

The Resolution Report:

Five Steps to Your Healthiest Year Yet

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**Wishing You A Happy, Healthy New Year...
No Matter When You Read This Report**

Dear Reader,

Whether you've cracked open this report on January 1, 2012 – the first day it was published – or any day thereafter, please know that it comes with my best wishes for a happy, healthy year.

This special report is designed to provide you with the information, guidelines and support you need to make a groundbreaking resolution...

Eat the right diet, gently move your body, and sleep 8 hours a night.

I realize it sounds simple. And it is. Once you get the hang of it.

It's called **The Resolution Report: Five Steps To Your Healthiest Year Yet** because I truly believe that if you take this as a blueprint, and start following these steps today, you can live a healthier, more productive life for years to come.

Now more than ever, health is a choice. But it takes information, and the resolve to use it, to make that choice wisely.

Please share this with your loved ones, with a friend, a neighbor – and especially, someone who will be on your team. Someone who might share meals with you, walk with you, or just cheer on your resolve to take these steps in your daily life.

Let's get started...

To your health,
David Blyweiss, M.D.

Introduction

- The one resolution that could dramatically change your life
- The secret to keeping your New Year's resolution this year
- How do you change the health of the nation?

Make Your New Year's Resolution (Any Day of the Year)

...And Stick With It

At the beginning of every year, millions of people resolve to improve their health. Gym memberships surge. Dieting book sales and Weight Watchers memberships skyrocket. And for a week or maybe even a month, we all do our best.

But in most cases, our best doesn't get us very far.

One study showed that about 75 percent of people stick to their goals for at least a week. And that number dwindles to 46 percent still on target six months later. Informal surveys by popular magazines estimate only a persistent 8 percent make it through the whole year.

Today, I'm inviting you to join the 8 percent...

First, I'm going to suggest you take on a simple, no frills resolution. Just the basics... really. But it has tremendous power to help you protect yourself against cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and a whole host of autoimmune and chronic disorders that are stealing quality of life from millions:

Eat the right diet, gently move your body, and sleep 8 hours a day.

I say "simple" knowing full well the specific recommendations may be challenging. They will take a little effort, and a lot of support.

But the gains could be extraordinary:

- Improved mobility for the rest of your life
- Natural protection against many of the chronic ailments facing Americans today
- Improved energy, better moods, sharper thinking
- Less reliance on pharmaceuticals
- Easier weight management

Now, there are a few things to know in order to commit to – and carry out – this resolution. That's why I'm going to break it down and give you the blueprint for success.

Follow the guidelines in this report, and you can become one of the 8% of people who successfully transform a New Year's Resolution into a lifelong positive health habit.

The Key to Success: Find A Resolution Buddy

If you haven't already shared this with a buddy, take a minute to do so now. Having someone share this resolution with you is the secret key to your success. How do I know? Let me tell you about what a colleague of mine – another Functional Medicine physician – discovered when he offered educational information, much like what I'll be sharing with you, to a very large church in California.

He issued a similar challenge to the members of the church – to take on this simple resolution and in exchange, he would provide the information on how to carry it out – and 14,000 of them agreed to participate.

Overwhelmed by that number, he had them break down into smaller groups of 20, and made sure all the group members lived in the same neighborhood. They met weekly to review the information provided by the physician, and they paired up for daily walks and general support.

After 6 weeks, the church members collectively lost *a quarter million pounds of fat*. More than half were able to stop taking meds for hypertension, diabetes and heart conditions. Just by following the same basic guidelines I'll be sharing with you...and leaning on each other for support and camaraderie as they did it.

I'm convinced this kind of approach could change the health of the nation. So I decided to offer it to you in hopes you will accept the challenge, share it with a friend, and have the same success.

So... let's move forward and get started.

Step One: You Are What You Eat

- The Four Food No-No's
- What you can and should eat
- Follow this final recommendation and never diet again

There is no lack of controversy, conflicting information and downright confusion about what to eat...and what not to eat...these days.

Should you eat for your blood type? Like a caveman? Like a rabbit?

Seems like the more complicated it becomes to eat right, the easier it is to throw up our hands and give up. But since it's part of a very important New Year's resolution that I'm encouraging you to make, I want to make it as simple as possible for you.

Remember, the resolution I've proposed is to *eat right, gently move your body, and sleep 8 hours*. Those two little words, *eat right*, are a mouthful.

