

Effortless Healing: 9 Simple Ways to Sidestep Illness, Shed Excess Weight, and Help Your Body Fix Itself

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Let your body do the work...

Do you have to tell your leg to heal from a scrape? Your lungs to take in air? Your body that it's hungry? No. Your body does these things automatically, effortlessly. Vibrant health is your birthright and within your grasp; you just have to step out of the way. In *Effortless Healing*, online health pioneer, natural medicine advocate, and bestselling author Dr. Joseph Mercola reveals the nine simple secrets to a healthier, thinner you. The results are amazing and the steps can be as easy to implement as:

- ❑ Throwing ice cubes in your water to make it more "structured"
- ❑ Skipping breakfast, as it could be making you fat
- ❑ Eating up to 75 percent of your calories each day in fat for optimal health, reduction of heart disease, and cancer prevention
- ❑ Avoiding certain meat and fish, but enjoying butter
- ❑ Eating sauerkraut (and other fermented foods) to improve your immune system and your mood
- ❑ Walking barefoot outside to decrease system-wide inflammation (and because it just feels great)
- ❑ Enjoying a laugh: it's as good for your blood vessels as fifteen minutes of exercise

Effortless Healing is the distillation of decades of Dr. Mercola's experience and cutting-edge medical knowledge. With his wisdom and that of your body, you can optimize your health, your weight, and your life...effortlessly.

Dr. Joseph Mercola is a passionate advocate of natural medicine, a wellness champion, and a visionary who has implemented much-needed changes to our current health care system. As a physician for twenty-five years, he treated thousands of patients at his wellness center outside of Chicago, and in 1997 he created the natural health website Mercola.com. A New York Times bestselling author, he has also appeared on national news media such as CNN, Fox News, ABC News, Today, CBS's *Washington Unplugged*, and *The Dr. Oz Show*. Chapter 1

What Effortless Healing Is, and Why You Need It

If you have opened this book because you are challenged with a chronic health condition, excess weight, or a general malaise, I'm not surprised. Statistically speaking, you are much more likely to be some level of sick than you are to be well.

You might question how we could still be so far from understanding health and curing diseases. After all, the forty years we've spent fighting the War on Cancer has resulted in \$500 billion in expenditures, yet the death rate has changed little.¹ Medical science in general could be implicated: cancer researcher Glenn Begley attempted to replicate fifty-three "landmark studies"- conducted by top labs and published in major medical journals- and could only reproduce six.² That's an 89 percent failure rate.

Obesity rates are at an all-time high and rising—the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being poll, which has been monitoring body mass index (BMI) since 2008, found that in 2013 the number of obese Americans rose a full percentage point, after being basically flat for five years.³ For the first time in human history, this generation will live a shorter time than their parents⁴—and this is despite spending an estimated \$2.9 trillion in 2013 on health care in the U.S. alone.⁵ How is that for progress?

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that by 2050, one in three U.S. adults will have diabetes.⁶ One in eight people aged 65 and over currently has Alzheimer's,⁷ and that number is expected to rise to one in four within the next twenty years.

In its 2014 World Cancer Report, the World Health Organization reported a looming "human disaster" in the rising cancer rates—from 14 million new diagnoses reported in 2012 to an estimated 22 million annual diagnoses twenty years from now⁸—an increase of 57 percent. That means within two decades, 13 million people will die from cancer each year.

Asthma, hay fever, eczema, food allergies, lupus, multiple sclerosis, and other autoimmune diseases are all on the rise. According to some estimates, allergies and diseases of the immune system have doubled, tripled, or even quadrupled in the last few decades, with some studies indicating that more than half of the U.S. population has at least one clinically diagnosable allergy.⁹ At an alarming rate, some people's immune systems are overreacting to substances that should be harmless, leading to allergies; others' immune systems are malfunctioning and attacking parts of their own body—the very definition of autoimmune disease.

If you seek relief from any of these conditions from your doctor, you are likely to leave his office with at least one prescription—and more likely, multiple—for pharmaceuticals. You may be shocked to learn that nearly 70 percent of all Americans are taking at least one prescription drug for a chronic or other medical condition, with antibiotics, antidepressants, and opioids topping the list.¹⁰

One in four senior citizens takes 10 to 19 pills a day.¹¹ But over the course of a year, the average adult age 18 to 65 years old in the United States fills about a dozen prescriptions—unless they are over 65, and then that number goes up to more than 30 a year.¹² In the pediatric population, one out of every five children takes at least one prescription drug every month, about 10 percent of them use two or more, and 1 percent use five or more drugs per month.¹³

