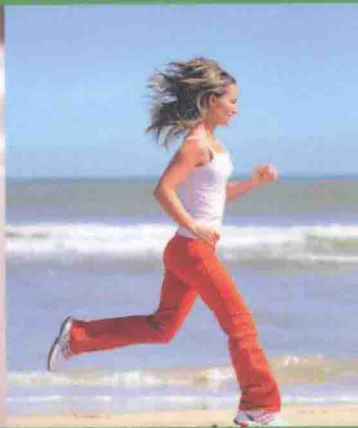
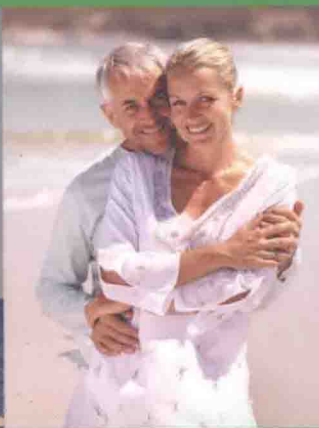




The MidLife Health Guide for Women

Finally, the companion to
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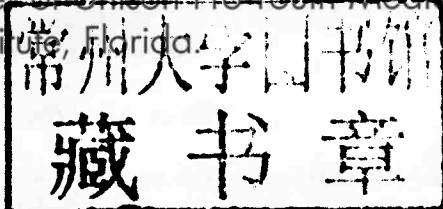
Chris G. Rao, M.D.



The MidLife Health Guide for Women

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The MidLife Health Guide for Women

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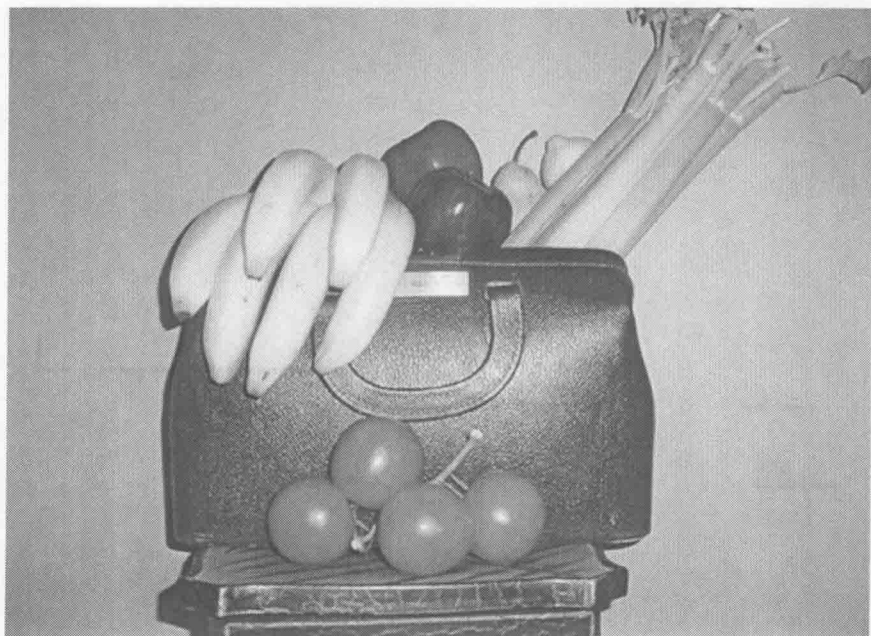
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The MidLife Health Guide for Women



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The MidLife Health Guide for Men

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The Health Guide for Children

Renaissance (fiction)

