected sex (brand name: ParaGuard IUD)

- You can find the Morning After Pill at drug stores (in the aisles; you don't have to ask a pharmacist) or at Planned Parenthood centers; it costs between \$25 and \$65
- Some common ones are ella, Plan B One-Step, or Next Choice One Dose; (ella is most effective, but you need a prescription for it; the others you don't)
- Take the pill as soon as possible after having unprotected sex
- It works best when taken within 72 hours of having unprotected sex, though some can be taken up to 5 days (or 120 hours) after
- Read the instructions on the box to make sure the pill is the right one for you and that you are using it correctly. Some pills work best for people under a certain weight or certain body mass index

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Most Common Symptoms

- Warts in your genital area
- In men: warts on the penis or in the pubic region
- In women: warts outside or inside the vagina (can go unnoticed!)

What to Do at Home

- Be aware of any bumps or warts developing in your genital area, especially places you can't see.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you notice any bumps or warts in your genital area.

How Long to Recover

- Doctors can remove genital warts by freezing them or using topical irritants; complete recovery may take several weeks for the lesions to resolve and disappear

- Once lesions are gone, infectivity is reduced but it is possible that microscopic remnants remain and that infection can occur; that is why barrier methods (condoms) are preferred to prevent STIs

How to Prevent

- HPV 16 and HPV 18 have been shown to cause cervical cancer in women, penile cancer in men, and oral cancer in both sexes; be very careful!
- Do not have sex (or any sexual contact) with anyone with warts in their genital area
- Use condoms when having sex
- Women can go in for Pap smears or gynecological exams to check for warts and for cervical cancer
- HPV immunizations are available; although best given at age 11-12, then can be given up to age 26 (a three shot series and are best given before you become sexually active, but they still can be considered after this time)

Herpes

Most Common Symptoms

- Rash and blisters on the skin where it made contact with an infected individual

- Blisters that develop into scabs
- Scaly patches on the genitals
- Severe outbreaks can come with fever, muscle aches, or headaches (first time infections)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- As soon as you notice a rash or blisters on your genitals, go to your doctor
- A doctor will prescribe antiviral medications to treat an outbreak, and daily medication can prevent future outbreaks if you get recurrences

How Long to Recover

- Once you have been infected with the herpes virus, it remains in your body for the rest of your life
- However, outbreaks can occur only once in a lifetime or repeatedly every few weeks to months
- A typical outbreak episode will last one week

How to Prevent

- Do not have sex with someone who has open herpes sores or blisters
- Use condoms when having sex

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Most Common Symptoms

- HIV infection will be a flu-like illness at onset and then will remain dormant and without symptoms for months to years
- If undiagnosed you may infect others with HIV, and generally if, untreated, it will develop into progressive HIV and AIDS

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you are exposed to HIV, see a doctor immediately to start post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment; if started within 72 hours of infection, PEP can keep the infection from becoming permanent
- You can get PEP from your doctor, an emergency room, urgent care centers, or local HIV clinic
If you think you've been exposed to HIV, get your blood tested immediately. Blood tests may be falsely negative within the first 6 months of infection.
- Repeated blood testing, over time, will be required

How Long to Recover

- HIV infections can last for many years and can be fatal without treatment

- HIV can be treated, though the treatment is complex, and it does not remove the virus from your system; it only keeps the virus levels low or unmeasurable
- HIV, if left untreated, can develop into Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) because HIV has damaged your body's immune system so much

How to Prevent

- Use condoms when having sex; HIV can be spread through vaginal or anal intercourse and less often through oral sex (it is not spread through kissing or casual contact)
- Do not have sex if you have broken skin or open wounds in your genital area
- Do not reuse or share needles with others
- If your partner has HIV, you can take pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to keep from being infected (brand name: Truvada)
- If you are exposed to HIV, see a doctor immediately to start post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) treatment; if started within 72 hours of infection, PEP can keep the infection from becoming permanent

Syphilis

Most Common Symptoms

- Firm, rubbery, raised areas about the size of a nickel-to-a-quarter in the genital region (though they can be found elsewhere on the body)
- The vast majority of people with syphilis have no symptoms and only a blood test will reveal an infection that requires treatment

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you think you've been exposed to syphilis, get your blood tested immediately
- If you develop the sores described above, go to the doctor to have them evaluated

How Long to Recover

- Antibiotics cure a syphilis infection in one dose (injection) or with 14 days of oral antibiotics.