Let me break it down for you...

Say 'No' To These Four Foods... and You Can Say Yes To Anything Else

It is impossible to state strongly enough how important food is to your health. It is our first line of defense against disease. It provides every system of our body with nourishment. And it also has the potential to do serious damage.

Because diet has so often been linked to diet-*ing*, and weight has been more about looks than health, we have lost sight as a culture of the most basic function of food. Health and nutrition.

So when I say *eat right* I mean for your health. Will you lose weight? If you have it to lose, probably. But these tips are not strictly for weight loss, but rather to support optimal health.

Surely, there are many things you could add to your diet – such as greater quantities and varieties of fruits and vegetables. But this resolution will be most effective if you are willing to give up what I'm calling the Four Food No-No's.

You can take time with the elimination, so you have time to make adjustments and replacements. By giving up the following four foods, you will make an enormous difference in your health. I would even go so far as to say it could save, or at least dramatically extend your life, regardless of your current health status.

No-No #1: Gluten

For most Americans, no gluten means no wheat...unless you have celiac disease, in which case the difference between wheat and gluten makes a big difference.

The problem with wheat is that it has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Agricultural practices that emphasize drought resistance have produced a heartier, not healthier, grain that bears little resemblance to the "amber waves of grain" memorialized in our national anthem. There's an excellent book that I highly recommend you read, *Wheat Belly* by Dr. William Davis, that can explain these changes and how they affect you.

For the purposes of our resolution, what you need to know about wheat is that it makes you fat, and is almost as addictive as heroin.

Chemically speaking, wheat contains amylopectin A, which converts to blood sugar faster than just about any other carbohydrate, including table sugar. That means two slices of toast can spike your blood sugar higher than a candy bar would. Two hours later, your blood sugar plunges, you feel shaky, your brain feels foggy, and you're hungry again.

Not only do you pack on the pounds when you get caught in this cycle, you create the perfect environment for diabetes and heart disease to flourish.

Wheat also creates an opiate called gluteo-morphine that crosses the brain-blood barrier. Yes, an opiate - like heroin - which is why kicking the wheat habit is so difficult. I'll give you fair warning...you will hate this part of your resolution for 5 days. You might even feel in state of withdrawal - because you are! But once you kick the wheat habit, and start shedding the pounds, you should find it much easier to stay off.

No-No #2: Cow's Milk Dairy

Milk from cows is the best stuff on earth...if you're a baby cow. But for humans, when we wean from our own mother's milk, we would be better off without any mother's milk.

Every mammal's milk is specifically designed for its young. So unless you *want* the massive girth and weight of a cow, I don't suggest you drink the milk that's designed to make them that way. The inclusion of growth hormones and antibiotics, being used for economic not health reasons, are making cow's milk an even worse choice for humans.

Also, cow's milk contains casein as its form of protein, while human milk contains albumin. Like wheat, casein crosses the brain/blood barrier and creates an opiate called caseo-morphine. So it creates the same cravings as wheat, with many of the same negative health effects. It also will make it tough to quit...but worth it.

Finally, many people are allergic to cow's milk and don't even realize it. You might discover you are one of them. Digestive issues that you think are 'normal' may completely clear up when you quit. Same with skin problems, blood sugar irregularity, and many other chronic complaints.

If you can't quit dairy altogether, at least stick with organic, grass-fed dairy products. Most cows are force fed foods they would not normally eat, which has a negative impact on the cow, the baby calf...and you.

You might also consider switching to goat's milk - which is more digestible and contains a friendlier form of casein.

No-No #3: Corn, soy or peanuts

I am a big fan of nuts -- almonds, cashews and the like. But a peanut is actually not a nut at all...it is a legume. It also:

- is one of the highest allergens out there
- is high in lectins, specialized proteins also found in grains, dairy and plants in the nightshade family, and considered potentially toxic
- contains aflatoxin, a carcinogen that has been shown to cause liver cancer in rats

Soy is another misunderstood food. Considered one of the original "health foods," it has been taken over by American agro-business...and turned into a hazard. Genetically-modified soybeans now make up 91% of America's soy production. If you must have soy, find an Asian supermarket that sells non-American soy, which is less likely to be genetically modified.

Corn is another sad story. Sweet ears of summertime corn-on-the-cob may be a favorite childhood memory... but the ways we grow, process and eat corn has changed dramatically in recent years.

