

**The Prescription for a
Lifetime of Great Health**

THE **Doctors**



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THE DOCTORS with Mariska van Aalst

The Prescription for a
Lifetime of Great Health

THE Doctors



Health
Fixes

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THE DOCTORS with Mariska van Aalst



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We inspire and enable people to improve their lives and the world around them

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The Doctors wants to dedicate this book to all the people who are facing some of life's most challenging health issues and to those who are taking the necessary steps to create a healthier lifestyle. *The Doctors*, its experts, and its production team are committed to bringing our viewers the latest medical information and tools for healthier living.

Introduction

The Doctors Are On Call— For You



What is the one truly irreplaceable resource? Time.

We all want more time:

- more time to ourselves
- more time to sleep
- more time to develop our talents
- more time to travel, to experience new things
- more time with our spouses or significant others
- more time with our kids or grandkids
- more time to enjoy our lives

With an eye toward saving time, we've created machines to do our work for us. Think of all the time-saving machines we've developed over the past 100 years.

Instead of washing our clothes by hand, wringing them out, hanging them up on the line, taking them down from the line, ironing them with an iron heated over a fire (which was built by hand), what do we do?

We put our clothes into a box and press a button. Then we put them into another box and press another button. (Can't get around that folding, though.)

And think about our food. Instead of tilling the soil and growing our food, picking out the weeds every day, chasing down and slaughtering our dinner, plucking feathers, gutting deer, climbing trees or crawling through vines, chopping and slicing and canning, we do this:

We toss a package into a box, close the door, and press a button.

For most of us, all of this time "saved" is not translating into time spent doing things that improve our lives. With the time we save by nuking a frozen dinner or e-mailing a colleague who is 20 feet away, we're more likely to . . . well, eat junk food and sit on our butts.

And as we squander that time, we're also squandering our health. In the process of using more of these time-saving measures to save ourselves effort, we've been robbing our bodies of the exercise they used to get and the whole, fresh foods that we used to nourish them with. In a way, all those time-saving tools might actually be *stealing* time from us—because we may be dying sooner.

Well, no more! We're here to show you how you can create time. How you may be able to add 2, 4, 10, 20 years to your life—good years, active years. Fun years.

And you're going to do it starting today. Starting right now. Because we're going to show you something amazing: You only really need 5 minutes to make a change that lasts a lifetime.

We're Not Only Doctors, We Play Them on TV

Every weekday since September 2008, we've come into homes all over America to help you make sense of the conflicting medical information that comes at you from so many sources. We debate each other and share our thoughts about the biggest health headlines, the most controversial new procedures, and the embarrassing questions that people are scared to ask their own doctors. We take that information and turn it into positive solutions that impact viewers' lives.

If you've seen the show, you know we serve up our health information with a little bit of sass and a lot of science. Hey, we're not only doctors, we're also guinea pigs. From herbal teas to exercise machines to avocado facials, we love to try out as many of the cures we cover as possible—sometimes to very surprising, silly, or even (when we're feeling brave) gross effect. And if we can have a chuckle in the process, all the better. Laughter is the best medicine, right?

But while we like to have fun, we also take our jobs very seriously: We want to help everyone in the world—including you!—enjoy better health. We doctors can literally be lifesavers—but the only person who can *keep* you healthy is *you*. You have to make health a priority—and one of the best ways to keep it that way is to make it fun. That's where we come in. We are:

Dr. Travis Stork, an emergency room doctor who plays a mean game of hoops (if he does say so himself). He taps into his experience treating thousands of critical and life-threatening medical problems to help you determine important health choices to make every day

Dr. Lisa Masterson, an obstetrician and gynecologist who can't live without her heels and helps women stay sexy and strong so they can live happy and healthy lives and empowers women of all ages at every stage of their lives

Dr. Jim Sears, a pediatrician who is always game to try the wackiest, scariest, and most disgusting—hello, Neti pot!—remedies with a goofy good humor that makes his little patients (and their parents) love him

Dr. Drew Ordon, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon who gets jazzed by doing groundbreaking treatments on the air and who shows us that radiant beauty and good skin are well within the grasp of every woman and man in America, with or without plastic surgery

Between the four of us, we've received thousands of letters and e-mails from viewers all over the country. And we love that some viewers can come on the show to share their stories and ask for advice. Given the time constraint, however, we can only help so many people. Often, we find ourselves at the end of the hour saying, "Man, I wish we could have talked longer about that," or "I hope we answered that question fully." It's the quintessential 21st-century dilemma: There's just never enough time!