How to Prevent

- Use condoms when having sex
- Do not have sex with someone displaying any bumps or raised areas on their genitals

Gonorrhea

Most Common Symptoms

In men:

- Milky discharge (liquid drainage) from the penis
- Burning with urination

In women:

- Vaginal discharge that is abnormal
- Fever
- Burning sensation in the vagina
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Joint pain

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you experience any of the symptoms above and have had sex recently.

How Long to Recover

- Antibiotics usually cure gonorrhea in 1-14 days
- However, some strains of gonorrhea are resistant to antibiotics, which is cause for concern

How to Prevent

- Use a condom when having sex

- Do not have sex with someone who has tested positive for gonorrhea or displays the symptoms of gonorrhea; sexual activity can be resumed two weeks after treatment

Chlamydia

Most Common Symptoms

In men:

- Burning during urination
- Clear or milky discharge dripping from the penis may occur
- Sometimes, there are no symptoms in men

In women:

- Burning during urination
- Vaginal discomfort
- Vaginal discharge
- Throat infections
- Eye infections

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you develop any of the symptoms above and have had sex recently
- For women with symptoms, seek assistance immediately, as untreated chlamydia may cause fallopian tube scarring and loss of fertility

- For men with symptoms, seek assistance immediately
- For men without symptoms, seek assistance if your partner develops symptoms of chlamydia, as you may be infected as well

How Long to Recover

- Antibiotics cure chlamydia in 7–14 days.

How to Prevent

- Use a condom when having sex
- Do not have sex with someone who has tested positive for chlamydia or who is displaying symptoms

Molluscum Contagiosum

Most Common Symptoms

- Small bumps on the skin of your genital area or other parts of your body
- Small, flesh-colored, dome-shaped, pearl-like bumps

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- Sometimes the bumps resolve on their own, but this can take several months; during this time, you are contagious if someone is exposed to infected skin lesions

Vaginal Concerns

Unusual Vaginal Bleeding

All women have a sense of their own menstrual cycle and its normal pattern. Whether you are perfectly regular, or often irregular in your cycle, over the years you will become aware of your general tendencies and can identify your normal pattern and what is within normal limits for yourself. When that normal pattern is interrupted, it often leads to concern, but generally speaking, irregular cycling in women is very common and is not cause for worry.

Other than specific concerns about pregnancy being signified by such variations, most doctors will give reassurance that missed periods, or off-pattern intermenstrual flow, should not be cause for concern. Generally speaking, variations of your flow for 1-3 months are generally to be ignored as within the normal unless they are accompanied by:

- Extremely heavy flow causing the use of multiple tampons or pads out of character of your normal menstrual pattern
- Pain during the unexpected times of bleeding

- Treatment to freeze, burn, or use a laser to remove the skin lesions is effective and can be done anytime during the course of the infection

How Long to Recover

- Bumps are generally considered not to be contagious after they have been treated, or if they completely resolve on their own. If microscopic infection remains, transmission of infection is still possible. This is why condom use is recommended.

How to Prevent

- Use a condom when having sex, though condoms do not prevent transmission if the bumps are not covered by the condom
- Do not have sex with someone who has bumps or warts in their genital area

- Fever or additional vaginal discharge associated with unexpected vaginal bleeding

Vaginal Discharge

Vaginal discharge is a normal occurrence in most women and is not always a sign of a serious health condition that requires attention. Vaginal discharge can be the result of normal mucous production, increased production from sexual activity or arousal, or from increased activity and exercise. Generally, if you are feeling well and without symptoms and have a clear to slightly colored vaginal discharge the best approach is a “wait and see attitude” for a few days to see if it abates.