Like soy, GMO corn has become abundant. Plus, it has replaced cane sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup and is found in an overwhelming number of products, causing a whole host of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

But the main reason I'm suggesting you cut it from your diet is because it makes you fat, plain and simple. And while we're on the topic of unhealthy, ubiquitous sweeteners...

No-No #4: Sugar

One of the most pervasive problems with sugar is how much more we consume now than ever before. Get this:

Between the years 1700 and 1800, sugar consumption increased from four pounds a year to 18 pounds a year, per person.

By 1900 that number rose again to 90 pounds per year, per person.

Last year the average American consumed 180 pounds of sugar. That's a half a pound of sugar a day!

Considering that sugar feeds cancer, triggers weight gain and contributes to a host of other health problems, it should be no surprise I'm including this in my recommendation. What is more confusing is why doctors around the country aren't taking up arms against this sweet, silent killer.

This year, resolve to lower your sugar intake considerably. Use the natural sweetener, Stevia. Or if you do have sugar, make sure it is raw and unprocessed, and eat it with a meal so your body has the fiber to digest it.

Avoid artificial sweeteners at all costs. They include molecules of chlorine and other chemicals that are even worse for your health than sugar.

That might seem like a lot of bad news... but it's actually good news in disguise. You have the power to change your health status simply by changing your choices at the grocery store.

Speaking of the grocery store, reading labels and identifying foods by their many names can be an art unto itself...and ridiculously time-consuming. [Use this guide](#) as a cheat sheet to make shopping faster and easier.

Now, let me take one last minute to discuss what you can and should be eating...

What Can and Should You Eat

Replace what you're cutting out with as many live, nutrient-dense foods as possible. Eat organic foods more often than not. And yes, incorporate more veggies and fruits. Eating in the right balance is the key.

It's perfectly fine to keep meat in your diet... but consider using this guideline when you measure your portions: *The percentage of meat in your diet should equal the percentage of teeth in your mouth that are made to tear flesh: 12%.*

Meat, along with grains and shellfish, are acidic and acidic foods are inflammatory. When you eat these, balance them with less inflammatory, more alkaline foods. This balance between acidic and alkaline foods is an important one that I'll be writing you more about in future issues.

Follow This Last Recommendation and You'll Never Have to Diet Again

My final recommendation to start the day with a protein-oriented breakfast, and graze throughout the day, making sure your last meal of the day is a full three hours before bedtime. When you

don't eat smaller meals more often, your body thinks it's in famine and stores fat and calories instead of burning them.

This is why dieting doesn't and never will work!

It goes against the body's natural survival mechanisms that have been in place for thousands of years. Try working with your body, and feeding it the right foods, and you'll never have to worry about dieting again.

Step Two: Move Your Body, Relax Your Mind

- We are made to move... and how
- What stress in your mind is doing to your body
- Why protecting your mobility should be your #1 priority

The second step to fulfilling your resolution is to gently move your body...

Notice I didn't say *exercise*.

First of all, I'm pretty sure that one more person telling you how important it is to exercise wouldn't be particularly helpful. And know that if you feel resistant to the idea of exercise, you are far from alone.

This is because developing the habit of exercise is completely unnatural. We weren't made to *exercise*, we were made to move. To be even more specific... you need to move your mind, body and bowels.

Good food goes in, toxins and waste are flushed out. Stress goes in, and releases easily through the breath. Energy is constantly coursing through you, like electricity through a socket. These are the signs of a healthy, happy body.

The best part? It's so much easier to incorporate gentle movement into your life than it is to exercise. See for yourself...

When the dawn of modern conveniences began – let's say roughly from introduction of the Model-T forward – it seemed like an incredible era of ingenuity and advancement. In many ways, it still does. What humans are able to do with a little brain power and economic motivation is truly remarkable.

Who would have guessed then that many of these miracles of invention would plant the seeds for chronic illness and physical decline?

How Modern Conveniences are Killing Us

Think about it. Today, most people drive everywhere... take elevators and escalators instead of stairs... and are under constant stress from the expectation of increased productivity that has come with our expanded technological capacity.

But our mental and physical systems aren't changing and adapting quite so fast. While our inventive minds are creating new ways to sit still and accomplish mind-oriented tasks, we are

losing our mobility, our ability to focus, and the energy generated from moving according to our body's innate design.