Dedicated to
my mother, wife and daughter

*If you want to fool Mother Nature, you
must learn to play her game and win.*

—Chris G. Rao, MD

Contents

List of Illustrations xv

Preface..... xvii

Acknowledgments xxi

I. Introducing Our Middle Aged Gals, Here are Maggie 1, 2 and 3... 1

 A. Maggie 1 3

 B. Maggie 2 6

 C. Maggie 3..... 9

II. Why and How Do We Age?..... 12

 A. The Genetic Theory..... 14

 B. The Wear ‘n’ Tear Theory 16

 C. The Neurohormonal Theory of Aging 19

 D. Let’s Expand on this *Age-Management Medicine* Paradigm . 21

 E. *Midlife* is the Time to Become Proactive 28

 F. Life span vs. Health span..... 28

III. Diet Basics: You Are What and How Much You Eat! 35

 A. Introduction, the *SAD* State of Affairs..... 35

 B. Carbohydrates and the *Glycemic Index*..... 45

 C. Good vs. Bad Fats 51

 D. Proteins 53

 E. What about Fiber? 55

 F. Nutrition Facts Label—Just the Facts, Ma’am!?! 58

G. Diet Summary	61
H. Fish Oil to the Rescue.....	64
IV. Weight Loss: This Time, You Will Lose Weight	78
A. How Do You Know if You're Overweight?	79
B. Why Lose Weight?.....	84
C. Weight-Loss Diets.....	88
D. Weight-Loss Supplements and Drugs.....	100
E. Liposuction	104
F. Bariatric Surgery.....	105
G. Summary	110
V. Exercise: Use it or lose it!.....	115
A. A Pep Talk.....	115
B. Exercise Benefits.....	119
C. Exercise Tips	122
D. What about Sports Drinks, Bars or Supplements?.....	135
VI. Supplements: Helpful, or Are You Just Urinating Your Money Away?	139
A. Omega-3	144
B. Other Omega Fats as Borage, Primrose Oil, or Flaxseed ...	147
C. Vitamin C—Ascorbic Acid	148
D. Vitamin D	149
E. Vitamin E.....	151
F. Folate and B ₁₂	153

G. Coenzyme Q ₁₀ (CoQ ₁₀)	156
H. Sam-E.....	160
I. Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate.....	162
J. Probiotics	163
K. Green Tea.....	168
L. Iron	168
M. Milk Thistle	169
N. Lysine	169
O. Supplements and Medications for Menopause	169
VII. Fluids and Toxins: Detoxing Your Way Back to Health.	176
A. First of All, Water	176
B. What about Toxins?.....	179
C. Lead-Free Lip Service?!.....	180
D. Mercury's Rising.....	183
E. Miscellaneous Toxins.....	186
VIII. Andropause and Testosterone. Not Just for Men, Anymore!.....	193
A. The Hormonal Cascade	193
B. Introduction to Female Androgen Insufficiency Syndrome.....	198
C. Benefits and Risks of Testosterone Replacement	200
D. Improves Menopausal Symptoms	202
E. Improves Body Composition.....	203
F. Improves Female Sexual Dysfunction.....	204

IX. Pregnenolone and DHEA: The Testosterone Precursors	207
A. Pregnenolone	207
B. DHEA	209
X. Menopause.....	218
A. Introduction. Why Me?.....	218
B. The Women's Health Initiative Trial, WHI and Why?.....	220
C. Benefits and Risks of Hormonal Replacement Therapies ..	234
XI. Stress and Sleep: Cortisol and Melatonin's Role.....	251
A. Anxiety.....	251
B. Cortisol	264
C. Melatonin	268
XII. Human Growth Hormone: The Fountain of Youth?	275
A. The History of HGH	275
B. Symptoms of Low HGH.....	281
C. How does HGH Work?	283
D. The Safety of Human Growth Hormone Replacement	286
E. HGH Dosing.....	290
XIII. Thyroid: The Gas Pedal of the Body.....	295
XIV. Special Concerns.	303
A. Sexual Concerns.....	304
B. Breasts.....	310
C. Smoking	317

D. Alcohol and Other Addictions	319
E. The Middle-Aged Mind.....	321
F. The Middle-Aged Heart	327
G. Family Planning Methods.....	330
XV. Summary. Maggie's Success Stories.	334
Index-Glossary	343
Appendix.....	357
Glycemic Index of Foods	357
Healthy Food Choices	358
Meal Ideas	362
Daily Food Log and Corrected Food Log.....	369
Women's Weight Chart.....	374
Body Mass Index, BMI, Chart.....	375
Exercise Log Summary.....	376
Calories Burned during Various Exercise.....	380
Estrogen Metabolism	381
HRT Options	382
Ready to Stop Smoking?	384
Drug Therapies for Smoking Cessation	385
General Health Screening Recommendations	387
How to do a Self Breast Exam.....	389
Resources	393