If the discharge is associated with symptoms such as burning, discomfort, bleeding (blood tinged), odor, rash, or marked increase in quantity, then medical attention is required. Generally, for young women, such discharge is the sign of infection of either a sexually transmitted disease or a non-sexually transmitted infection.

Causes of infection include non-sexual infections, such as in bacterial vaginosis, which is a change in the normal bacterial composition with the vagina. This results in a strong, “fishy”

vaginal odor, thin/gray discharge and increased quantity.

Yeast Infection

An imbalance of ‘good’ bacterial germs in the vagina results in the overgrowth of yeast germs. Often this will occur after treatment with antibiotics for other conditions like a sore throat, sinus infection, or bronchitis. Discharge is generally white and clumpy and associated with a vaginal itching and redness.

For treatment, topical, over-the-counter antifungal medications will work, as will oral antifungals that are prescription strength.

To Prevent Vaginal Infections

- Use condoms when sexually active
- Wear cotton underwear
- Don’t douche
- Avoid perfumed soaps or hygiene products; they can irritate the vaginal area (cetaphil liquid cleanser is a gentle alternative)
- Wipe from front to back after urination
- Wipe from front to back after a bowel movement

Additional Resources

For More Information on Reproductive Health

- Planned Parenthood's women's health page: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/womens-health>.
- Planned Parenthood's men's health page: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/men>.
- MedlinePlus's page on menstruation: <https://medlineplus.gov/menstruation.html?session=mii62q141ROcUNBP3RW8afJSjs>.

Information on Sexual Assault and Consent

- RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) website: <https://www.rainn.org/>.

Information on Specific Topics.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) page on contraception:

<http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/contraception/index.htm>.

Planned Parenthood's reproductive health page: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn>.

CDC's page on sexually transmitted diseases: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/default.htm>.

***Section Four:
Mental Health***

Notes

Mental Health Problems

Emotional issues are a valid part of your health, just like physical illnesses and injuries. Your mental health is important, and if something is wrong, you should seek assistance.

Signs

- Eating too much or too little
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing from people and normal activities
- Having low or no energy
- Having unexplained aches or pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Having unusual feelings: being confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, anxious, or scared more than usual
- Shouting or fighting with family and friends more than usual
- Having mood swings that interfere with your relationships
- Hearing voices or believing things that aren't true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to carry out everyday tasks

Being a Friend

Sometimes it's hard to know how to help someone who is experiencing a mental health problem. Here are some tips for how to be a friend.

Find out if your friend or loved one is getting the care they need and want. If not, help them find it.

- Express your concern and support
- Remind them that mental health problems are treatable and that you are available to help
- Ask questions, listen to them, and respond when they talk about mental health problems
- Reassure them that you care about them
- Offer to help them with everyday tasks
- Continue to include them in your life by inviting them to events, even if they resist going
- Treat people with mental health problems with respect, compassion, and empathy

How to Start a Conversation

It can be hard to start a conversation with a friend or loved one about their mental health.

Here are some ways to ask:

- “I’ve been worried about you? Can we talk about what you’re going through? If you’re not comfortable talking to me, who would you be comfortable with?”
- “How can I help you talk to your parents about what you’re experiencing?”
- “What can I help you with?”
- “I’m concerned about your safety. Have you thought about harming yourself or others?”

