

Treating Health Symptoms Provides Only Quick Fix

The United States is spending more than two to three times more money on health care, compared to the second leading country. Unfortunately, we are not getting what we are paying for when you consider the fact that we are only the 15th-healthiest country! Which begs the question: Are we treating the *cause* of our health problems or merely addressing the *symptoms* with very expensive drugs?

Think about it: Did you wake up one morning with arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, irritable bowel, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue or any of a number of health issues? Or did these problems begin to develop as a result of annoying little symptoms that often get overlooked?

Treating the Cause

The first set of questions you should ask your health care provider when he or she gives you a prescription for a medication is, "Are these drugs going to make my body stronger and healthier? Are they addressing what is causing the problem, or do they only address the symptoms?"

Most prescribed medications only treat the symptom; they don't help strengthen your immune system, heart, joints, intestines, liver, kidneys, etc.

1. Are cholesterol lowering drugs and blood pressure medications helping your heart, or are they just lowering the markers we measure that tell us our cardiovascular system is in jeopardy?
2. Are the acid blockers and antacids fixing your digestive system, or are they just reducing the pain in your tummy?
3. Are pain medications for arthritis, joint pain or

fibromyalgia fixing the problem, or are they only disrupting the pain signals your body is sending?

4. Are hormone replacement drugs balancing out the imbalance by adding hormones, or are they addressing what's causing the imbalance so you don't need to take the hormones?

Remember, drugs have side effects too! Some can cause serious problems.

The Body Is Like a Car

The human body is very much like a car. It gives you signals, little warnings that something isn't right. It seems like most people do a better job of responding to the signals their car gives them than their bodies. Symptoms like fatigue, indigestion, cravings, headaches, elevated cholesterol and blood sugar are nothing more than signals letting us know that something isn't functioning right. It's our job to address what is causing those problems. But if we don't, those simple annoying problems could grow and be at the root of your major health complaint.

All of those tummy problems (bloating, gas, reflux, heartburn) are telling us our digestive system isn't functioning properly. This can lead to poor absorption of nutrients and even deficiencies. How can you expect your body to overcome any ailment or rebuild itself if the food and nutrients aren't absorbed?

If fatigue is your problem, could your hormones be so out of whack that it throws your metabolism off? How about cravings? Are we eating the wrong foods—too many carbs and not enough good protein and fats? Are you skipping meals? Either way, it throws our blood sugar off and leads to moodiness, irritability and the inability to concentrate and focus, and it is a prime cause for adult ADD/ADHD.

Don't assume that blood sugar problems only cause diabetes.

That is a huge mistake and one of the biggest reasons traditional medicine hasn't been able to help the chronic and degenerative problems (fatigue, weight gain, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, depression, hot flashes, PMS, nightsweats) our nation faces. They are not addressing the true cause.

Blood sugar imbalances put additional stress on your adrenal glands, which cause an overproduction of the stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline. This contributes to weight gain and fatigue. In addition, it throws our reproductive hormones (estrogen, progesterone and testosterone) out of balance. Blood sugar imbalances also cause high blood pressure and elevated triglycerides, which eventually can lead to high cholesterol.

Even conditions such as arthritis, heart disease and fibromyalgia can be a result of inflammation. The best way to overcome inflammation is with a good diet. The body makes its own natural "anti-inflammatory drugs" if we feed it the right foods. For example, the omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, fish oils, olive oil, nuts and seeds can dramatically decrease inflammation. Conversely, saturated fats and trans fats will trigger inflammation.

Start With the Basics

If you're struggling with any chronic or degenerative condition, you need to make sure your digestive and elimination systems are functioning properly. Are you keeping your blood sugar stable? Are your stress hormones out of balance? Is your metabolism functioning properly? These are the most basic questions that need to be answered when dealing with any health challenge. Too often we skip over these fundamental concerns and wonder why we aren't getting better.

The healing process is exactly that ... a healing process! There is not one magic formula that is going to do everything for

you. It's like peeling an onion; it's one layer at a time.

One of the best ways to determine the possible cause of your health problems and where to begin is with online health quizzes. Once you identify the weak areas, you can begin to address the cause of your problem.

Dr. Len Lopez is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of *The Work Horse Trainer*. He speaks extensively on diet, exercise and how stress can affect your overall health and wellness.

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