

God's Secrets for Divine Health

You don't have to live with constant sickness. If you follow God's principles of diet and health, abundant life can be yours.

The Bible tells us that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are to glorify God in them as well as in our spirits (see 1 Cor. 6:19-20). But many Christians don't look as if they are following this scriptural mandate.

Rather than being fit and beautiful places for God to dwell, as a physical temple would be, their bodies are overweight, out of shape and diseased. As a result, they are hindered from accomplishing all God has for them to do, and many times their lives are cut short by disease.

My goal is to change this picture by showing believers how they can become strong, healthy, disease-resistant, younger-looking, and more energetic and have improved mental clarity. It is not difficult to develop a consistently healthy lifestyle and to be set free once and for all from poor health, bad habits and disease. All you need is some basic information about your body and how it works, and an understanding of the seven pillars of health.

Pillar 1: Water

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters."

Isaiah 55:1

I start our study of the seven pillars of health with water

because it is the most foundational aspect of health. Water is the single most important nutrient for our bodies because it is involved in every bodily function. You can live five to seven weeks without food, but the average adult can last no more than five days without water.

In my medical practice I see people all the time whose bodies are starved for clean, pure water and are dehydrated to some degree. They often suffer from headaches, back pain, arthritis, skin problems, digestion problems and other ailments. When they take my advice and start drinking water, these symptoms usually go away.

If it sounds like a miracle cure, that's because it is! God created us to rely on water for our very lives.

I treat every patient I see in my practice first with water. Most of my patients get better when they simply drink as much water as their body is asking for. Drinking sufficient amounts of the right kind of water (such as filtered water or pure spring water bottled in glass or bioplastic containers) will do more to improve your health than anything else you can do.

How much is enough? To determine how much water your body needs, take your body weight (in pounds) and divide it by two. That's how many ounces of water you need every day.

But you don't have to consume it all in liquid form. Simply by eating lots of fruits and vegetables—as you should—you will get about a quart or more a day.

Here's a typical timetable for healthy water consumption:

Start with an 8-ounce glass half an hour before breakfast. If

you usually have juice, coffee or tea with breakfast, you don't have to eliminate them.

But limit coffee to one or two cups a day if you can, as caffeinated beverages tend to steal water from your body. Organic green tea and organic black tea have only a small amount of caffeine, 30 and 50 milligrams per 8-ounce serving, respectively. So you can have a few glasses a day, though not late in the evening because it may interfere with your sleep.

A couple hours after breakfast drink another 8-ounce to 16-ounce glass of water. Near lunchtime, repeat your breakfast schedule. If your goal is to lose weight, try drinking 16 to 24 ounces of water before your largest meal to give yourself a "full" feeling and lessen your appetite.

Two hours after lunch have another 8-ounce to 16-ounce glass of water. Then 30 minutes before your evening meal drink your next glass.

Finally, two hours after dinner have another 8-ounce glass and another before bedtime, unless you have a hiatal hernia, reflux disease or an enlarged prostate. In those cases, do not drink anything after dinner.

Pillar 2: Sleep and Rest

"He gives His beloved sleep."

Psalm 127:2

Every night while you sleep, your body goes into a type of repair mode to regenerate and rejuvenate. Your immune system

recharges. Your major organs are restored. Old cells are replaced with new ones. Your mind relaxes and orders its thoughts, creating a healthy mental and emotional state.

But just as many Americans live in a state of unrecognized dehydration, many also live on the brink of mental and physical collapse because of lack of sleep. The No. 1 complaint I hear from patients who come into my office is, "I'm tired." They slump forward in their chairs, peering at me from under the weight of fatigue.

This is not the way our bodies or minds were made to operate. God gave us a promise of deep, restorative sleep.

Psalm 127:2 says, "He grants sleep to those he loves" (NIV). To those who are tired, He says, "'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest'" (Matt. 11:28). Sleep and rest are important because of what they do for your health.

1. **Sleep regulates the release of important hormones.** When you sleep, growth hormone is secreted. This causes children to grow, and it increases muscle mass and helps control fat in adults. When you don't sleep enough, this hormone's function is disrupted.

Leptin, another hormone, is secreted during sleep and directly influences appetite and weight control. It tells the body when it is "full." A person who doesn't have this regulating hormone often has a runaway appetite.

2. **Sleep slows the aging process.** In fact, some say it is one of the most important "secrets" for averting wrinkles. How well a

person sleeps is one of the most important predictors of how long he or she will live.