These statistics, which are the latest available but still five to ten years old, are disturbing enough. But what is most shocking is that an average senior citizen who has been diagnosed with just five chronic conditions (osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and COPD) will be taking a minimum of 12 different drugs every day, just to "treat" these conditions.¹⁴

If you consider that someone on hypertension drugs is most likely also to be on a statin to

reduce cholesterol, this would bring it to 13 prescription drugs taken every day. But if you add in drugs prescribed for other chronic conditions commonly associated with old age, such as GERD, angina, depression/mental illness, insomnia, sleep apnea, hot flashes, kidney disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and congestive heart failure,¹⁵ that person could easily be taking as many as two dozen or more drugs a day! Since statistics show that three out of four older Americans have multiple chronic health conditions,¹⁶ these numbers are not unrealistic.

But these "cures" come at a high cost-their side effects and even life-threatening adverse reactions can have a seriously detrimental impact on your health. After all, adverse reactions to prescription drugs were responsible for more than 2.3 million emergency room visits in the United States in 2011, up 84 percent from 1.3 million visits in 2005.¹⁷ The FDA, an agency that doesn't protect us as it should, nonetheless cites that over 98,000 people died from adverse drug reactions in 2011-the sixth most common cause of death in 2011, according to the CDC.¹⁸ There were over 573,000 incidents of adverse drug reactions with "serious" consequences-defined as hospitalization, life-threatening complications, disability, or other harmful outcomes.¹⁹

If you find yourself in the hospital, look out. Studies from the Institute of Medicine in 1999 showed that at least 44,000 people- and possibly as many as 98,000-die every year as a result of medical errors made in hospitals.²⁰ Ten years later, the U.S. Office of the Inspector General increased that number to 180,000 every year in Medicare patients alone.²¹ And in 2013 a study in the *Journal of Patient Safety* suggested that the number could actually be as high as 440,000.²² With so many dying just from the drugs they're using to "heal" every year, there's a good chance you personally know someone who suffered this unfortunate and unnecessary fate.

It's clear from these trends and the data that an ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure. My intention in sharing the simple strategies within this book is to keep you and your family out of harm's way, so these mistakes never happen to you.

The Odds Are Stacked Against You

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon not understanding it! -Upton Sinclair

Why has it become so dangerous to seek help from the medical industry?

The best place to start is by looking at that nearly \$3 trillion number I wrote about earlier. Pharmaceutical companies view your symptoms and see dollar signs. They spend billions every year advertising to you on TV and magazines to help their drugs find their way into your body.

There's the \$5 billion they spend on direct-to-consumer marketing, of course. You've seen the ads showing silver-haired men grabbing their spouses with a knowing look in their eye, or the woman with a little black rain cloud over her head (a symbol of depression) that

magically transforms into a rainbow after she takes a pill. Their oversimplified presentations-complete with long lists of side effects-have people feeling they know all there is to know about a drug, so they march in to their doctors' offices expecting a prescription. Even with the threat of numerous possible side effects, the lure of being able to simply take a pill and have a troublesome symptom magically "disappear" is just too alluring for many people to resist.

But if you don't buy what they're selling in their commercials, they spend another \$16 billion every year to market to physicians so they'll use drugs as a primary solution to most of the health problems people have. Many people are completely unaware of the many ways in which they are being manipulated into taking dangerous and oftentimes completely unnecessary drugs.

Time to Lift the Veil . . .

Exposing pharmaceutical dangers can be quite hazardous in and of itself, as documents uncovered during a class-action lawsuit filed against Merck revealed disturbing plans to neutralize, destroy, and discredit doctors who warned about the dangers of Vioxx.

As reported on CBSNews.com, one e-mail from a Merck executive said about a doctor who disliked prescribing Vioxx: "We may need to seek them out and destroy them where they live. . . ."

It's quite clear that both doctors and the public at large are being manipulated for the sake of corporate profits. The pharmaceutical industry is not really in the business of promoting health; instead it makes money off disease. And when one market begins to dwindle, it simply creates a new one, by inventing yet another disease, usually by "upgrading" a common symptom to disease status. Need convincing? Keep reading. As CNN reported, in order to market its antidepressant Paxil, GlaxoSmithKline hired a PR firm to create a "public awareness campaign" about an "underdiagnosed" disease.

The disease? Social anxiety disorder . . . previously known as shyness.

