



Holistic Health

Tips for Healthier Living

Dr. Robert Abel Jr.

I spent 40 years in clinical practice with people just like yourself. Having studied both Eastern and Western medicine, I have learned to combine the best of each. I share these tips which are based on clinical experience in some cases and on evidence-based science in others. When a patient tells a story it is an anecdote; when you hear several similar stories it becomes an hypothesis.

The body is more than just the sum of the parts and caregivers need to look at more than just a single area. My contention is to always look for the cause even though you may have to treat the symptom.

We are creatures of habit and in fact chained by our habits. It takes a great deal of intention and effort to change our habits. Therefore, it should be done one step at a time. Information should be gathered from doctors, nurses, literature, internet searches and other people/support groups. Great discoveries in medicine have often come from outside of the field.

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forward.”

- S. Kierkegaard

Oxidants and antioxidants:

Oxygen, necessary for life, breaks up into free radicals. Our body counteracts free radicals with tissue-based enzymes, cell-based antioxidants and circulating antioxidants, many of which are the 13 vitamins, omega-3 and phytochemicals. The liver stores all the chemicals, good and bad, (i.e. drugs and environment). So having a positive antioxidant bank account will help support in the fight against oxidation which gradually destroys cells and tissues.

For instance, if you cut an apple and leave it on the counter, it will turn brown because of limited antioxidants. Whereas, if you cut a lemon and leave it on the counter it remains yellow because of the vitamin C. If you cut an apple and squeeze lemon juice on the open surface it will take a longer time to turn brown, demonstrating the power of antioxidants.

Stressors which can lead to disease:

UV light and environment

Dietary decisions

Lifestyle indiscretions

Inadequate sleep

Overstimulation

Hormonal disruption

NEWBARS:

An acronym that supports your antioxidant bank account

N
E
W
B
A
R
S

Nutrition & Supplementation

Exercise

Water

Breathing

Alternatives

Relaxation

Socialization & Spirituality

Nutrition:

- 14 of the 15 leading causes of death have risk factors that can be reduced by diet.
- There are many diets out there but the best one is the one you stick to.
Fat is necessary; good fat is much better.
- The Mediterranean diet and olive oil is excellent; the Paleodiet was effective for primitive people because the meat was organic.
- Primitive people's diets were never prepared for tremendous amounts of processed foods, sugar and artificial sweeteners.

The top 10 foods for sight:

- Cold water fish (sardines, cod, mackerel, and tuna) are an excellent source of DHA, which provides structural support to cell membranes and is recommended for dry eyes, macular degeneration, and sight preservation.
- Spinach, kale, and green leafy vegetables are rich in carotenoids, especially lutein and zeaxanthin. Lutein, a yellow pigment, protects the macula from sun damage and from blue light.
- Eggs are rich in cysteine, sulfur, lecithin, amino acids and lutein. Sulfur-containing compounds protect the lens of the eye from cataract formation.
- Garlic, onions, shallots, and capers are also rich in sulfur, which is necessary for the production of glutathione, an important antioxidant for the lens of the eye and the whole body as well.
- Soy, low in fat and rich in protein, has become a staple in vegetarian diets. Soy contains essential fatty acids, phytoestrogens, vitamin E, and natural anti-inflammatory agents.
- Fruit and vegetables contain vitamins A, C, E, and beta-carotene. Yellow and orange vegetables, like carrots and squash, are important for daytime vision.
- Blueberries and grapes contain anthocyanins, which improve night vision. A cup full of blueberries, huckleberry jam, or 100 mg bilberry supplement should improve dark adaptation within 30 minutes.
- Wine, is known to have a cardio protective effect, and has many important nutrients which protect the heart, vision, and blood flow. Needless to say, moderation is always important.
- Nuts and berries are nature's most concentrated food sources. Grains, such as flaxseed are high in the beneficial Omega-3 fatty acids, which help lower cholesterol and stabilize cell membranes.
- Extra-virgin olive oil, a monounsaturated oil, is a healthy alternative to butter and margarine.

The top 10 vitamins:

- Vit C 1000mg
- Vit D 2000-5000IU daily (blood test determines)
- Omega-3 DHA (algae oil) 500-1000mg (depends on bruising) and EPA (fish oil)
- Vit E 400IU
- Vit A 5000-7000IU or Beta-caratine
- B complex and extra sublingual B12
- Minerals: macro (Ca, Mg,Zn) and micro (Se, Bo, Cr etc)
- Vit K
- Carnitine 500mg
- Lutein/Zeathanine 10/2 mg for retina, skin and memory.