3. **Sleep boosts the immune system.** People who sleep nine hours a night instead of seven hours have greater than normal “natural killer cell” activity. Natural killer cells destroy viruses, bacteria and cancer cells.
4. **Sleep improves brain function.** One study shows that short-term sleep deprivation may decrease brain activity related to mental alertness and cognitive performance.
5. **Sleep reduces cortisol levels.** Excessive stress raises cortisol levels, which disrupt neurotransmitter balance in the brain, causing you to be more irritable and prone to depression and anxiety. Sufficient sleep helps reduce cortisol levels.

Good sleep is one of the best health principles available to you. And yet relatively few people get adequate sleep.

Half of all Americans suffer from insomnia at least a few times a week. One in six claims that insomnia is a major problem for him or her. By not sleeping, such people degrade and even ruin their health.

Sleep experts say most adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep each night for optimum performance, health and safety. When we don't get adequate sleep, we accumulate a sleep debt that can be difficult to “pay back” if it becomes too big. The resulting sleep deprivation has been linked to health problems such as obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, negative mood and behavior, depression, anxiety, decreased productivity, and safety issues in the home, on the job and on the road.

Pillar 3: Living Food

“And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.’”

Genesis 1:29

Everything you put in your mouth has the potential to produce life or death. Eating the wrong foods will bring curses of poor health. Are you at war with your health because of the foods you eat? Or are you enjoying the beautiful dance of hunger and satisfaction that centers around the divine gift of living food?

Living foods were created for our consumption. They exist in a raw or close-to-raw state. Living foods include fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds and nuts.

They are beautifully packaged in divinely created wrappers called skins and peels. Living foods look robust, healthy and alive. They contain no chemical additives and have not been altered.

Living foods are harvested, sliced, sprouted and squeezed, not processed, packaged and put on a shelf. Living foods are recognizable as food.

Dead foods are the opposite. They are living foods that have fallen into human hands and been altered in every imaginable way so that they will have as long a shelf life and be as addictive as possible.

That usually means the manufacturer has added considerable amounts of sugar, variously called “corn syrup,” “dextrose,” “fructose,” “glucose” or “sucrose,” as well as man-made fats that are toxic to our bodies.

These fats—called “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils—are a common ingredient in the American diet and are present in most processed foods from crackers and pastries to hamburger buns.

Life breeds life. Death breeds death.

When you eat living foods, the enzymes in their pristine state interact with your digestive enzymes. The other natural ingredients God put in them—vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, antioxidants, fiber and more—flow into your system in their natural state. These living foods were created for our digestive systems, bloodstreams and organs.

Dead foods hit our bodies like a foreign intruder. Chemicals, including preservatives, food additives, bleaching agents, and so on, place a strain on the liver. Toxic man-made fats begin to form our cell membranes and become incorporated in our bodies or stored as fats. They begin to form plaque in our arteries.

Fat also contains compounds called leptins. When the small intestine detects leptins, it sends a message to the brain saying, “I’m satisfied, I’m full, stop eating.” However, it takes about 20 minutes from the time we start eating for the food to reach our small intestines and leptin is able to signal the brain to stop eating.

Your brain, sensing that it still doesn't have the nutrition it needs, sends out hunger signals. You eat again—more of the same dead food.

Your body does its best to harvest the tiny traces of good from the food, but in the end you are overfed, overweight and undernourished. You are caught in the trap of the Standard American Diet, which is a “SAD” and toxic situation.

If you want to be a healthy, vibrant, energetic person rather than someone bouncing between all-you-can-eat buffets and fast-food restaurants, take your diet seriously. Now is the time to build the rest of your life on this wonderful pillar of health—living food.

Pillar 4: Exercise

“Bodily exercise profits a little.”

1 Timothy 4:8

For many people, exercise is the most difficult part of healthy living. But your body was designed to move. It needs water, rest, food and exercise to run smoothly.

I used to have a sports car that I liked but didn't drive much. After a while I noticed that when I did take it out for a spin, the engine wouldn't run well.

When I took it to the shop, the mechanic inspected it and said: “You haven't been driving this car enough. It was built to run. If you don't drive it, it will break down because you're not using it.” I was ruining my car by keeping it

parked.

In a similar way, if you park yourself in a chair and don't exercise, eventually you may ruin your engine. Many people these days are sick because they haven't "stirred the waters" of their bodies with movement and action. They have become cesspools of disease due to stagnation.