In our DNA, we remain hunter-gatherers.

When our ancient ancestors ran, it was to escape a saber-tooth tiger, not pass time on a treadmill. And the chase didn't last for 45 minutes. It lasted for 30 seconds to a minute – 5 minutes at most – before it was over, one way or another.

We walked everywhere. To the river or well for water, planting and working in the fields, canvassing for medicinal herbs and berries. And at the end of long, physically active days, we danced and played music around a fire. Told stories and laughed. Or even, gasp, sat quietly together. Then slept... from roughly sundown to sunrise.

I'm not suggesting it is either practical or desirable to return to such a lifestyle – especially the tiger chases. But I am saying that mimicking this kind of all-day gentle movement – punctuated by a few short bursts of exertion a day – is the optimal way to stay in shape.

This is where inviting a buddy to join you really helps. It is much more interesting to take a walk for 30 minutes in the morning and the evening if you have company. Someone to push you out the door on days you might not want to, and vice versa. You can also ride a bike, either outside in nice weather or indoors on a stationary bike in inclement weather.

Whichever you choose, don't forget to periodically insert 30-60 second bursts of faster walking, running or pedaling.

Protect Your Mobility With Your Life

Statistics certainly indicate we are living longer lives, but that we are losing our mobility much too soon. We are losing muscle, crumbling under frail bones, getting out of breath too easily, and buckling under the stress of carrying around too much excess weight.

Gently moving your body throughout the day may not sound like a revolution... until you try it. Walk for 30 minutes, twice a day. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Park in the furthest spot at the mall, not the closest.

When movement becomes part of your life, along with eating right and sleeping eight hours a night, you'll see and feel a change... you'll provoke an ancient revolution that will return your body to the way it was meant to be, according to your very DNA.

The inherent stress of a more convenient – but busier – life is more than your body is equipped to handle. Just like that short, fast burst of a tiger chase, your body is genetically programmed for short, sudden bursts of stress.

Long-term chronic stress produces more cortisol than your system can handle, and the effects can be quite dire. Your blood pressure rises. Your blood sugar levels increase. Unhealthy fat builds up in your abdomen. Your digestion is hindered. Your bone formation stops.

Turns out stress isn't all in your head, after all. It's in your adrenal glands. And unchecked, it can do some serious damage.

Address Your Stress

The best antidote for stress is to pick a daily practice that will give your cortisol production a break. These include: yoga, prayer, meditation, diaphragmatic breathing or any other relaxation technique that appeals to you. No, you don't need to wear stretch pants, make guttural sounds or burn incense... unless you want to. You can keep it simple and even include it into your daily routine in the shower or bathroom if that's the only time you can manage.

Here's one exercise I do several times a day for an instant cortisol break:

4-5-6 Breathing

- Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4
- Hold your breath for a count of 5
- Breathe out through pursed lips for a count of 6
- Repeat breathing pattern 3-5 times in one session
- Repeat session 3-5 times a day

Try it right now. You'll feel your body relax instantly. You can even set your phone or watch to remind you to take a 4-5-6 Breathing break at several-hour intervals throughout the day.

Step Three:

The Five Supplements I Would Take to a Desert Island

- Filling the gap between what food delivers and what your body needs
- The 5 supplements you would want on a deserted island
- How to support your supplements

In a time long, long ago, in some perfect world (perhaps of our imagination), we got every vitamin and nutrient we needed from our food. We didn't fear eating anything toxic or bad for us. We got enough sun every day. And plenty of clean water. Kids didn't talk back to their parents. And the tooth fairy was generous and always remembered to come in the middle of the night.

OK... you can wake up now!

While it's true you can get many of your health requirements handled by eating the right diet, I doubt this historical nirvana ever existed. I suspect humans have always experienced gaps between what they could get from their food and environment, and what they needed to thrive. Does the word "famine" ring a bell?

As much as I rail against biased – or just plain bad – science, there's no denying that our ability to accurately assess what we're missing, and replace it with supplements, is a gift of science I celebrate every day.

Step Three of your resolution identifies the most common gaps we face in our diet, and how to best use supplements to fill them...

If you called me and said you expected to be stranded on a desert island for the rest of your life, and asked me what supplements you should bring, here's what I would say:

1) A good multi-vitamin... start with the basics

First, you'll want a solid multi-vitamin that carries all the water-soluble and fat-soluble vitamins you need, such as A, D, E, K and the B's. No iron necessary, because adults generally don't need additional iron on a regular basis, and too much iron can be dangerous.