Stress

General Notes

- Stress is a normal part of life

Tips for Stress Management

- Take a break; spend time doing something that relaxes you and makes you happy (yoga, listening to music, reading a book, or playing a sport)
- Eat well; don’t skip meals, and keep healthy snacks on hand
- Limit alcohol and caffeine; they can make mental health problems worse

- Get enough sleep; your body needs more rest when you’re stressed
- Exercise every day; 30 minutes of exercise, even just a walk, will often make you feel better
- Take deep breaths; breathe slowly and slowly count to ten; repeat until feel calmer
- Make a list of everything stressing you out; sometimes it helps to get it all out of your head

If your stress starts interfering with your everyday life, or if you’re feeling stressed for no reason, you may be experiencing anxiety or another mental health problem (see entry on anxiety and consider seeking professional help)

More Tips for Stress Management

- Exercise; you can run, walk, do yoga, play a sport, climb some stairs, or do some stretching
- Listen to soothing music (ocean waves, wind through the trees, classical music, or anything that soothes you)
- Laughter can help lower cortisol, a stress hormone, which will help lower your stress levels (watch a sitcom, funny YouTube videos, read jokes, or talk with someone who makes you laugh)

- Make a list of everything stressing you out or that you need to accomplish. Break down each thing into manageable steps. Make a plan
- Make a list of everything you are grateful for (a stranger smiling at you, a great grade on a test, a good conversation with a friend)
- You can also make a list of things that make you happy
- Meditate; sitting calmly and letting your mind rest can be very helpful

Basic Guide for Meditation

- Find a quiet place (it doesn't have to be completely silent, but it shouldn't be distracting)
- Sit up straight, with your spine aligned (you can sit cross-legged on the floor or a chair with your feet flat, whatever makes you comfortable)
- Focus on your breath but try not to actively tell your lungs to breathe: (sometimes it helps to recite a word like "ohm" or a sentence)
- Let all your thoughts float away (if you catch yourself thinking hard about something, refocus on your breathing and let your thoughts drift away)
- You don't have to meditate long; five minutes every day can help

Specific Conditions

Anxiety

Most Common Symptoms

- Apprehension or worry that's hard to control
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle tension
- Irritability
- Difficulty sleeping due to worry
- Persistent, recurring headaches
- Abdominal cramping or pain
- Other pains not explained by a health condition

Anxiety is one of the most common mental illnesses. About 60% of people experience it at some point.

Kinds of anxiety include:

- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** You feel anxious regularly without it being connected to specific events
- **Panic Disorder:** You feel extremely worried and have physical symptoms; abrupt and severe emotional reactions and physical symptoms occur spontaneously or in specific settings

- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** You feel anxious when interacting with a few people or a large group; it may prevent you from participating in activities
- **Phobias:** You feel anxious when in specific situations, such as flying in an airplane, being somewhere high, or confronting a spider

What to Do at Home

- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Limit alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, or other drugs; they may provide short term relief but can make things worse over time
- Get enough sleep
- Identify what makes you feel anxious and avoid those triggers (high places, airplanes, etc.)
- Try deep breathing exercises
- Meditate
- Use any other self-help, self-soothing methods you develop that are unique to you

Check out the resources available at the website of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America: <http://www.adaa.org/>.

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you feel overwhelmed by your anxiety
- If you can no longer perform everyday tasks

- If you are unable to sleep well for several days in a row
- If you are persistently losing weight due to worry and inability to generate an appetite or to keep food down

How Long to Recover

Your anxiety may go away with medication prescribed by a doctor, or you may learn to manage it with meditation techniques. However, anxiety can be a lifelong problem, and seeking help to learn to manage it is crucial.

Depression

Most Common Symptoms

- Overwhelming sadness, or sadness that persists without cause
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Lack of energy
- Sleeping much more than usual or sleeping much less than usual
- Anger or irritability
- Significant increases or decreases in weight
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Apathy
- Suicidal thoughts

- Depression can occur when you make big changes in your life; many people experience depression at some point in their lives

What to Do at Home

- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise regularly
- Limit alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, or other drugs; they may provide short term relief but can make things worse over time
- Get enough sleep
- Try deep breathing exercises
- Meditate
- Use any other self-help, self-soothing methods you develop that are unique to you

Check out the resources available at the website of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