Exercise:

- Circulation is cleansing. Cardiovascular exercise moves the blood, energizes the body and relaxes the brain.
- Lymph needs to circulate as well; do not sit all day because we need calf muscle action to bring the lymph up and we need deep breathing to drain the lymph from the eyes, head and neck.
- Walking, yoga or tai chi will always do more for you than the remote.
- Recognize pain and when to stop or when to stretch. Balance is attained with exercise to work the muscles and stretching the muscles for recovery.

Water:

- Hydration is necessary; six glasses of water or the equivalent is recommended daily.
- Coffee, soda, alcohol and even many juices are not equivalent.
- Because of the contaminants in water, filtered water and reverse osmosis is highly recommended.
- I've had patients who developed thyroid disease and RA from their water supplies. Two of them went to well water or filtered water and the rheumatoid arthritis actually improved. It is the chlorine that makes water toxic to ourselves.

Breathing/rhythmic breathing:

- Breathing clears the lungs and expresses those pockets of mucus which can harbor pathogens and induce inflammation.
- Breathing moves the lymphatics which are essential to heart health. Your lymphocytes need to circulate to counter inflammation.
- Quieting the mind is so helpful for the body. It reduces blood pressure, pulse and relaxes the muscles while improving oxygenation.
- Your brain actually limits your spiritual self. It is geared for survival and thrives on a daily routine while being wary of change.
- So breathing stimulates your intuition which supersedes your mechanical self and hubris.

Alternatives:

- Choose appropriate caregivers, healers, role models and integrative partners.
- Reduce medication and review your drugs every few months
- Find support groups and learn from your peers.
- Get the best from East and West.
- Look beyond simple journal articles. For instance Ancel Keys in the 1950s wrote that cholesterol and fat were bad for us and created a whole industry around cholesterol reduction. Yet we need cholesterol and fat. Authors of journal articles often have the results in mind before they do the experiment. Journals funded by pharmaceutical companies tend to reject positive articles about vitamins.

Relaxation and stress reduction:

- Breathing, slowing the mind and adopting good nutrition and lifestyle choices are vital for the health of our bodies.
- Find your own center.
- Stimulate your parasympathetics by relaxing which will enhance your entire body.

Socialization and spirituality:

- Giving and loving are the currency of humanity. Use meaningful words and put yourself out there. Allowing others to make a difference will be enable them to do so.
- We may be doomed by our success in our daily jobs.
- Dr. Larry Dorsey wrote about the power of prayer and Dr. Eben Alexander wrote about the proof of heaven. You decide.

Memory:

- 95% visual
- Clench your fist
- Talk to yourself
- Write it down and keep it in front of you
- Do puzzles
- Complete a task, i.e. don't multitask.
- Bill Moyers five recommendations given by 90 year olds:
 - Diet
 - Cardiovascular health
 - Exercise
 - Small hand manipulations
 - Intellectual stimulation

Eastern Medicine:

Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine is based on a combination of herbs which are changed every 10 to 14 days. These plant-based medical systems know that both people and their disease conditions change and therefore the herbal concoction needs to change. Whereas in Western medicine people receive the same dose of the medication despite differences in age, body type or gender; furthermore, the medications are not discontinued until people complain, find an interaction or get sicker.

In Ayurveda there are three Doshas or personality types. Vata is the nerve natured individual who tends to get high strung, develops dry skin and later in life gets hearing and vision problems. Pitta individuals are aggressive, have excellent digestion but get cardiovascular disease. Kapha types are overweight and sluggish and tend to be mucous formers, have rosacea, vein occlusions and diabetes. Recognizing your body type is a hint as to what foods to avoid and precautions to take.

Western medicine:

- Basic blood chemistries and routine checkups are necessary, as Western medicine should be the portal of entry into risk assessment and disease management.
- Fractionates the body and only looks at parts.
- Often only treats symptoms and not the cause.
- One author wrote that doctors make a diagnosis in 18 seconds; we need to slow that down.
- We need to develop an interactive relationship with our caregivers. This means take notes, ask questions, seek second opinions and become a partner in your own care.
- Needs to recognize the placebo effect is real

Environment:

- Reduce radiation: dental, fluorescent lights, airports, handheld devices.
- Dilute all detergents, see Allison Aiello's book *Against Disease*.
- Check your products for pesticides, children are most susceptible.
- Fracking causes low birth weight babies
- Climate change has affected krill, polar bears, and the Greenland Icecap

Eyes and vision:

- To avoid the cataract epidemic wear sunglasses and consider carnosine eye drops.
- Progressive myopia in children. Now 42% of American children, 50% of Swedes, 61% of German high school graduates and 93% of Taiwanese are myopic. The prevention is the periodic interruption of staring at computers and cell phones; children and adults should look away for 2 minutes every hour and perhaps do periodic eye exercises.
- With the aging demographic we're seeing more and more macular degeneration. UV and low-energy blue light can disrupt the retinal cells. These rays can be blocked with appropriate glasses. The macula, the center of the retina, has the highest metabolism in the body and therefore is most sensitive to oxidation and light. Protect your eyes inside and out and keep your anti-oxidant bank account full.
- The eye is the window to the body, the mind and the soul. We can detect diabetes and other systemic disorders through the eye.
- Schedule periodic dilated eye exams.

The Caduceus and Harmony:

- The Caduceus, the symbol of medicine, balances art and science, Yin and Yang.
- Stress and relax, exercise and stretch, inhale and exhale slowly.
- Sympathetic versus parasympathetic nervous systems; the latter brings relaxation and is employed in meditation, rhythmic breathing, martial arts and even going to the bathroom (to make sphincters relax)
- Know your biometrics! Your GI regularity and composition, urine pH, pulse, waist size, BMI and grip strength. In a 10 year study those with the strongest groups live the longest.

Specific Disease Tips

Hypertension:

- Always try magnesium first.
- Check blood pressure lying down.
- Do not take blood pressure medication at night if you have glaucoma.

Diabetes:

- Supplement with vitamin C, quercetin, magnesium and vitamin D.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners; use Stevia.
- Low glycemic foods, eliminate sodas.
- Weight reduction may eliminate the disorder.

Immunity:

- Vitamin D, vitamin D, vitamin D.
- Maintain gut health. Eliminate bloating and irregularity with probiotics, glutamate and choice of foods. Watch out for antacids and artificial sweeteners.
- Find options to steroids and immune suppressors.
- Wear a mask on planes, trains & in public places.
- Do not use strong antibiotic soaps or over use detergents.
- Manage systemic disorders.

Cataracts:

When the crystallin lens of the eye yellows or forms an opacity it is called a cataract. Most cataracts are immature and, although they may change your vision, they may not necessarily require imminent surgery.

- Prevent cataracts with sunglasses.
- Certain vitamins are helpful because the lens has no blood supply or nerves (that's why it can be operated on so easily). Vitamin C, glutathione boosters, lutein & vitamin E have all been shown to reduce the incidence and progression of cataracts in some people.
- L-carnosine has been used for years as an eye drop to block cataract formation by the Russian researcher. It has been successful in dogs and in my experience has stopped cataracts in a small clinical study; some people actually improved their vision.

Neurodegenerative diseases:

- MS, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, SAD and even depression can be detected through the eye. The retina is part of the brain and the OCT machine can detect changes in specific retinal layers that are indicative of these neurologic disorders. The newest OCT software may be able to detect the beta-amyloid in the retina. Curcumin may have a role in the treatment.
- Vitamin D deficiency is seen in almost every one who demonstrates these illnesses. Therefore, we all should have D level tested to make sure it's adequate.
- The OCT device will be available within two years; current models are highly effective in identifying macular degeneration and glaucoma.

Macular degeneration:

With the increasing age of Americans we are witnessing greater numbers of people with AMD. This is due to the fact that the macula, the center of the retina has the highest metabolism in the body and is constantly under stress from visible light and UV light.

Numerous medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and elevated inflammatory markers (said rate, homocysteine, CRP) increase the risk.

- Many medications may affect the retina and may even cause glare.
- Always review your medications for side effects with your pharmacist.
- DHA, Lutein&Zeaxanthin, A, C, E, mg, Zn, taurine are important for retina health.
- Avoid high zinc and copper-containing supplements because of toxicity and potential cognitive decline. That is why I created EyeComplex CS with 23 important ingredients for vision and contains no Copper.

Medication side effects:

Treating any disease means ingesting a pill which must be excreted by the liver or kidney. The liver contains all of the nutrition support for the eye; when it's busy dealing with pills and toxins, it limits its availability to resupply the retina. Also, a pharmaceutical preparation or vitamin travels throughout the body and will undoubtedly circulate through the eye.

Therefore, use such benchmarks as glare recovery, dark adaptation and clarity of your vision to recognize the health of your eye. An eye chart is not sufficient and an OCT exam will only pick up a more advanced disturbance.

In Chinese and Ayurvedic (Indian) medicine multiple herbs are mixed and the concoction is changed every 10 to 14 days, because the patient and the disorder changes.