If you find a multi that also contains a generous helping of antioxidants, take it. Research has shown antioxidants help cells remain healthy, and even has anti-aging benefits. Look for a multi-vitamin with flavonoids, polyphenols and botanicals... or add a separate antioxidant to your desert island supplement list.

2) A good probiotic... because nothing else works until your gut does

It doesn't matter how well you eat or how many supplements you take if your gut isn't working right. Without the proper bacteria and enzymes in the lining of your digestive tract, you could be

eating like a king... and still starving for basic nutrition. In fact, sadly, this is all-too-common among older and elderly adults.

Look for a probiotic containing several varieties of *Lactobacillus*, such as *Lactobacillus brevis*, *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* and *Lactobacillus casei*. You also want a product containing several types of *Bifidobacteria*, a colon colonizer. These may include *Bifidobacterium longum*, *Bifidobacterium breve* and *Bifidobacterium infantis*.

Hint #1: Be sure to refrigerate your probiotics if they come refrigerated... If the bacteria isn't alive when you take it, there's not much point. Also, there are those probiotics now formulated without refrigeration to work just as effectively at room temperature. Read the label carefully.

Hint#2: When checking the actual number of bacteria, look for at least 5 billion colony forming units (cfu) per dose. And here is a commonly overlooked number: how many cfu's will there be at time of product expiration, not at the time of manufacture. You don't want to wind up with a minimally effective probiotic a few weeks after purchase.

3) Essential fatty acids... for better Omega 3/6 balance and less inflammation

Often described as “the good fat,” EFA’s (Essential Fatty Acids) help bring your ratio of Omega 3/6 back into balance. As a general rule, Americans are 6-heavy and 3-deficient. The result is a near-epidemic of chronic immune disorders that involve inflammation.

No need to overdo it on this recommendation, since balance is key. Choose EFA’s from fish oil over plant-based options. Fish oil has the added benefit of containing brain-supporting docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and heart healthy eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). If you regularly eat fish, you can take a lower dose than someone (like me) who doesn’t.

Hint #1: You should also keep fish oil in the refrigerator. It can easily oxidize in warm environments, which works against your best interest, not for it.

Hint #2: If you're taking a gel cap and experience “fish burp,” keep them in the freezer instead and be sure to take it with a meal.

4) Vitamin D... for immune support

OK, granted, if you are stranded on a very *sunny* desert island and will be lounging about in your bathing suit sipping Mai Tai’s the rest of your days... you might not need this. But for everyone else, additional Vitamin D supplementation is absolutely critical. Most of us require 12 times more than the amount normally included in a multi-vitamin. I recommend 5000 IU a day, as much as 10,000 IU daily if a blood test shows you are deficient.

Study after study is showing how critical Vitamin D is for the immune system, and how precious little of it we’re getting from its greatest source... the sun. The conspiracy of sunscreen, less outdoor time and few food sources has taken its toll.

5) CoQ10... cell food extraordinaire

CoQ10 is like a cup of coffee for your cells every morning. It boosts your energy, and delivers a massive antioxidant hit. When you were under 25, you had no shortage of CoQ10, and didn't need any supplementation. But if you are over 40, and you aren't already taking it... start today. You'll be amazed at the difference you feel in your energy.

When shopping, opt for your CoQ10 in the form of Ubiquinol. It is a reduced form of CoQ10 that is super bioavailable – so gives you more bang for your buck. To increase absorption even more, take it with a meal and/or with your fish oil.

Putting It All Together

Combining good food choices with the right supplement habits is the best way to ensure you are getting optimal nutritional support for your body.

There's just one catch. Taking them at the right time, with the right support... not just when you remember.

Most supplements are best taken with a meal. Eating stimulates production of hydrochloric acid in the stomach, a necessary ingredient for digestion. But a pill alone won't stimulate the same response, which means the content of that pill passes right through you – and is discarded as waste. In nursing homes these are referred to as “bedpan bullets,” since most elderly patients do not take digestive enzymes or supplemental hydrochloric acid, and are even more likely to be deficient in them.

You can also look for other delivery methods for some of your supplements. There are numerous high-quality multi-vitamins available as a liquid shot. The trick is to find the most bioavailable and gut-friendly form of any supplement you choose to use.

