

74 OF 172 / Set 1 Copyright (c) 2000 Los Angeles Times 000000601

What the Docs Do

10 prominent physicians share their good-health habits--and admit to a few slip-ups.

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We know what they preach, but what are they practicing? Curious, we asked 10 of Southern California's high-profile doctors what they do to stay healthy. We also got them to confess to their less-than-healthy habits and to fill us in on their healthy resolutions for the new millennium. Some, you'll see, are your classic overachievers, at work as well as at play, but even so, most believe the key to mental and physical health is balance.

Beth Karlan

42, gynecologic oncologist, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Healthy practice: Works out six days a week, 40 to 50 minutes per session, on a Stairmaster. To do this and to get to the operating room by 7:30 a.m., she gets up at 5 a.m. "It's the perfect hour. The house is quiet. The phones don't ring. The exercise gets me focused and helps me think clearly." While climbing those virtual stairs, she also reads every popular novel on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list.

Unhealthy practice: Besides being a workaholic, she has a Diet Coke addiction. "I drink close to a six-pack a day, easily." Oh, and she likes Swedish Fish candies. "I probably go through a pound a week."

Y2K resolve: To make more of her kids' soccer and Little League games than she misses. And to celebrate her 20th wedding anniversary with her husband by hiking through the Swiss Alps. "He's also a surgeon, so that makes the 20 years seem like two."

Lena Peltonen

47, geneticist, chair of Human Genetics, UCLA Medical Center.

Healthy practice: Spends as much time as she can looking at the world through her children's eyes. "Seeing a whole new side of life is good for my mental and emotional health. Good health depends on a good emotional status."

Unhealthy practice: Spreads self too thin. Also has a weakness for chocolate and ice cream.

Y2K resolve: To become more focused so she can take better care of her mental and emotional health. To organize her life so she can spend more quality time with loved ones. "If I do that, the end result will be more satisfaction and happiness. People who are happier are healthier."

William Sears

60, pediatrician and author, San Clemente.

Healthy practice: After colon cancer gave him a wake-up call two years ago, he completely changed his eating habits, which, he says, is why he's still here. "Doctors all know the relationship between good health and good eating, but I didn't always practice that." After his battle with cancer, he did "tons" of research and recently finished a book (his 26th) titled "The Family Nutrition Book" (Little, Brown, 1999). As for his dietary changes, he switched from a heavy meat diet to one of fish and occasionally chicken, and he avoids hydrogenated oils. "There's a whole aisle in the supermarket [the one with the crackers and cookies] that we just don't go down."

And every day he has a smoothie--one he designed--for breakfast. "Breakfast must be terrific because it sets the nutritional tone for the whole day."

Here's the recipe he says serves three: (Tip: Cut in half unless you have an oversized blender.)

3 cups low-fat or nonfat milk (or soy beverage)

1 1/2 cups nonfat plain yogurt

1 frozen banana

1 cup frozen blueberries

1/2 cup frozen strawberries or mango or papaya

1/2 cup flax-seed meal

4 ounces tofu

2 tablespoons peanut butter

1 scoop/serving soy isolate powder

1 scoop/serving

multivitamin/multi-mineral powder

in flavor of your choice

Blend and serve.

Unhealthy practice: Has a tendency to overeat. "But at least now I'm overeating with healthy stuff." He also tries to balance his overeating with a NordicTrack.

Y2K resolve: To keep with the program: breakfast smoothie, low or no hydrogenated fats, and a largely vegetarian diet. "I believe until you're 40, you can make a lot of mistakes, but if you don't adopt healthy eating habits by 40, you'll be sick by age 50."

James Luck

58, orthopedic surgeon, chief executive and medical director, Orthopaedic Hospital, Los Angeles.

Healthy practice: Runs in the mountains. "If you live or work in the city, you have to get out of it, and Los Angeles is surrounded by nature. I used to work out on a treadmill in a gym and watch the news. While that was great for my physical health, it did nothing for my mental health. I was just trading one stress for another. Running in the mountains--a tip from my son who's an elite mountain runner--helps both." He typically runs three to four miles, three to four times a week. He also takes a multivitamin, 500 milligrams of C, 400 units of E and 400 micrograms folic acid each day, and believes strongly in the health benefits of volunteering: "Thinking of others besides yourself has proven physiological value."

Unhealthy practice: Needs a 12-step program for work addiction. "I run

a hospital, am involved in academic research and education, have a private practice and am active in various organizations. The problem is I like it all."

Y2K resolve: To work a little less, exercise a little more. "I think I'll try an apple a day."