Stirring the waters with exercise has a powerful effect on your health. Exercise helps prevent cancer, heart attacks and heart disease; lowers stress; promotes weight loss; decreases your appetite; may help prevent diabetes and control blood sugar in diabetics; slows down the aging process; tones your muscles; improves digestion; aids restful sleep; energizes your mind; reduces depression; improves memory retention and reaction time; and increases lung capacity.

How to exercise? I can't say it enough—brisk walking is one of the best aerobic exercises I can recommend, and it's virtually free. It can give you three times the normal amount of oxygen you would otherwise get.

Buy a good pair of walking shoes so you don't injure your feet, and find a soft walking surface so you don't injure your joints. Walk slowly enough so that you can talk, but fast enough so that you can't sing. Keep a steady pace without stopping. Try to walk for 30 minutes four times a week.

Aerobic exercise such as walking is great for the heart and lungs, but it's also important to strengthen your bones and muscles with muscle-toning, anaerobic exercises. Working out with weights and performing calisthenics are the most effective way to do this.

If you can afford it, I highly recommend that you find a certified personal trainer to train you in the correct form and technique. He or she can get you started on the right program, help you avoid injury, and teach you flexibility and stretching exercises, too.

Don't try to run a five-mile race or a marathon tomorrow if you have been a couch potato for the last five years. It will do more harm than good! The American College of Sports Medicine recommends a medical examination and exercise testing prior to participation in vigorous exercise for all male adults over 40 and females over 50.

Pillar 5: Detoxification

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Everyone has toxins stored in his body. They build up over time, just as your garbage would if the trash cans in your house were never emptied. Eventually they would overflow, and after a few weeks the stench of the garbage would be so bad that you would smell it all over the house.

That's essentially what happens in your body when you take in toxins but don't get rid of them. Your body has waste management systems that keep you healthy when they function properly. But they can eventually become overwhelmed with pollutants—and when they do, your body becomes toxic.

I'm convinced that toxicity cannot be avoided entirely. We live in a toxic world. From the moment of conception a child is exposed to a plethora of toxins in his environment, first from his mother, then from the world into which he's born.

A study by the Environmental Working Group reported that the American Red Cross took umbilical-cord blood samples from 10 babies and tested them for contaminants. The tests showed that the samples contained an average of 287 contaminants, including methyl mercury, fire retardants and pesticides such as DDT and chlordane. Of these chemicals, 180 of them are carcinogenic in humans.

Toxins get into our bodies through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and by direct contact with our skin. Studies show that more than 80,000 metric tons of carcinogens are released in the air annually in North America, and more than 2,100 chemicals are present in most municipal water supplies. Much of our food supply is tainted by pesticides, herbicides, parasites and chemicals.

Because of the toxicity of our environment and the way most Americans eat and drink, many people's bodies are backed up with microscopic garbage. It's as if their bodies' waste management departments have gone on strike.

Thankfully, there is an answer: detoxification. There are simple things you can do, starting today, to rid your body of toxins and help your waste management systems keep them out.

The first step is to drink plenty of clean, filtered water. Your body needs—minimum—two quarts of water per day. Other steps include:

6. Eating green foods and taking specific nutritional supplements to keep your liver (the body's main detoxifying organ) healthy
7. Eating plenty of fiber—25 to 30 grams per day
8. Eating living, organic (chemical-free) foods
9. Sweating, brushing your skin and using sauna therapy
10. Cleaning the air in your home with air purifiers and live plants
11. Fasting using fresh, juiced organic fruits and vegetables.

Pillar 6: Nutritional Supplements

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith ... commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.”

1 Timothy. 4:1,3

In 2002, the Journal of the American Medical Association, the leading medical journal in the United States, shocked the medical community by publishing a study that recommended that all adults take a multivitamin supplement to help prevent chronic diseases. For decades most of the medical establishment had insisted that multivitamins were not necessary, that people got all the vitamins and minerals they needed from the foods they ate. Some doctors actually said that multivitamins only gave people “expensive urine.”

The authors reviewed studies of the relation between vitamin intake and various diseases published between 1966 and 2002 and concluded that when people did not take in enough vitamins, they were at increased risk of a variety of chronic diseases, including heart disease and cancer. The best course, the authors said, was for all adults to take nutritional supplements.

Nevertheless, the bias against multivitamins and supplements remains so strong that some doctors still won't recommend them. They insist that multivitamin supplements, and most other supplements, are "alternative therapy" or should be recommended only for sick and elderly patients who are more vulnerable to vitamin deficiency. Unfortunately, these doctors don't appreciate the extensiveness of vitamin deficiencies and the problems these deficiencies create for people's health.