Yet when we step back and consider those e-mails and letters and stories together, we see that, essentially, they generally boil down to the same question:

"How can I enjoy my life and my health and stick around more years?"

Now, no matter how much advice and information we can share in an hour of television, tackling that question is still a tall order. Which is why we decided to write this book.

In your hands, you hold the information you need to help answer that question. We've developed solutions so simple, so straightforward, that you can start *today*, in just 5 minutes.

Sound too good to be true? We thought it might. But believe us: You're going to be stunned by what we found.

What *Does* Help Us Live Longer—And Better?

As medical professionals, we always begin with science. We draw all of our recommendations, both on the show and in our own practices, from a methodology doctors call evidence-based medicine. Simply put, we combine our clinical experience with the most credible scientific information available to make the best possible recommendations to our patients.

With this approach to inspire us, we formulated a plan for this book: What aspects of health are the most critical to long-term vitality? Keeping in mind that, in today's crazy, time-crunched world, no one can do it all, what are the areas the average person can focus on to help safeguard his or her long-term health?

To find the answers, we looked at many dozens of studies examining millions of people throughout the world. We sought to isolate the aspects of health that most often corresponded with long-term vitality. And what we found was actually very straightforward: If we focus our efforts on 10 key areas of health, we can live longer, more vital lives.

As busy professionals ourselves—we're all practicing doctors with active personal lives and volunteer duties, in addition to spending a few days a week taping the show—we knew that readers weren't going to sign up for any inflexible, time-consuming program. So we crafted the advice in this book to fit into the typical all-too-crazy life—instead of asking you to reengineer your life to fit the program, we've engineered the book so that it truly fits you, your needs, your life.

If you've watched the show, you know we are always up for a challenge—especially when we're challenging each other! So we set a goal for ourselves: To offer only tips that can have the *maximum* impact in the *minimum* amount of time. Using 5 minutes as the time limit for most of the fixes we would suggest—because, c'mon, we can do anything for 5 minutes, right?—we

delted into the research in all of the relevant fields, gathering together the most efficient ways to enhance your health and potentially extend your life starting *right now*.

Sounds good, right? Maybe too good?

“C’mon, Doctors,” you might be thinking. “That’s a bit of a stretch.”

How can we possibly make that claim—that you may actually extend your life with a change that takes just 5 minutes?

Well, try this on:

- One Italian study found that if you eat a small piece of dark chocolate every day for 15 days, you could shave 6 points off your blood pressure and significantly enhance your body’s insulin response, a key to preventing diabetes
- Use a paper filter in your drip coffeemaker instead of using a gold one or drinking French press coffee and you could decrease your cholesterol by 8 percent, reducing your risk of heart disease
- Floss your teeth in the morning for 30 seconds to help prevent periodontal infections that raise the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory diseases—possibly adding 6.4 years to your life
- Have sex at least once a week and cut your risk of erectile dysfunction by 200 percent. Bump that up to two or three times a week, and you decrease your risk of heart attack or stroke by 50 percent—and add up to 8 years to your life.

How is it possible that such small things can have such big effects? (Guys, when we say small, don’t get paranoid—we’re obviously not talking about sex here.) The human body is an incredibly resilient, thriving machine that *wants* to be healthy. Your body just needs you to put in a bit of effort here and there and it will do the rest.

Now, consider that the suggestions above are among the easiest “fixes” you can make. (We sincerely doubt, for example, that any guy is going to fight us on the sex thing—especially Dr. Jim.) But imagine what can happen if you add, say, 5 extra minutes of walking the dog each time you take Fido outside? Or if you decide you’re going to stop worrying so much or

actually take your vacation this year? Combined, changes like these could reap gains of several years, not just weeks or months.

Now multiply these changes by the hundreds of suggestions and tips packed into this book. You could be on your way to 2, 5, 10, even 13 or 16 extra years of life—simply by making a few of these small changes every day.

But adding years to your life is not the only benefit—not by far. Consider the quality of the life you'll add to those years. You'll be better able to play with your kids and your grandkids. You'll be able to scale those staircases—and then, possibly, a mountain or two. You might go from exercising with an aerobics DVD to taking tango lessons. You might move from a stationary bike to a road bike to a racing bike—who knows what you'll do with your increased energy, strength, and vitality?

We know one thing you'll do with it: You'll *create* time. And that's all we really want, right? We all desire more time—more time with our loved ones, more time to pursue our passions. But once our time is gone, we can't get it back.

So that's what we aim to do with this book: manufacture time. We want to add time to your life now by giving you the tips that we believe have the biggest, most efficient health impact. We'll seek to add time to your life later, time you would never have had if you hadn't picked up this book. Every minute you invest now pays off with many more to come.