Taro Yokoyama

65, heart surgeon, St. Joseph Medical Center, St. Vincent Medical Center.

Healthy practice: So he can get to the operating room by 7:30 a.m., he gets up at 4:30 a.m. and works out on the treadmill for 20 to 30 minutes (incline 7, speed 3.9 to 4 mph). Then he makes a Japanese breakfast of broiled salmon, miso soup and rice. He has a big breakfast and a light lunch, mostly because he has little time to eat and because "you don't need many calories at my age." His motivation? "I see so many sick patients, but I also see that appropriate exercise every day really reduces the risks of heart disease."

Unhealthy practice: Likes to have a drink at the end of the day to wind down. "I particularly enjoy wine and good scotch, but I'll drink anything."

Y2K resolve: To reduce workload so he can have more contact with medical students. "I'd like to pass down what I know to the next generation of doctors."

Keith Black

42, neurosurgeon, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, UCI Medical Center.

Healthy practice: Besides exercising at the gym two to three times a week, he meditates and practices yoga. He has a private yoga lesson once a week and goes to a group class once a week. But his favorite escape is the ocean: "My work is very intense. I balance that by getting close to the water. I love to scuba dive and sail, which makes you get in touch with the elements--the wind and currents." Every three to four years, he likes to do a big trip, like climb Mt. Kilimanjaro.

Unhealthy practice: Drinks too much coffee. "I'm trying to convert to tea." Another problem: He takes his Palm Pilot on vacations.

Y2K resolve: To improve his spiritual health. For him, that means to be more consistent with, and even increase, the meditation and yoga. He

also intends to carve out a week every six months to get away from e-mail, cell phones--even Palm Pilots.

Ka Kit Hui

50, internist, medical director for UCLA Center for East-West Medicine.

Healthy practice: Strives for peace of mind, particularly by having harmonious relationships with friends and family. "Health is multidimensional. It involves the mind, body and spirit." He's also a proponent of Chinese soup made with healthy herbs and nutrients.

Unhealthy practice: Works too many hours and has too many demands. "I also under-exercise, according to my son."

Y2K resolve: To learn to say "no." To try to share his experience and advice regarding health with others "beyond the confines of my medical practice and academics."

Susan Love

51, breast surgeon and author, founder of SusanLoveMD.com

Healthy practice: Has a soy protein drink every morning for breakfast. "It lowers cholesterol and helps control my hot flashes."

Unhealthy practice: Is a chocoholic. "But in the interest of turning vices into victories, I have decided that chocolate is a vegetable since it comes from a bean. So I count it in my five fruits and vegetables a day."

Y2K resolve: To play more with my family, to exercise religiously rather than sporadically, to not make any resolutions. "I have enough guilt already."

Gary Small

48, gerontologist, director for UCLA Center on Aging.

Healthy practice: For breakfast, he eats an egg white on toast with nonfat cheese, and a little sugar-free jelly (sweetened with Nutrasweet). He has regular coffee with Equal and nonfat Coffee-mate. "I get plenty of chemicals early. My feeling is we don't know the long-term effects of the chemicals, but we do know the long-term effects of fat and sugar, so I'm siding with the chemicals." He also just started Pilates, an exercise he describes as "strange and wonderful," and he takes daily vitamins: 800

units of E, 500 milligrams of C, and a multivitamin. As a researcher who studies memory loss in seniors, Small believes that vitamin E offers protection against memory loss and other diseases. He ends the day with a glass of wine, which he believes is healthy.

Unhealthy practice: At the end of the day, when he's tired of "being good," he craves ice cream. "I keep a stash of frozen ice cream drumsticks in the garage freezer for such attacks."

Y2K resolve: To stick to the Pilates. Substitute nonfat frozen yogurt for ice cream more often.

Harry Glassman

56, plastic surgeon, Beverly Hills, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Healthy practice: Tries to avoid or offset two major causes of aging and illness: stress and pollutants. To counter those, he eats no red meat (only fish and chicken), low carbohydrates, very little sugar, and he drinks purified water and takes antioxidants. He exercises regularly, sees a homeopathic doctor twice a year and plays games. "Every night when I come home from work, I relieve my stress by playing a game of computer chess. To me that signals the end of the workday and the time for winding down."

Unhealthy practice: Channel surfs. "It's unhealthy because it causes marital conflict, which leads to stress, which leads to"

Y2K resolve: To listen to his wife (actress Victoria Principal) more. "I credit her, as well as my doctor, for my health. When she sees I'm deviating from a healthy lifestyle, she straightens me out and tells me to get to the gym or take a vacation."

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