List of Illustrations

Figure (chapter.number) Description

- 1.1 Effects of Aging
- 1.2 Free Radical Damage and Reactive Oxygen Species
- 1.3 Diseases Associated With Aging
- 1.4 Health Span Curves
- 1.5 Extending Your Health Span
- 3.1 Nutrition 101—Carbs, Proteins, and Fats.
- 3.2 New Food Pyramid
- 3.3 Daily Meal Guidelines
- 3.4 Undesired High Glycemic Index Food Curves
- 3.5 Desired Lower Glycemic Index Food Curves
- 1.6 Nutrition Facts Label
- 1.7 Fatty Acid Metabolism
- 4.1 Height-Weight Chart
- 1.2 Obesity Task Force Suggestions
- 5.1 Signs of Overtraining
- 6.1 Inside the Mitochondria
- 8.1 The Human Hormone System
- 8.2 Gonadal and Adrenal Steroid Hormone Synthesis
- 8.3 Andropause Symptoms in Women
- 8.4 Female Sexual Dysfunction categories

9.1	DHEA Declines as We Age	101
10.1	Types of HRT	102
10.2	The “First Pass” Metabolism Effect	103
11.1	Acute vs. Chronic Stress	104
11.2	Melatonin Declines as We Age	105
11.3	Melatonin Replacement Therapy Summary	106
12.1	HGH Levels Decline as We Age	107
12.2	The IGF Superfamily	108
13.1	Thyroid Feedback and the Importance of T3	109
		110
		111
		112
		113
		114
		115
		116
		117
		118
		119
		120
		121
		122
		123
		124
		125
		126
		127
		128
		129
		130
		131
		132
		133
		134
		135
		136
		137
		138
		139
		140
		141
		142
		143
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		145
		146
		147
		148
		149
		150
		151
		152
		153
		154
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		156
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		158
		159
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		161
		162
		163
		164
		165
		166
		167
		168
		169
		170
		171
		172
		173
		174
		175
		176
		177
		178
		179
		180
		181
		182
		183
		184
		185
		186
		187
		188
		189
		190
		191
		192
		193
		194
		195
		196
		197
		198
		199
		200

Preface

As promised, the woman's companion to the *Midlife Health Guide for Men* has finally arrived! From the onset, I must apologize for not being a gentleman and letting the ladies go first, but truthfully, there were a total of only three men's health books available three years ago. I had to write one for them first. Add to that the fact that men don't generally live as long on Earth as women do and are sicker today than they ever were. (No rude comments, please.) Maybe a better way of looking at this is by helping your man stay healthier, I was helping *you* out in the long run too. It was virtually *one* book for *both* sexes. Now that the women's version is finished, I must shout, "Touché!" It winds up this book will also help men by helping their woman feel healthier, younger, and more sensual.

As I was doing my usual lunchtime jog on the treadmill at the YMCA, I happened to glance at the TV monitor and saw Dr. Oz miming along about female sexual disorders. After first sighing about his Oprah-induced popularity, I slowly began to feel some gratitude. After all, he's a made-for-TV doc that can't have any time to actually *see* patients. As a surgeon, he certainly doesn't have an internal medicine background and probably had a ghost writer pen all his Oprah Club books. Curiously though, why was I beginning to feel a deep sense of accomplishment?

Reflecting on the past few decades, *I've* been the renegade MD promoting preventative, holistic, and complementary medicine. I'm the lone drummer beating a different beat for people to follow along to a healthier destination. Just finishing my medical residency in 1995, I found going down that road less travelled was quite a challenge. It toughened me up, though and gave me the conviction that I was onto something. Oh, the naysayers were all around. My medical colleagues, all making a mint off of healing the sick, would routinely poke fun. "Oh, he's into all that herbal, natural quackery." I often felt defrocked from the halls of traditional medicine. Yet, in these same halls and doctor's lounges are exactly where I would try to change their attitudes by pinning up articles and often having quite heated discussions. I would show the peer-reviewed research touting this novel approach of integrating both medical and *nonmedical* approaches. Geez ... I've taught fellow doctors for

decades now about sexual dysfunction and androgen replacement in women. I'm far from being a Dr. Johnny-come-lately.