<http://www.adaa.org/>

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you feel you are depressed or are becoming depressed, seek help from a professional
- Depression is treatable through therapy or medication, but it is a serious mental health problem that often won't go away through simple positive thinking

How Long to Recover

- Depressive episodes may last a short time, a few years, or come and go throughout your life
- Medication and/or therapy may help you manage your depression and live a happier life

Suicidal Thoughts

General Notes

- Talking about suicide has always been hard because it can be seen as taboo; however, if you are feeling suicidal or suspect someone you care about is suicidal, it is important to talk about it
- Mentioning suicide will not cause a person to harm themselves
- Openly discussing suicide can help prevent someone from committing suicide
- Predicting who will attempt suicide is impossible; the only solid predictor is previous suicide attempts (if someone has a history of previous suicide attempts and is talking about suicide, call 911)
- Other risk factors may include: significant personal loss, severe depression, or substance abuse (not all those who attempt suicide have experienced these things, and not all people experiencing these things attempt suicide)

If you are feeling suicidal, seek assistance and help

- Tell a friend
- Tell a family member
- You can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and speak to a trained counselor at a crisis center in your area, 24/7

If you suspect someone is considering suicide

- You might ask them, “Are you thinking of hurting yourself?”
- You can call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and speak to a trained counselor at a crisis center in your area, 24/7. The counselors are also there for the friends and family of those considering suicide; they can help you talk to your loved one

Eating Disorders

General Notes

- Not all people with eating disorders are women; men can struggle with eating disorders as well
- Many movies and advertisements show people that have very thin or very muscular bodies; those images are often photo-shopped, and actors and models may diet extensively in the days before filmings do not consider those bodies ideal or realistic

- People with eating disorders do not simply need to eat more or less; eating disorders stem from mental health problems and should be taken seriously
- If you feel you have or may be developing an eating disorder, please seek help through counseling services

ANOREXIA

Most Common Symptoms

- An excessive desire to lose weight through reduced calorie consumption
- Not eating enough
- Refusal to eat certain foods or food groups (carbohydrates, for example)
- Denying you're hungry
- Excessive exercise, even when injured or exhausted
- Low weight
- Dramatic weight loss
- Severe fear of weight gain
- Obsession with weight
- Frequent comments about being fat or overweight
- Self-esteem highly linked to body image

- Inability to understand how serious the situation is
- Withdrawing from friends and family

Health Consequences

- Slow heart rate and low blood pressure, leading to weakness and faintness or collapse
- Loss of bone density, which results in osteoporosis
- Muscle loss and weakness
- Severe dehydration, leading to kidney failure
- Fainting, exhaustion, weakness in general
- Dry hair and skin, possible hair loss
- Feeling cold all the time

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you have the any of the symptoms listed and cannot change your behavior for fear of gaining weight.

How Long to Recover

- Healing can take a long time and is a prolonged process, but progress is possible. Therapy can help as can medications, and many people recover from anorexia, though it may take a while and some fear of weight gain may linger.

BULIMIA

Most Common Symptoms

- Extreme overeating followed by self-induced vomiting and purging due to an obsessive desire to lose weight
- Feeling out of control while binge-eating
- Self-esteem highly linked to body image
- Excessive exercise, even when injured or exhausted
- Abnormal swelling of the cheeks or jaw area
- Calluses on the hands and knuckles from self-induced vomiting
- Discolored or stained teeth
- Withdrawing from friends and family

Health Consequences

- Slow heart rate and low blood pressure, leading to weakness and faintness or collapse
- Loss of bone density, which results in osteoporosis
- Muscle loss and weakness
- Severe dehydration, leading to kidney failure
- Fainting, exhaustion, weakness in general
- Inflammation or rupture of esophagus from frequent vomiting

- Tooth decay and stains from stomach acid in vomit
- Irregular bowel movements and constipation from abusing laxatives
- Possible stomach rupture, possibly resulting in death

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you have the any of the symptoms listed and cannot change your behavior for fear of gaining weight.

