

## Health is a Choice

by Raymond Francis

"Health is not a chance, it's a choice. But it's a choice only you can make." These are the words I use to sign off each of my radio shows. Unfortunately, most people believe that disease is something that just happens. It's a roll of the dice to determine who gets sick and who doesn't.

Because of this erroneous belief, few people are choosing health and almost everyone is sick. According to the latest estimates, 75% of us have a diagnosable chronic disease. This includes 90% of the people over age 65 and 25% of the people under 18. Yet despite these numbers, two thirds of us think we are in good or excellent health. What's happened is that chronic disease has become normal. As long as people are able to function they think of themselves as being in good health. In truth, only about one percent of us are in good health, and chronic disease is a runaway epidemic. The economic effect of all this is budget-busting health-care costs. The result is more and more denial of health care, a medical establishment in chaos, and a lot of sick people running around with diminished quality of life.

### Preventing Disease

It doesn't have to be this way. Disease can be prevented. If it does occur, it can be reversed. Too often we hear that disease is the result of genetic predisposition, but genes just make people susceptible to a particular disease. They rarely cause it. The most important influences are the fundamental parameters of human health, namely: diet, environment, and behavior. The problem is, in a relatively short period of time, we have radically changed these parameters. These changes are producing progressive breakdowns in cellular integrity and systemic processes, thus distorting our self-regulation and causing disease. To stay well or get well, we have to make new choices regarding diet, environment, and behavior. We have to prevent or reverse the distortions. Sounds simple doesn't it? In truth, it is simple. And best of all, it works!

The human body is a self-repairing, self-regulating system that will maintain good health if we properly support its functions. Disease results when we distort our natural self-regulating processes. The distortions are the result of unwise choices because either we don't care or we don't know any better.

Almost all chronic disease can be prevented or put into remission by making different choices. This is a far cry from our current perception where we are misled into thinking that everyone gets sick and only the doctor can make us well. But the doctor's treatments for chronic disease are seldom effective, and usually do more harm than the disease itself. Modern medicine doesn't cure disease; it suppresses the symptoms with toxic chemicals, radiation, and surgery. None of these address the causes of disease, and all of them damage health. This is why, according to statistics published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, medical doctors are one of the leading causes of disease and the third leading cause of death in America.

### Choosing Health

What are some of the things all of us can do to choose health? First of all, eat a better diet and take high quality nutritional supplements. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture titled "What We Eat in America" found that almost half of us eat no fruit and that most of us eat minimal amounts of vegetables on a given day. The conclusion was that most American adults have insufficient intakes of zinc, magnesium, vitamin B6, calcium, and vitamin E. This is why high quality supplements are necessary.

We managed for millennia without supplements, but we need them now because our intake of nutrients is down. Furthermore, coping with the toxins in our environment has increased our need. Very simply the need is up, the supply is down, and even when you eat a good diet, it's very difficult to get adequate nutrition.

#### Our Diet

Eating a good diet isn't all that difficult. It means avoiding processed food, the kind that goes through a factory before you get it. This means eliminating sugar, hydrogenated oils, processed oils, salt, dairy, white flour, and white rice. Don't buy foods in cans, jars, packages, etc., and don't eat foods cooked at high temperatures such as in toasting, frying, broiling, and barbecuing. The average American eats 150 pounds of sugar per year. Why eat almost a half-pound per day of a metabolic poison that is incredibly damaging to human health? And why are we feeding this poison to our children?

Instead, choose a mostly raw diet rich in organic, whole, unprocessed foods. Choose fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains scooped out of bins, seeds, nuts, and sprouts. Choose organic flaxseed oil and extra-virgin olive oil. Choose fish instead of steak. Studies have shown that eating fish instead of steak for dinner will sharply cut the risk of heart attack the next morning. A high fat meal will within six or seven hours put the blood into a hypercoagulation state increasing the risk of artery-clogging blood clots. Choose only high quality supplements such as Beyond Health. Most supplements are useless, and many are dangerous.

#### Our Environment

During this century, we have introduced over 100,000 man-made chemicals into our environment. We have little information on how each of these act in the human body and almost no information on how they all act in combination. We do know that many of these chemicals are toxic and that some are carcinogenic. That's why another aspect of choosing health is learning how to avoid toxins.

Toxins are things our cells don't need because they jam the machinery and interfere with normal cell function. It's not possible to completely avoid toxins because we have polluted the entire planet. However, it is possible to minimize our toxic exposures. Begin with the things you use on your body such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc. Most of these products contain toxic ingredients. The toxins go through your skin, bioaccumulate in your tissues, and eventually cause cellular malfunction. Common chemicals such as sodium lauryl sulfate are known to bioaccumulate in liver, eye, and heart tissue, and when used in toothpaste to cause gum disease and tooth loss.

Eating organically grown foods that have not been exposed to pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides is just common sense. Avoid meat and dairy for the same reason. Farm animals bioaccumulate toxins from the animal feed and pass them on to you in concentrated form. In fact about 80% of the average person's pesticide exposure comes from eating meat and dairy.

Clean up your home environment. Don't purchase carpets made of synthetic polymers. Don't buy furniture made of particleboard. Purchase clothes, bed linens, and mattresses made from natural materials. Use environmentally safe household cleaners. Avoid solvents and toxic chemicals of all kinds including prescription and recreational drugs and local anesthetics.

#### Our Behavior

A major aspect of modern behavior is chronic stress. Even driving on the freeway is a very stressful event. Chronic stress causes a distortion of the body's daily maintenance processes. Chronically deferred maintenance eventually results in major distortions in the body's self-regulation processes and the body literally falls apart for lack of daily repair. Developing new ways of dealing with stress is a must. There are many ways to do this, including exercise, meditation, Qigong, and therapy. The right way is what works for you.

Lack of physical exercise is another behavioral change with huge negative results. The human body was designed to be physically active. It will not function properly without a high level of activity. Yet most people are couch potatoes and drive to places to which they can easily walk. Without movement, the heart/lung system does not get the stimulation it needs to deliver adequate amounts of oxygen to the body's tissues. This causes a gradual decline in health.

Another impact on our behavior is brought about by our modern health care system that promotes disease by instilling feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness in the chronically ill. Modern medicine tells the chronically ill they are powerless to act on their own, that they cannot be cured, only treated, and that they have no options other than the medical system. This promotes feelings of helplessness that actually lead to a further breakdown in health. It is well established that our outlook on the future has a profound effect on health. Feelings of despair diminish the patient's ability to deal with the problem and lead to the patient becoming increasingly depressed. Knowing that health is a choice gives patients a sense of personal power, which enhances physical and emotional vitality.

#### In Summary

Disease is the result of long-term imbalances in the body's self-regulating systems. These imbalances are brought about by making inappropriate choices regarding our diets, environment, and behavior. Each of us has the power to choose health over disease. By knowing what our bad choices are, we can change these habits, choose new action, and effect changes in our biochemistry that will redirect our lives toward health and well being. No matter what your state of health, it is possible to make new choices, to improve, and to go beyond health as you know it.

*Raymond Francis is an M.I.T.-trained scientist, a registered nutrition consultant, author of Never Be Sick Again and Never Be Fat Again, host of the Beyond Health Show, Chairman of the The Project to End Disease and an internationally recognized leader in the field of optimal health maintenance.*

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