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What *alternative doctors* tell their friends

The advice these gurus dish out to their loved ones helps keep them healthy and happy without meds. If you like the idea of a natural cure, listen in. BY JESSICA GIRDWAIN

Acupuncture is powerful medicine

“Even for friends who are generally healthy, I recommend acupuncture to help promote overall well-being. And I assure them: Only very rarely is it painful. Acupuncture can help address lingering issues such as menstrual cramps, back pain, and asthma. It can also lessen fatigue and increase energy by promoting and restoring the balance of energy in the body, called qi or chi. And I make sure to tell friends that, yes, the benefits are more than just a placebo. Scientific evidence as well as clinical experience strongly suggest that acupuncture has very real effects on the mind and the body, even though there’s no consensus about how exactly it works. So go in without skepticism or fear.” —Andrew Weil, M.D., founder and director of the *Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona* and director of integrative health and healing at Miraval Resort

You don't have to live in organic panic

“The number-one question I get asked at parties is if you need to buy organic all the time. And I say no. That goes for the ‘dirty dozen’ list too. Rather than obsessing over whether the label on your apple says it’s organic or not, try to buy food that’s in season and grown locally. Local farmers who produce on a small scale are more likely to use sustainable practices, like avoiding pesticides and genetically modified seeds. They also tend to go above and beyond the organic label by practicing biodiversity, crop rotation, and maintaining a low carbon footprint. All that adds up to more nutrient-dense soil that

translates into healthier, tastier food.” —Daphne Miller, M.D., practicing family physician in San Francisco and author of *Farmacology: What Innovative Family Farming Can Teach Us About Health and Healing*

Yes, it may be your thyroid

“I have a friend in my monthly book club. She was eating well, exercising regularly, and still couldn’t lose weight. She asked her doctor if her thyroid might be to blame, but he dismissed the idea. I had no problem telling her that her doctor was probably wrong. Thyroid issues are one of the most common reasons for a slumping metabolism and slow weight loss. In fact, for women over 35 who struggle with excess pounds, I live by the rule of ‘slow thyroid until proven otherwise.’ My friend got more extensive tests, and lo and behold, she had a sluggish thyroid. She was treated not just with a thyroid medication but with multivitamins and vitamin D. Two months later, she was back to her normal, healthy weight.” —Sara Gottfried, M.D., board-certified gynecologist, integrative physician, and author of *The Hormone Cure*

Skip the Z-pack

“Whenever a friend tells me she feels like she’s coming down with something and is going to the doctor for a Z-pack, I tell her: Don’t! These antibiotics won’t work if you have a virus anyway. I tell her to eat a mixture of olive oil, raw honey, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and turmeric—eyeball it, adding spices to taste. One teaspoon a day will alleviate a sore throat and help



shorten your sick time. Turmeric, an anti-inflammatory, can help prevent or relieve a cold, and raw honey has antiviral and antibacterial properties. This concoction is great for seasonal allergies, too.”
 —Leslie Mendoza Temple, M.D., medical director of the integrative medicine program at NorthShore University HealthSystem in Chicago

Juice cleanse? Bad idea

“When a friend wants to try to lose weight with one of those popular bottled juice cleanses, I recommend against it. For one, they don’t supply all the nutrients you need, so your immunity can be compromised. You should never do one to jumpstart a New Year’s resolution—you could get the flu. Plus, cleansing encourages your body to release toxins (like from pollution, bacteria, alcohol, or sugar), which then circulate through your liver. You’ll need supplements to support liver function and get adequate nutrition. Bottom line: Juice cleanses can be dangerous without medical supervision. Do one on your own and you

may suffer from fatigue, headaches, and digestive problems.”
 —Theri Griego Raby, M.D., American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine, founder and medical director of the Raby Institute for Integrative Medicine at Northwestern in Chicago

Alternative treatments don't have to be expensive

“Holistic therapies like acupuncture are being covered by insurance more often these days, but if a friend’s plan doesn’t provide coverage, I tell her to look into community acupuncture centers, which are available in most cities. There, you go in for a private consultation, but get treated in a room with a group of people. This is exactly how it’s done in China—and you’ll pay as little as \$15. Look into Chinese-medicine schools too, which typically run low-cost but very well-established community clinics.”
 —Patricia Fitzgerald, homeopath and founder of the Santa Monica Wellness Center in Santa Monica, CA

Cures from your health-food store

Almond milk: Helps you fall asleep fast
 “It’s rich in magnesium, a relaxation-promoting mineral that’s effective against insomnia.” —Brian Clement, Ph.D., codirector of the Hippocrates Health Institute in West Palm Beach, FL

Mushroom supplements: Combats a cold
 “Science shows that mushrooms support immunity—they’re even used in some cancer therapies.

Take them when you’re sick and need to feel better fast.” —Mendoza Temple

Fish oil: Helps you unwind
 “This is a miracle supplement. It’s been shown to lower cortisol levels associated with stress.” —Gottfried

Magnesium oil: Soothes aches and pains
 “Spray it behind your knees, on your chest, and on the outside of your hips to relax tight muscles.” —Clement

Digestive enzymes: Relieves indigestion
 “If you’re starting to eat more fiber in the form of fruits and veggies, these will help you digest. They’re made from plants and easy to find in pill form.” —Clement

L-Tyrosine: Perks you up
 “For the occasional lift, 500 mg can boost your energy and dopamine levels, the feel-good chemical in the brain.” —Bryce Wylde, homeopath and author of Wylde on Health