How Long to Recover

- Healing can take a long time and is a prolonged process, but progress is possible. Therapy can help as can medications, and many people recover from anorexia, though it may take a while and some fear of weight gain may linger.

Others

- There are other kinds of eating disorders, besides the two listed above
- Many of the health consequences are the same and can be lethal
- Seek help if you have or are developing an unsafe relationship with food
- If you need help, visit counseling services

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

General Notes

- Two percent of young adults experience OCD
- OCD consists of obsessions (excessive or unreasonable thoughts and fears) that someone deals with through compulsions (repetitive behaviors meant to relieve obsessions)
- This cycle of obsessions and compulsion consumes a great amount of energy and time and often will interfere with the person's normal day-to-day activities and create significant distress

Most Common Symptoms

- **Checking:** Fear of harm causes you to repeatedly check knobs, locks, windows, alarms, or personal objects
- **Contamination:** You are concerned something can cause illness or death, and so you repeatedly wash your hands or body, avoid public phones/locations, or excessively clean your home or objects
- **Hoarding:** You cannot get rid of worthless or overused possessions

- Intrusive thoughts: Thoughts about relationship issues, sexual issues, magic, violence, or religion intrude on your normal thoughts; they consume a lot of time and distress you (or games, internet pornography, or social media)

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If your thoughts or actions interfere with your daily life or cause you undue worry or anxiety, seek professional assistance.

How Long to Recover

- Healing can take a long time and is a prolonged process, but progress is possible. Therapy can help as can medications, and many people recover.

Schizophrenia

Most Common Symptoms

- Delusions: thinking things that are not true
- Hallucinations: seeing or hearing things that are not real
- Disorganized speech and behavior
- Lack of interest in normal activities, such as bathing or grooming
- Apathy: lack of feeling or emotion
- Anhedonia: difficulty experiencing pleasure

- Paranoia

When to Seek Medical Assistance

- If you experience any of the above symptoms, seek professional assistance
- If you need help, visit counseling services

How Long to Recover

- Improvement can be seen rapidly with proper medication and therapy. Ongoing adjustment of medications can have dramatic and positive effects that are long-lasting.

Substance Abuse

General Notes

- People usually worry about tobacco, alcohol, and drugs when discussing substance abuse
- However, any behavior performed in excess (shopping, internet use, pornography, gambling, etc.) can lead to addiction

Signs of Addiction

- You are unable to control the use of a substance or the behavior involved
- You experience withdrawal symptoms without the substance or behavior. Those include: cravings, depression, anger, moodiness
- Continuing to use the substance or participate in the behavior has negative effects on your social interaction, personal relationships, finances, or arrest record
- If you become obsessed with the substance or activity, you may go to extremes to obtain, secure, hide, or consume the substance or activity

Tobacco

Health Consequences

Tobacco use, either chewing or smoking, can lead to heart and lung disease, stroke, lung cancer, oral cancer, esophageal cancer, stomach cancer, and bladder cancer.

The Numbers

- As of 2014, 16.7% of people aged 18-24 smoke.
- As of 2014, 18.5% of men aged 18-24 smoke, and 14.8% of women aged 18-24 smoke.

As health consequences take a while to develop, you may not feel the need to quit now. You should, and here are a few more practical reasons why:

- To save money (if you smoke half a pack a day, your habit costs you about \$1,000 per year and twice that if you smoke a pack a day)
- Better exercise capacity; smoking reduces lung capacity and your ability to perform high levels of exercise; if you quit, you'll be in better shape
- You will have better skin because smoking causes progressive loss of collagen; (the support proteins in your skin) and results in smokers looking older than others the same age who don't smoke

- Your breath, hair, clothes, car, and home will smell better (the smell of tobacco leaches into all things you're around and can't be avoided)

How to Quit

There are many ways to quit smoking, though no method works for everyone.

