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what your doctor wants you to know...

...but doesn't have time to tell you in an all-too-brief appointment.

Here, **insider stay-well tips from 10 specialists.**

MOST DOCTORS tell you to eat right, exercise, watch your weight, and avoid smoking. But during the typical 15-minute office visit, there's little time to impart more than that, in addition to getting through the original reason for the appointment. To bridge the information gap, *Real Simple* asked 10 specialists—in fields such as orthopedics, cardiology, and gynecology—to divulge the sort of advice they share with their friends and families over cocktails or home-cooked meals and the things they wish all their patients would heed year-round. Some of their tips are surprising (who knew your dentist sees lemons as weapons of mass destruction?), and some are simply wise words that bear repeating. Read on to learn what will help keep you well and perhaps save your life.

WRITTEN BY **SALLY WADYKA**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **YUNHEE KIM**

“The doctor and the patient together are to cure or mitigate the disease. They must be coworkers.”

Harriot K. Hunt, U.S.
physician and feminist

FOR Anna Clarke DATE May 6th
ADDRESS 101 West End Ave

Rx

- Do that crossword puzzle
- Stop going barefoot
- Get a cat

Prescriber Signature X

Michael Katz

technique for improving the recall of names, faces, and lists is called "Look, snap, connect." **Look:** Focus your attention. **Snap:** Create a visual picture in your mind. **Connect:** Put it into a context that will help you recall it later.

- **Put stress in its place.** Chronic stress shrinks the memory centers in the brain, and the stress hormone cortisol can hamper a person's learning ability and recall. So cutting stress is the first step toward improving and preserving memory.

- **Swirl some red.** "Choose a glass of red wine over white," says Small. Resveratrol, the antioxidant compound in red wine, may have protective effects on the memory. But don't overdo it: Having more than one drink a day for women and two for men may increase the risk of cancer and other diseases.

the spine surgeon says

Sean McCance, a codirector of orthopedic spine surgery at Mount Sinai Medical Center, in New York City

- **Work your core to save your back.** Focus on exercises that strengthen your abdominals and back in tandem. McCance suggests the "Superman." Lie on your stomach, arms extended overhead. Arch your back and lift your arms, shoulders, and head off the floor. Hold for a few seconds, then release.

- **Move in close.** Each time you bend over to pick up something at arm's length, the forces acting on your spine are four to five times as great, which can lead to back injury. Instead, stand close to the object, get low, then lift.

- **Don't sit still.** "When you remain in one position for too long, your muscles get stiff, putting pressure on the discs in the spine," says McCance. By getting up and moving around every 30 to 45 minutes or so, your back gets to change position, your blood flow increases, and fluid flows back into the area to rehydrate the discs that cushion the spine.

the psychologist says

Karla Umpierre, a clinical psychologist at the Miami Institute for Age Management and Intervention, in Miami

- **Be selfish.** Whether you seek counseling, practice meditation, or keep a journal, it's important to take some time to learn about yourself, your fears, and

what you want in life these days. "When you don't set priorities or make time for yourself, you rob yourself of the chance to clear your mind and gain perspective," says Umpierre.

- **Hit the party circuit.** "It's a rare person who can lead a solitary existence and still be happy," says Umpierre. Having a strong social network has been shown to improve physical as well as mental health, so seek out events where you'll connect with people you care for.

- **Get high on exercise.** To keep your spirits high, schedule in some physical activity every day. Exercise may be a natural antidepressant. Anything from a vigorous workout to a casual stroll around the neighborhood may lift your mood.

the family physician says

Davis Liu, a family physician with the Permanente Medical Group, in Sacramento, California

- **Let your birthday be a health reminder.** Think of this day as an annual opportunity to assess your health. Have you reached a milestone birthday that means it's time for a test like a mammogram or a colonoscopy? Look back at the calendar and make sure you aren't overdue for a visit to the gynecologist or the dentist. "Think about whether or not you've done everything you need to for your health in the past year, and plan what you should do in the year ahead," says Liu.

- **Come in with an agenda.** "Don't wait till your hand is on the door to leave the doctor's office to bring up what's bothering you," says Liu. Arrive prepared with a handful of issues you want to discuss, and describe them succinctly. "Don't wander off on tangents," says Liu. "Your doctor may interrupt you because he thinks he knows where the story ends. You need to give clear information and control the interview."

- **Powwow with your family.** As your parents and brothers and sisters age, stay on top of what medical conditions they have, and let your doctor know of any major developments. "Your immediate family members are like a window into your future," says Liu, "and heeding the warnings of any medical issues they're experiencing is one proactive thing you can do for yourself."



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