

□ To Fight Infections
□ To Repair Bones
□ To Control Fear

Spermicides are linked to infections in women. *Theory:* Spermicides kill protective bacteria, leaving more room for infection. Women with chronic urinary tract infections should consider birth control pills or an intrauterine device . . . from Thomas Hooton, MD, University of Washington, Seattle.

Bones deformed by injury, tumor, infection or birth defects can now be corrected with the Ilizarov procedure, named for the Soviet inventor Dr. Gavriil Ilizarov. An apparatus with spoke-like wires is inserted through the bone and held by four metal hoops on the outside of the body. Over several months, the hoops slowly separate to expand the bone, allowing bone and soft-tissue to grow (approximately one millimeter a day) . . . from James W. Aston Jr., MD, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Fear of open spaces (agoraphobia) can be controlled with clomipramine, an antidepressant now available in Canada, Europe, and Brazil. In a recent Canadian study, those taking the drug reported significant relief from fear, depression and panic attacks. Clomipramine could be available in the US by 1990, reports David Johnston, MD, University of Calgary.

Nitroglycerin patches, worn on the chest by angina pectoris sufferers, can cause itching, rash and pimple-like lesions on the skin. Seventy percent of the patients in a recent study had dermatologic reactions, though most reactions were to only one brand of patch. If you experience discomfort on your skin, ask your doctor for a prescription change . . . from Bruce Schrader, PharmD, University of Illinois, Chicago.

Carbonless copy paper can lead to hoarseness, coughing, shortness of breath, dermatitis, headache or fatigue . . . from Thomas B. Casale, MD, University of Iowa College of Medicine.

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THE LEADING EDGE PREVENTIVE/CURATIVE HEALTH LETTER

HEALTH
CONFIDENTIAL

Gerald Epstein, MD

How to Use Your Own Powers for Healing
It's not Supernatural

Dramatic examples of the mind's power over the body accentuate the role of the mental in the control of one's health. *Startling:* People with multiple personalities, a rare psychiatric phenomenon, have different diseases in each of their distinct selves. They can—and do—shift personalities from minute to minute. *Amazing:* They simultaneously switch from one state of health to another.

Such a person can—within the same body—have a diabetic personality and a non-diabetic one. In the first personality, he may experience diabetic symptoms, such as perpetual thirst. As the second personality, the thirst—as well as all other symptoms—disappear.

OB/GYN

Barbara A. Gilchrest, MD

Does Accutane Cause Birth Defects?

Approximately one out of every four fetuses of women who use Accutane* during pregnancy have deformities that include facial malformations (missing or misplaced ears), mental retardation and heart defects.

Q: At what point in the pregnancy is Accutane most likely to have a negative effect on the fetus? A: During the first month—sometimes before the woman even realizes she is pregnant.

Q: How can a woman protect herself? A: She should undergo a pregnancy test before beginning treatment. . . begin the drug after the next menstrual period . . . and practice contraception throughout the drug use and for at least one full menstrual period after treatment.

Q: Can fathers who take Accutane also contribute to birth defects? A: That has not been shown possible. A malformed sperm is unable to fertilize an egg.

*Accutane (isotretinoin) treats severe cystic acne in patients who might otherwise experience disfiguring facial scarring. **☒**

Health Confidential interviewed Barbara A. Gilchrest, MD, head of the department of dermatology, Boston University School of Medicine.

For those of us trying to harness the power of only a single personality over our physical health, this example offers insight.

We can tap our own healing forces by learning to use the power the mind has over the body. Healing is part of self-realization, a process of becoming whole and healthy.

CRUCIAL FACTORS

To mobilize your own resources for healing, you must understand the basic elements involved in the healing process. There are seven key components in the self-management of disease—mental or physical:

• **Sacrifice.** To become healthy, you have to give up something. Healing does not come without it. It can be as obvious as giving up cigarettes or alcohol or it can be a *symbolic* sacrifice.