In a perfect world, the human body would indeed get all the nutrients it needs from food. The vitamins and minerals our bodies need to thrive should come through the foods we eat. However, processed foods have been stripped of much of their nutrient content.

Cooking and storage also cause our food to lose nutrients. Our toxic environment and toxins in our food, water, and air, as well as our overstressed lifestyles, have increased our nutrient requirements. Even if we were to eat adequate fruits and vegetables, the nutrient content in them has decreased due to our depleted soils.

But few, if any, people get the nutrients they need from food alone, even if they eat a completely healthy diet. That's why the sixth pillar of health is nutritional supplements, because supplements give you the nutrients you are likely missing from your normal diet.

Those nutrients are the building blocks of health, and they will protect you against disease. Without them, you are likely to have nutrient deficiencies.

What kinds of supplements should you take? Start with a

comprehensive, whole-food multivitamin that has at least 100 percent of the daily value (DV) or reference daily intake (RDI) of all 13 vitamins and 17 to 22 minerals. Add additional antioxidants in the form of a phytonutrient powder that has a combination of colorful organic fruits and vegetables. And take $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 teaspoon (or 2 capsules) of omega-3 fats two to three times a day.

If you are over age 50, you will also need additional antioxidants, calcium, vitamin D, digestive enzymes and sublingual B-12. (See Day 42 in my book *The Seven Pillars of Health* for recommended amounts of each of these supplements.)

Please remember that supplements are not your first source of nutrition. They are just what their name suggests—supplements to a healthy diet—to ensure that you receive adequate vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and phytonutrients.

Pillar 7: Coping With Stress

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”

Isaiah 26:3

Good stress—such as that which accompanies a wedding or a promotion—is healthy. So is the stress that initiates our body’s natural reaction to a threat or perceived threat. It causes a sudden release of adrenaline and other hormones that make your blood pressure increase, your heart beat faster, and your breathing increase, among other physiologic events. These stress hormones give you extra strength, energy and mental acuity for a few moments, and they empower you to either fight or flee.

But when the stress response occurs too frequently, or goes on long term, the stress hormones that were meant to save your life begin to harm you. They can leave you feeling depressed and angry, lower your sex drive, and predispose you to obesity, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, hypertension and all kinds of illnesses. The same hormones that save your life in an emergency can destroy your health.

In June 2005, the Wall Street Journal devoted an entire section to how to live longer. The front-page article of the section said, "Increasingly, researchers are viewing stress—how much stress we face in a lifetime, and how well we cope with it—as one of the most significant factors for predicting how well we age." The article concluded that stress "kills" people as much as poor health habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol and not exercising.

A long-term study at the University of London showed that chronic unmanaged mental stress was six times more predictive of cancer and heart disease than cigarette smoking, high cholesterol levels and elevated blood pressure. In a Mayo Clinic study of people with heart disease, psychological stress was the strongest predictor of future cardiac events.

Excessive stress can predispose a person to develop or can aggravate every conceivable affliction. If you want to rid your life of illness, you must learn to identify and overcome stress. Practicing the following techniques will help:

12. **Mindfulness.** Mindfulness means letting go of any thought that is unrelated to the present moment and finding something to enjoy in the present moment.
13. **Reframing.** Reframing is learning to see the past and the

future in a positive light. It requires a person to change his present point of view and see another person or situation from a new perspective.

Scriptural reframing is one of the most powerful ways to relieve stress. It is simply replacing our fears, worries, failures, grief, sorrows and shame with God's promises.

14. **Laughing.** Belly laughter offers one of the most powerful natural healing methods. It lowers stress hormones and increases feel-good hormones. A merry heart is your greatest weapon against stress.
15. **Forgiving.** Accepting an offense is always optional. When you are hurt, intentionally or unintentionally, forgive the person who has hurt you and let it go. Otherwise you will suffer damage from the stress chemicals produced by hanging on to bitterness and anger.
16. **Practicing stress-reducing habits.** These include meditating on the Word of God, practicing deep breathing, removing obvious stressors in your life and choosing to maintain a positive attitude.

Don Colbert, M.D., is a board-certified medical doctor who is trained in nutritional medicine and who believes in combining nutritional and traditional medical practices to help his patients achieve optimal health. He is the author of more than 40 books, including *The Seven Pillars of Health* (Siloam), in which he shares his life message and provides a program that guarantees improved health in just seven weeks.