In Western medicine traditionally doctors prescribed the same medication dose despite body size, gender, age and even other medications.

Headaches:

- This is something we all have. It can be caused by eating cold food, vascular or neurologic disease, injury, dental pain, loud noise and bright lights.
- The two most common causes of headaches are migraine and tension headache. Migraines are severe in young people, while limited only to a 10 minute episode of blurred vision in seniors. To block migraine attacks take 500 mg magnesium daily; if that is not effective, try the herb feverfew twice-daily.
- Tension headache is characterized by tender little knots at the back of the neck where muscles insert at the base of the skull. I see patients who come in with unexplained and undiagnosed headaches that extend into the orbits and above the eyes. I realize that the pain is referred from the back of the neck because of a small branch of the trigeminal nerve which provides sensation to the head and neck. The pain may also be referred to the jaw, ear, or around the entire head. This condition is also known as occipital neuralgia.

Dry Eye and Arthritis: an interesting couple

- Long-term gradual nutritional deficits will lead to subtle systemic consequences. Arthritis is one of those non-specific indicators of inflammation in the body. Many patients with arthritis also have dry eye symptoms.
- Eyes may be dry because of aqueous deficiency, medication, chronic conjunctivitis and inadequate water intake. Since the eye's tear film is composed of water, mucus and oil.
- Blepharitis or inflammation of the oil glands in the eyelids may be the underlying cause of dry eyes.
- Using Fluorescein to color the tear film and Schirmer test strips will help differentiate the cause. Likewise, a good history is always important.

Neuropathy:

- Neuropathy is often attributed to diabetes and vascular disease
- We are learning that medications that reduce stomach acid and others eliminate the absorption of B12 from the stomach. This results in possible anemia, memory loss reduced proprioception and neuropathy.
- B-12 deficiency, magnesium & D deficiencies are the most common nutrient deficiencies in seniors.
- Artificial sweeteners are associated with B12 deficiency and dry eye syndrome. Eliminate them from your diet and consider Stevia as an option.
- People who drink diet sodas have increased appetite and double the weight gain of those who don't.

Herpes Simplex and Shingles:

- Reduce intake of chocolate and nuts. The arginine stimulates the herpes virus. Stress and sunlight may also be triggers.
- Reduce the recurrence of herpes infections by taking 500 mg lysine, 1000 mg vitamin C and 15 mg zinc daily.

Hypothyroidism:

- Hypothyroidism is becoming epidemic in America. I believe it is the result of chlorine and fluorides in our water and toothpaste.
- Filter your water and brush your teeth with bicarbonate soda. Take your temperature under your arm with a thermometer; if it is below 97 degrees two days in a row you are most probably low in thyroid hormone.
- Synthroid and Levothyroxine (T4-the inactive form of thyroid) were never tested by the FDA and were grandfathered in. They are about 20% effective.
- Armour thyroid (T3 and T4) is approximately 60% effective and is also available in pharmacies. Concerned doctors are now prescribing this more often.

Gut bacteria Gut Health:

- Be good to your microbiota. Your bacteria does not like a lot of inflammatory foods.
- Alkaline foods facilitate general health. On the other hand, acid in saliva is conducive to cavities. Once again, brush your teeth with bicarbonate of soda even if it's the second brushing.
- 50 to 70% of your lymphocytes reside in your gut; these white blood cells are on the lookout for unusual bacteria, allergens or chemicals. Therefore, most of our allergies begin in the gut.
- Mood is often regulated by the gut. This is the result of the fact that 80% of our serotonin resides in the GI tract.
- Newer Probiotics will help reestablish gut health. In fact, the use of fecal transplants either from oneself or other has shown that dreadful diseases like C diff can be treated by this technique. Companies are working on capsules to do the same
- The ultimate result of changing bowel bacteria will be the reversal of obesity and even diabetes

Sleep Apnea:

- Aberrations in sleep cause blood pressure and hormonal changes that can lead to obesity, diabetes, hypertension and the metabolic syndrome. They also increase the risk of dry eye, glaucoma and blindness.
- It can cause strokes, heart disease and brain swelling.
- If you or your loved one has sleep apnea make an appointment with a sleep center for testing.

Believe in the force.....your force!

Best wishes,

Rob Abel, M.D.

All of this and more can be found in Dr. Robert Abel's The Eye Care Revolution (Kensington 2014)

For podcasts, download the "Wizard of Eyes" show page at www.radiomd.com.

To learn more about Eye Complex CS visit www.eyecomplexcs.com.

You may also visit www.eyeadvisory.com.