Oh, there were others besides me, but they were rare. Like an occult club, almost brethren, we had to travel far and search out each other in non-mainstream medical venues. Yet the more I learned, the more this new paradigm fascinated and intrigued me. I knew this was a better path to fulfill my passion of preventing and treating disease in a safer, more effective manner. In retrospect, these few fellow believers helped me along the way, but my mentors back at LSU Medical School and Florida Hospital in Orlando were the most encouraging. They taught that the human mind is like a parachute; it has to be *open* to work. They harped on us to *listen* to the patient—ultimately our best teachers. Ah ha ... listen to the patient! Doing this makes common sense, but is often shamefully ignored. Yet, these truisms were the driving force behind all of this. Patients suffering with arthritis would declare glucosamine safely helped their joints when nothing else worked. (They somehow felt more comfortable confiding this to me than their orthopedist.) Others would ask if taking fish oil or flax seed is safe; they stopped taking their prescriptions because of side effects and found these natural remedies lowered their cholesterol just as well. The more I listened, the more I scavenged for the scarce research about the safety and efficacy of these alternative methods. And, the more I read, the more I became hooked, even to the point of hosting my own local radio show, *In the Know with Dr. Rao!*

In 1992, when the preliminary results on the Women's Health Initiative, WHI, were announced, I was caught off guard, as were most of the medical and lay persons. How could hormonal replacement therapy, HRT, be considered so beneficial for so long a time, but now had become taboo virtually overnight?! After all, I was a well-known proponent of HRT in women as being part of an integrative approach to helping them feel young and staying healthy. Many fellow HRT disciples scattered. I still felt deep inside that HRT, when performed properly, helps prevent premature aging. The artificial hormones used in the WHI were already infamous for worsening inflammation and other problems. I only promoted and prescribed what eventually became popularized as *biologically-identical hormonal replacements*—long before it was trendy, and even before Suzanne Somers began raving about it. Feeling like Frank Sinatra in a way, I stuck it out through all the lean and in-between years following WHI and did it my way. Today, positive attitudes toward HRT have rebounded some, despite a fog of confusing interpretation, albeit with valid precautions. HRT still isn't for everyone. Confused? You won't be after reading this book; it discusses all the facts and options. There's indeed

no one way to treat every woman out there. Each one desires and deserves a tailored approach in order to reach her optimal health goals, safely.

Let me be clear, this is NOT another book on menopause, or merely one facet of Earth's most brilliant jewel we call woman. She's infinitely more than the sum of all her parts. She's uniquely complicated. Likewise, the book is comprehensive in order to touch upon most of the nuances that the midlife woman will face. Accordingly, reading it may be somewhat tedious at times; after all, it is written by a man. But, you will discover many cutting-edge, yet proven methods of safely preventing or treating most age-related diseases. Though disclosing many secrets of living a long, happy life, the book will also stir up new questions inside of you. Isn't that the way a book imitates life? Compared to the men's book written in *manspeak* and more black and white, this version is geared more toward the patient, more discriminating of the sexes so you can relax, cuddle up with a cup of tea, and enjoy yourself. It's really about relationships and the stories behind our *middle-aged gals*, or Maggie's. Eventually, you'll embark on your own healthier destination on your own terms. Oh, but what an entrance you will make!

Starting sometime when a woman is in her thirties, midlife may extend well into her late fifties. As we baby-boomers live longer, this glorious era may even become longer. Think of all the changes you'll go through! (Better take good care of this book, so it'll also last.) In the introduction, you'll read about our three Maggie's and what's up, or down, in their lives. When taken all together, they express the entire spectrum of issues that many midlife women will have to face. In her thirties, Maggie 1 has all the passion of starting a new life, yet is experiencing some slowing down symptoms of middle age. With a husband and young children, she's trying desperately to keep it all together. She's exercising and dieting, but not regaining her previous cheerleader-like shape. Feeling tired all day and stressed out, Maggie 1 is also having poor sleep and experiencing other common midlife issues as IBS and female sexual dysfunction. Is she suffering from *andropause*? Now, Maggie 2 is in her early forties and just starting to go through menopause—the purgatory of *perimenopause*. On the verge of going on medications for hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol, she knows she needs to get her act going ... now! Not quite ready for the hormonal replacements she desperately desires, she and her supporting husband embark on a difficult journey battling family concerns and addictions. *Menopausal* for a quite a few years, Maggie 3 loved how she felt while taking hormones, but got off them and never went back thanks to the increased rates of dementia and heart disease observed in WHI. Losing her earlier gains and now almost a diabetic, she wants all the benefits