And last but not at all least... read the label. Make sure you know how to store your supplements to keep them fresh, the dosage, the fillers and other ingredients, and whether you are allergic to any of them.

Step Four:

5 Easy Ways to Get All 8 Hours

- Why the importance of sleep is so under-rated
- How you can beat the odds stacked against getting as much as you need
- Putting your entire resolution together into one great day

Blame it on Thomas Edison for testing that final filament, inventing the light bulb. Or Benjamin Franklin for flying kites with his son in a lightning storm for that matter! First, electricity and light bulbs... now a world that doesn't sleep, and a body that's urged to stay up instead of accepting its' need to lie down.

Your body doesn't see this as progress. In fact, it protests, loudly, but if you're like most people, you don't even notice anymore. Most of us have become so accustomed to being sleep-deprived, we don't know what it would feel like to actually get enough sleep every night.

We consider it normal to have to use an alarm clock to get up in the morning... and to hit the snooze button 25 times. We think watching television is putting us to sleep, not keeping us awake. Or that losing our memory as we get older is normal, not a consequence of long-term sleep deprivation. Most of us believe the 8-hours-a-night guideline applies to everyone else, but not us. That we can make do with less.

Not true. None of it. Here's what *is* true...

Why Night Is Your Body's Busiest Time of Day

Getting enough sleep is one of the most important building blocks of health. It affects every single system in your body. Sleep rebuilds your organs and muscles, replenishes your mind, and even regulates your appetite, hormones, and blood sugar. And, it turns on the coordinated release of specific hormones, rhythmically throughout the night, to allow for optimal replenishing and regulation.

Long-term studies on people who chronically don't get enough sleep – such as nurses and firefighters who perform shift work – have shown that sleep deprivation shortens life expectancy and puts you at higher risk for cancer, heart disease, diabetes and a whole host of chronic illnesses.

Maybe when you're young, you can afford to ignore the truth for a while. But along with age comes wisdom... and the courage to face the truth. So, here it is:

Sleep 8 hours a night and you add extra years and quality to your life. Get less... and you don't.

That said... here are some tips that will put you in the habit of getting enough sleep, every single night:

1) Use dark and light to signal your body's natural rhythm: During the light of day, your body produces melatonin, a critical sleep hormone and powerful antioxidant. At night, the melatonin releases into your system, inducing sleep and indicating to your body that it is time for the daily refresh and renew cycle. Be sure you get enough bright light during the day and complete darkness all through the night to keep this cycle intact. You may need to install some special lighting inside the house if you live in a gloomier climate, and wear eyeshades at night if you can't achieve 100% darkness. When you get enough light and dark throughout the day, you'll see... both falling asleep and waking up become effortless when you let your body's natural rhythm do all the work.

2) Develop a consistent routine: Just like when you were a kid, setting a daily bedtime and having a consistent routine really works. If your day starts at 6am, then bedtime should be at 10pm... and your bedtime routine should start at 9pm. Lights go down, electronics go off. Drawing a hot bath or taking a hot shower will raise your core temperature, and getting out will drop it, telling your body that it's time to hibernate. Pick a short, relaxing activity such as reading (nothing too exciting though!) or meditating that will wind down your mind. As soon as your eyes get heavy and your breathing slows, turn off the lights and allow yourself to drop into sleep. Do this both on weekdays and weeknights, and within a few weeks your body will be in the habit, and sleeping – and waking refreshed – will become natural.

3) Separate eating and sleeping times: Finish dinner 3 hours before bedtime, and all fluids within 2 hours of bedtime. This will ensure that you're not disturbed by frequent bathroom trips. Eating a high-protein snack a couple hours before bed, and avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and grains and sugars right before bed can ensure you get an uninterrupted 8 hours.

4) Create a relaxing sleep environment: Reserve your bedroom for sleeping and intimacy *only*. This means no TV, computer, or piles of work strewn across the floor or on the bedside table. Maintain your bedroom more as a sanctuary than a work space. Keep it cool at night – around 65 degrees is optimal – and use blankets to keep warm. And if you or your partner find sharing a bed inhibits your sleeping, consider separate beds or bedrooms. You may both get better rest, and enjoy the quality of your intimate time in bed together, if you are getting the quantity of sleep you need elsewhere.