- Cold turkey: 5% quit rate, simply stop smoking (this is the simplest method, as well as the cheapest and most commonly used; it is also least effective due to the intensity of the withdrawal symptoms and people usually resume smoking soon after the initial "stop phase")
- Nicotine products: 20% quit rate; use nicotine gums, lozenges, or patches to reduce your craving for the nicotine in tobacco
- Prescription medications: 30-40% quit rate; use medication prescribed by a doctor to eliminate your craving for tobacco (examples: Zyban (bupropion) or Chantix)

E-cigarettes

- E-cigarettes are not safe; if you don't smoke, don't start using e-cigarettes
- E-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and also may harm developing adolescent brains

- If you smoke regular cigarettes, switching to e-cigarettes may be beneficial if it helps you quit smoking entirely
- The liquid in e-cigarettes is not water vapor. It is an aerosol that may contain heavy metals, tiny particulates that may be inhaled deep into the lungs, and cancer-causing substances like acrolein
- E-cigarettes may also contain flavorings; manufacturers claim that flavorings and other ingredients in e-cigarettes are safe because the FDA has deemed them safe for eating; however, inhaling something is very different than eating it, and no one knows what the health effects are

Alcohol

Health Consequences

- Effects on the brain: abnormal behavior, worsening moods, lack of coordination
- Effects on the heart: reduced pumping capacity, irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure
- Effects on the liver: scarring, inflammation, or fat accumulation

The Numbers

- 70% of people aged 18-25 drink alcohol
- 45% of those people are binge drinkers

- 14% are heavy drinkers

How to Tell if You Have an Alcohol Problem: CAGE

- **C:** Have you ever had to CUT down on your drinking?
- **A:** Have people ANNOYED you by criticizing your drinking?
- **G:** Have you ever felt GUILTY about your drinking?
- **E:** Have you ever had an EYE-OPENER in the morning to steady your nerves or help with a hangover?

Marijuana

- 19% of those aged 18-25 use marijuana
- Chronic users of marijuana use it extensively and become dependent on it
- Chronic users experience a deteriorating memory, IQ, and ability to focus
- Casual users of marijuana use it intermittently, like drinking alcohol responsibly
- Casual users experience few health issues due to marijuana
- Do not drive while under the influence of marijuana

Stimulants

- Stimulants can increase alertness, attention, and energy
- Some people need stimulants for medical conditions like ADHD and narcolepsy
- College students sometimes use stimulants like Adderall and Ritalin to enhance their cognitive abilities; using stimulants without a prescription is not a good idea and can have serious consequences
- Consequences can include feeling hostile or paranoid, a dangerously high body temperature, an irregular heartbeat, or psychosis
- You can become dependent on stimulants if you use them too much; withdrawal symptoms can include fatigue, depression, and disrupted sleep

Opioids

- Opioid drugs relieve pain in the body by reducing the amount of pain signals that reach the brain
- Sometimes, doctors prescribe opioids to treat coughs or diarrhea
- Legal opioids include prescription medications like Vicodin, OxyContin, Demerol, morphine, and codeine

- Heroin is an illegal opioid
- People legally taking opioid medications may become dependent on them due to long exposure; dependence means they will have withdrawal symptoms if they stop taking the medication, so it is not the same as addiction
- Being addicted to a drug means that you compulsively seek the drug and continue to use it despite its consequences
- Consequences of opioid use can include drowsiness, confusion, nausea, severe breathing trouble, coma, brain damage, or death
- If you are addicted to opioids or other illicit drugs, seek help as soon as possible

Additional Resources

For More Information on Specific Conditions

MentalHealth.gov:

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/index.html>

Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

<http://www.adaa.org/>

Information about eating disorders:

[https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/general-information.](https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/general-information)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration:

<http://www.samhsa.gov/>

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Douglas Lakin, M.D. is the son of Mervyn Lakin, M.D. Like his father he has a long career in internal medicine.

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Dr. Lakin is a graduate of ASU's Barrett Honors College, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. He has been a general internist in private practice in Scottsdale, Arizona for the past 28 years.

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