You may have seen this campaign firsthand; ads stating "Imagine being allergic to people" were distributed widely, celebrities gave interviews to the press, and psychiatrists gave lectures on this new disease in the top twenty-five media markets. As a result, mentions of social anxiety in the press rose from about 50 to more than 1 billion in just two years. Social anxiety disorder became the "third most common mental illness" in the United States, and Paxil skyrocketed to the top of the charts as one of the most profitable and most prescribed drugs here. And that's just one example among so very many, including the pushes to sell drugs that treat high cholesterol (statin drugs such as Lipitor and Crestor) and acid reflux-two conditions that are much more effectively treated with simple dietary changes.

Physicians, sometimes unwittingly, also play a major role in the massive pharmaceutical deception perpetrated on the public, but their manipulations are often more obscure. Drug

reps often give "gifts" to persuade doctors to prescribe the medications that they represent. These drug reps usually have no medical or scientific education. Instead, they're armed with some incredibly potent persuasion techniques.

Although the medical industry has established rules that limit face-to-face interactions between drug reps and doctors, drug companies influence doctor choices in numerous other ways, including sponsoring medical conferences and sponsoring third-party websites intended to provide "nondenominational" information about new drugs.²³ The method of indoctrination most difficult to detect is the "education" that doctors give to other doctors. A pharmaceutical company will pay individual doctors large fees to "educate" their colleagues about the benefits of a particular drug. Here, it's very easy for the doctor receiving the material to forget that the doctor presenting it is working on the drug company's behalf and not as an independent, well-educated, appropriate source of objective information.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I was one of their paid shills in the mid-1980s and so have firsthand experience on how it works. The company would pay my travel expenses and give me checks for as much as \$5,000 for speaking. That may not seem like much to some people now, but thirty years ago for someone just graduating school with loads of debt, it was a major sum. It is a magnificent system, too, as you may feel that you are doing good and being paid to share your hard-earned knowledge, when the reality is that you are merely feeding the researchers' studies bought and paid for by the drug companies so they can sell more drugs.

And then there's the insidious drug industry-sponsored "education" that takes place in medical schools across the United States. For example, out of Harvard's 8,900 professors and lecturers, 1,600 admit that they or a family member have ties to drug companies that could bias their teaching or research.²⁴ In one year alone, the pharmaceutical industry contributed more than \$11.5 million to Harvard for "research and continuing education classes."²⁵

This goes on in virtually every medical institution in the United States and is a massively effective way to indoctrinate budding physicians. By influencing the recognized thought leaders of medicine, drug companies can outrageously influence the entire profession—this, combined with the previously discussed marketing efforts, and their political lobbying to change the laws to their advantage. As a patient, you don't have to fall victim to these tactics. You can learn to see right through the propaganda and stop being deceived by drug company lies and deceptions.

Chances are your doctor, even if he or she has good intentions and a desire to heal, not harm, has fallen prey to pharmaceutical marketing tactics. Most doctors simply do not have the time to research each drug, and they rely heavily on information from their pharmaceutical reps and from other "experts," that is, doctors who are receiving significant fees to talk about drug treatments.

One of my main goals in sharing this information is to keep you out of the doctor's office

for anything other than preventive screenings and out of the hospital for anything but acute traumas. (Our medical system can be spectacularly effective in these instances.)

You absolutely can take control of your health. It doesn't have to be in anyone's hands but your own.

How Did We Get So Sick in the First Place?

The twenty-first century has brought about tremendous progress in technology, transforming culture, the way we communicate, and even the way we think. It's an exciting, paradigm-shifting time in history. But it's also a time fraught with lurking dangers.

Developments in technology have impacted our food supply, introducing genetically modified crops, processed foods that offer little or no nutritive value, pesticide-laden fruits and vegetables, and an overreliance on a handful of crops due to government farming policies. On top of these factors, today much of our food is pasteurized, irradiated, fumigated, and sterilized to the point that bacteria—even the good kind, which we rely on for our very existence (more on this in Healing Principle 6)—can no longer survive.

Ironically, the very advances that represent all that is modern in the world—hand sanitizers, treated water, factory farming—have created their own set of diseases. For example, triclosan—an antibacterial chemical used in many soaps and hand sanitizers—has been shown to kill human cells,²⁶ and even the FDA admits it acts as an endocrine disruptor in animals.²⁷ When combined with chlorinated water, it produces chloroform²⁸—a probable carcinogen according to the EPA.²⁹

Scientists are now connecting the sudden increase in neurological disorders and autoimmune disease, and the steadily inclining rates of obesity, with these changes to our food supply and the greater changes in our environment. Although plenty of research is being done searching for "cures," a pernicious force is working just as hard to perpetuate the very conditions that are making so many people ill: greed.

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