5) Solve any sleep problems you have: If you follow the first four guidelines and find you still have difficulty falling and staying asleep, do some troubleshooting to figure out why. Here are a few of the most common problems:

- ✓ Restless legs and leg cramping is a common complaint I hear from new patients. Add more calcium/magnesium and potassium to your diet, and possibly even use additional supplements, and see if they settle down.
- ✓ Urinary tract, bladder and prostate problems can take a serious toll on your sleep cycle. I cover each of these in other issues of Advanced Natural Wellness (found

at www.advancednaturalwellness.net) – or you can see your own physician – to address these issues.

- ✓ Adrenal stress is another common sleep disruptor. In the final issue of this series, I'll share some tests you can do to see if this is affecting your sleep.
- ✓ And last but not least, changes in hormone production – including the sleep hormone, melatonin – can be the culprit. You might try taking melatonin, or better yet, a combined sleep supplement that also included relaxing herbs, botanicals, tryptophan and other sleep aids if you have a hard time falling – and staying – asleep.

By now, you've probably realized that it will take some effort to carry out your very simple, very basic resolution to eat right, gently move your body and mind, and sleep 8 hours a night. But I hope you also realize that it will bring you tremendous rewards in the coming months and years.

Last, but not least, I want to make sure you have all the support you need. That includes professional assistance – such as a physician or other health care provider who can help you to personalize these recommendations. And a buddy – someone willing to eat, walk, and talk health with you, so you can keep up your commitment and momentum in turning your resolution into a healthy lifestyle.

Step Five: Making It Personal

- How much does your doctor *really* know?
- The 10 health screens that can tailor your resolution to best suit your needs
- Where to go when you want health care, not sick care

One of the most important steps in this resolution is to make these general suggestions more personalized to you and your health needs. I'll warn you in advance... it might take a little extra effort on your part. You probably already know why...

After most articles that cover topics in food, nutrition or supplements, there is usually a sentence that says, "check with your doctor." In fact, we recommend the same thing. Because aligning general recommendations with your health needs is important.

But when you try to check with your doctor, you discover how little *they* know about food and nutrition... and maybe they don't believe in using supplements at all, or they don't know enough about them, so they push you towards a pharmaceutical product.

Well, you can't really blame your doctor. I'm going to let you in on a little secret about medical schools in this country...

You Can't Teach What You Don't Know

In the mid-80's, the Committee on Nutrition in Medical Education conducted a survey to find out how much nutrition education existed in U.S. medical schools. In their landmark report, they found that the majority of schools taught less than 20 hours on the topic, and 20% of the schools taught less than 10 hours. They recommended a minimum of 25 curriculum hours.

Just last year, in their follow-up report, they found that the majority of medical schools in the U.S still fall far short of the recommended minimum.

Now, in defense of my colleagues, many of us take it upon ourselves to fill this critical gap in knowledge, and go on to study functional medicine, naturopathy, orthomolecular medicine, holistic health and other fields that have a deeper understanding how food and nutrition affect the health of our patients.

My final recommendation in this series is that you find out how much nutritional knowledge your physician has before you let them be the final arbiter of your health decisions, and determine for yourself whether it is enough to guide you in keeping your resolution.

At the end of this issue, I've also included some additional resources if you find you need to widen your team of health providers. Here's an idea of how it should go...

Specificity: The Difference Between Health Care And Sick Care

If a patient came in to my office and said, “I’ve made a resolution to eat right, gently move my body, and sleep 8 hours,” here’s how I would work with them to tailor my recommendations to suit that patient’s specific health needs.

I would start by getting a complete history, for the patient and their genetic family. Do they have a history of high lipids, heart disease, cancer? Are they suffering from any chronic conditions, such as overactive inflammatory response, digestion problems, or diabetes?

Then, I would order a set of tests to determine some important markers and nutrient levels – and adjust the general food and supplement recommendations accordingly.

Here are the 11 tests I routinely run – and that you can ask for – to get a snapshot of where you stand, and can begin to personalize the general health recommendations you read:

Note: Don’t worry if this list sounds a little too technical or confusing... you’re not going to have to sit for your medical exams any time soon! But it’s a good starting place for a conversation with your doctor. And if you share this list with him or her, and they are as confused as you are, be sure to use the referral number at the end of this issue.