We've tapped into all of our collective knowledge, scoured the medical literature, and talked to some of the top experts in the industry for tips, suggestions, and strategies that have maximum impact in minimum time. We'll teach you how to get the best care possible from your own doctors—how to ask educated questions, get second opinions, be your own best advocate—as well as arm you with the most credible, authoritative, useful, up-to-date information and advice so you can become the healthiest you possible.

All the while, we'll look for the most fun, simplest, and most pleasurable ways to do these things. Because good health doesn't have to mean a bowl of sprouts and 100,000 hours of cardio—it could mean a glass of really fine pinot noir enjoyed under the stars with your

partner or best friend. (In fact, research suggests that spending quality time with someone you love might keep you healthier than almost anything else you can do!)

In all of our rushing around, we sometimes neglect the most elemental truth of humanity: We only have one body and one life on this earth. It's up to us to do everything we can to protect it, enjoy it, and make it last as long as we can.

So, are you with us? We're all in this together. When it comes to your best health, let's not waste another minute.

Contents

| | | | |
|------------|--|------------|--|
| ix | Introduction The Doctors Are On Call— For You | 149 | Chapter Seven Get a Handle on Your Hormones |
| 1 | Chapter One Take 5 | 177 | Chapter Eight Take a Load Off |
| 15 | Chapter Two Have a Heart | 201 | Chapter Nine Love Will Keep Us Together |
| 39 | Chapter Three Use Your Head | 225 | Chapter Ten Oh, Baby! |
| 65 | Chapter Four Breathe Easy | 253 | Chapter Eleven Get It Right from the Start |
| 85 | Chapter Five Go with Your Gut | 283 | Resources Test Taking Is Not Just for Kids |
| 117 | Chapter Six Take Care of Your Vehicle | 297 | Acknowledgments |
| | | 301 | Selected References |
| | | 321 | About the Doctors |
| | | 325 | Index |

Chapter One

Take 5



In 2005, a very scary article was published in the prestigious medical journal *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Written by 10 of the best-respected researchers in epidemiology—the study of which factors affect the health and illness of entire human populations—the article’s title was “A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century.”

The researchers analyzed data from numerous studies that together involved hundreds of thousands of people and found that, contrary to the upward trend in longevity that has been the norm for centuries, the average person born today might actually die sooner than his or her parents or grandparents did. Despite all the huge advances in medical research and technology—vaccines, antibiotics, organ transplants, mapping the human genome—all of our predicted gains in longevity might be undone by one condition: obesity.

Sure, in the 21st century, we don’t have to chop wood for the fire. Or haul water from the well. Or stalk and kill a wild buffalo for meat.

But by sparing ourselves this routine physical labor and feeding ourselves low-quality, easily acquired fast foods, we may have actually time-saved our way into a shorter life here on earth.

From Time-Savers to Time-Creators

The researchers who performed this landmark review cited some other factors that might also trim our country’s longevity rate. Sure, a pandemic flu would do the trick. And, of course, pollution could take its toll. Or hospital-acquired antibiotic-resistant pathogens—such as MRSA—could gang up on us and take over.

But not all of the factors they identified were scary apocalyptic outbreaks beyond our individual control. The researchers also cited the significant risks that accompany a lack of regular exercise and ineffective blood pressure screening. They listed tobacco use. Excess stress.

In other words, like obesity, things we can do something about. Things we can take

control of. Things we need only become aware of so we can implement changes to make our lives better, healthier, happier, and most likely, longer.

When we look carefully at what this research tells us, it's clear that the solution to turning around this negative trend is not to go back to the Stone Age. The solution is to look at the changes we've made and then reclaim the activities that have the greatest health benefits—doing yard work, tending a kitchen garden, eating home-cooked meals, walking to school or work—while we also take advantage of the brand-new advances in medical science that can make us even healthier.

That's right: We're going to reverse some of those unhealthy time-savers. But we're also going to adopt something new: healthy time-creators.

The Secrets of Vibrant Health

We're so focused on the immediate—Twitter updates, drive-thrus with 60-second guarantees—we can forget each of those individual moments combine to become, hopefully, a very long life. If we take a different perspective on our lives—the long view—

PLAYING THE ODDS

How Many Years?

Every one of our behaviors can be a net positive or negative in terms of our longevity—and the quality of those years. Take a look at the impact of some of the health behaviors at both ends of the health spectrum.

| Behavior or condition | How many years? |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Smoking | -5 years |
| High blood pressure | -5 years |
| Diabetes | -5 years |
| Obesity | -5 years |
| Regular exercise | +5 years |