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HOLISTIC HEALTH NOTEBOOK

Ten ways to save health care dollars (Really!)

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In these difficult times, we are all looking to save money. One of the biggest (and most unpredictable) budget item is health care.

Can we really save money in this area? Absolutely. According to U.S. government figures several years ago, 85 percent of all

health conditions would be completely avoided if we made simple lifestyle and diet changes. So let's start saving today.

Before I introduce the list, know that it does not include obvious things like stop smoking, don't use "recreational drugs," drive safely, and so on. Things we all know but some of us ignore, to our collective peril.

1. **Eat eight servings of fresh vegetables each day.** This one tip has enormous health implications, including reducing oxidative damage, improving every measure of cardiovascular health, normalizing systemic pH, and reducing inflammation and pain. It is simple to do: two cups of fresh (raw or lightly cooked) vegetables with lunch and dinner.

2. **Avoid all soft drinks — completely!!!** This is so important three exclamation points needed to follow. Soft drinks are the most toxic beverage you can put into your body.

3. **Drink two or three cups of green tea each day.** Green tea is the most widely consumed beverage on the planet, and is associated with reduced risk of several serious diseases. Enjoy it sweetened with a few drops of stevia.

4. **Drink one ounce of water for every two pounds of body weight.** Water keeps the body hydrated, cleansed, and activated.

5. **Do some type of heartbeat-raising exercise** at least five times per week, along with some weight bearing exercises.

6. **Get eight hours of sleep every night.** If you can't sleep that long, stay in bed anyway with the lights out and your eyes closed. Relax!



7. **Eat adequate but not excessive amounts of protein.** Women require from 45-65 grams of protein daily; men require from 55 to 75 grams per day. Exercise, stress, pregnancy, lactation, and recovery may require even more.

8. **Do not go to the doctor every time you sneeze.** If you are smart enough to understand this column, you are smart enough to know when you really do need to check with your doctor but when you take unnecessary medications, you actually increase your risk of health problems. Many of my customers and clients have been taking five or more medications simultaneously — and then wonder why they don't feel well. Sometimes we do need medications — but more often, we need to make lifestyle changes.

9. **Do something fun and relaxing every day.** Give yourself 30 minutes of "me time." Helps reduce stress.

10. **Live a thankful life.** Every day, list and give thanks for your many blessings. And while you're at it, laugh heartily several times per day. Remember that a merry heart does good, like a medicine. ■

— Carol is a certified lifestyle educator at the offices of Dr. Alan Gruning in Fort Myers 939-3303. She owns the Island Nutrition Center on Sanibel, 472-4499.

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