- 1) Complete Blood Count (CBC): This is the standard starting place that every physician uses to measure of the concentration of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets in the blood.
- 2) Full Thyroid Panel: Make sure any thyroid testing includes T3 and T4 and a TPO (not just a TSH) – also known as a *full thyroid panel*. Many doctors are calling for thyroid screens starting at age 35. It’s a great idea, but until it becomes the norm, you might have to ask.
- 3) Reverse T3 (rT3): This test is most-often used for the person who is on thyroid medication and is not feeling better. It tests a thyroid hormone that isn’t included in a full thyroid panel – and solves an important mystery for many people with thyroid conditions, whether known or unknown.
- 4) Vitamin D: This vitamin is so critical to your immune system, and so chronically low in older adults, that screening is a must at the beginning of any health regimen.
- 5) VAP/Lipid Test: This is especially important if you have a family history of high lipids.
- 6) Homocysteine level may be a separate indicator of heart attack or stroke, and it is also important to see how methylation is happening in the body. This is one of the most helpful indicators when choosing the supplements and dosages your body requires for optimal health.
- 7) Serum or Urine Methylmalonic Acid: This test reveals a vitamin B12 deficiency, weeks or even months before it would show up in blood tests for anemia, or worse, in symptoms.

8) Serum GGT: This is a liver enzyme test that can show toxicity. It will show how well the body is regenerating and recycling glutathione, a master antioxidant. It can also be a future diabetes predictor.

9) Serum Heavy Metals and Organic Pollutants: While these tests don't show the body's complete burden of stored toxins, it reveals enough to know what you might need to remove and detox from your body, and what might be causing allergy, chronic current health problems. It can also identify the seeds for future issues that can be addressed before they arise.

10) Highly Sensitive C- Reactive Protein (hsCRP): This test reveals chronic systemic inflammation, which is a hallmark of chronic degenerative disease. Nutrition and supplementation is often the key to addressing these conditions, and this test can let you know where to start.

11) DHEA-S: DHEA is one of the main adrenal hormones. Studies show low levels of DHEA over long periods of time can actually shorten your lifespan. Being proactive in supplementing this hormone could make a huge difference in your health and longevity.

This may sound like a lot of tests, but they can all be run through a regular blood or urine sample, just like what you leave with the doctor at an annual check-up.

Gathering information *before* you get sick is a key factor in choosing wellness and health. When you know how your particular system is functioning, what you need to support, and how... and you have both medical and motivational support to make those changes... you become a walking health revolution.

Treat the Person, Not the Symptoms

Most of the medical system in this country is geared towards acute care. And by all means, if I break a bone, or am in a car accident, or have an emergent medical problem, I'm heading to the closest emergency room... and you should, too.

But more people than at any time in our history are suffering from complex, chronic diseases that are a result of many factors: environment, lifestyle, and genetic predisposition.

That's why some physicians, like myself, believe in treating the person, not just the symptoms – and focusing on prevention, rather than waiting until a person is sick, can't move, and has limited their life expectancy, to take action.

One place to find such physicians is in the database of the [Institute for Functional Medicine](http://www.functionalmedicine.org) at www.functionalmedicine.org. Or you might call a naturopathic physician, chiropractor, integrative medicine specialist, or holistic health practitioner. Many of the professionals who use

these titles will be familiar with the types of recommendations, tests and personalized health approach that I advocate here in Advanced Natural Wellness.

More than anything, in 2012, I wish you a healthy year. And all the support you need to successfully take on this simple – but radical – resolution.

Eat right, gently move your body, and sleep 8 hours.

How is it possible for that to change everything? You'll see.

Resources:

Norcross JC, et. al. *Auld lang syne: success predictors, change processes, and self-reported outcomes of New Year's resolvers and nonresolvers*. J Clin Psychol. 2002 Apr;58(4):397-405.

Jeffrey Smith, *Genetically Modified Soy Linked to Sterility, Infant Mortality in Hamsters*, The Huffington Post, April 20, 2010

USDA, *Profiling Food Consumption in America*, Chapter 2, Agriculture Fact Book, <http://www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter2.pdf>

Adams, Kelly M. MPH, RD et. al. *Nutrition Education in U.S. Medical Schools: Latest Update of a National Survey*, Academic Medicine: September 2010 - Volume 85 - Issue 9 - pp 1537-1542 doi: 10.1097/ACM.0b013e3181eab71b

Nutrition Education in U.S. Medical School, Original Report:
http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=597&page=R1