Example: One patient of mine needed to leave a job that wasn't suited to him, but he couldn't bring himself to state it openly to his boss and give up the security of a regular paycheck. Then he broke his wrist. That sacrifice, which kept him from working for a while, finally allowed him to break his ties to the office that was making him sick. He had to make

Health Confidential interviewed psychiatrist Gerald Epstein, MD, author of the forthcoming *Innervation*. He is in private practice at 5 E. 94 St., New York.

□ Carrots for the Heart

□ Formula for Allergies

□ Iron for Lethargy

Two carrots a day can lower cholesterol levels by up to 20%. *Key ingredient:* Calcium pectate, a fiber found in carrots' cell walls. *Other potent cholesterol fighters:* At least one cup of cabbage or onions daily. . . from chemist Peter Hoagland, PhD, US Department of Agriculture, Eastern Regional Research Center, Philadelphia.

Allergies to infant formulas occur in 15%–20% of infants born each year. The likelihood is higher if one or both parents have allergies. *Symptoms:* Diarrhea, vomiting, rashes, runny nose, wheezing. Soy-based formulas and cow-milk-based formulas can be troublesome. *Newest solution:* Predigested whey-based infant formula (Carnation Good Start H.A.). *Oldest solution is even better:* Breastfeeding. . . from Robert N. Hamburger, MD, University of California, San Diego.

Lethargy and fatigue may be caused by an iron and/or copper deficiency. Copper is a component of norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter which arouses the brain. Iron is an essential ingredient of hemoglobin, which supplies the brain with oxygen. Have your iron and copper levels checked to see if you need supplements. *Best copper sources:* Oysters, liver, dried yeast, lobster, nuts, legumes. *Best iron sources:* Lamb, beef, chicken. . . from psychologist James Penland, PhD, Department of Agriculture, Human Nutrition Research Center, ND.

Protein-restricted diet helps Parkinson's disease sufferers (600,000 Americans). Reduced protein intake helps combat the effects of levodopa, the most commonly prescribed medication for this neurological disorder. *Helpful:* Cutting back on meat, dairy products and wheat-based products. *Caution:* Low-protein diets should be carefully supervised by a medical professional. . . from Anthony Lang, MD, Toronto Western Hospital.

Blood-clot sufferers who are taking Warfarin sodium should avoid broccoli and turnip greens. *Reason:* These vegetables contain large amounts of vitamin K, which counteracts the effects of warfarin sodium. . . from Sanford J. Kempin, MD, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City.

a "payment"—the fracture—to accomplish his aim.

This is not a new idea. People have traditionally given alms to pay "debts" figuratively and ensure good health. The trick in healing is to recognize that you need to make a sacrifice and to define what sacrifice you need to make.

- **Pain.** There is no growth without pain, nor is there any healing. Birth is painful. . . maturing is painful (growing pains). . . ridding your system of toxins is painful. . . giving up an addiction is painful. The pain of healing often mirrors the original pain of the disease. Accept the pain of healing for what it is.

- **Quieting.** To heal, you must be in a calming environment where you can shed your anxieties. If you're tense or fearful, you can't help the healing process.

A technique for quieting yourself is to change your breathing pattern. Try combining a long exhalation with a normal inhalation in a rhythmic manner.

- **Cleansing.** All healing involves mental and physical cleansing. You can clean out your body with steam baths or saunas or drinking liquids. You must purge your mind of negative thoughts and feelings.

You must also cleanse yourself morally within your own ethic. . . if you feel that something you are doing is wrong, it may impede your healing not to correct it. You must cleanse your conscience.

- **Forgiveness.** People want to ascribe blame for whatever unpleasant predicament they find themselves in. If you can acknowledge your own errors you can ask forgiveness from yourself or others. Or, you can forgive the person you blame for your bad luck. You can't heal while you are harboring unforgiven grievances.

- **Faith.** You must place trust in yourself and in your connection with a supernatural force that can answer your prayers. You must acknowledge a universal nutrient energy with which you can align yourself. Faith helps you become whole.

- **Reversing.** Any kind of illness represents an imbalance in your system. To regain physical and mental balance, you must change some of your habits. *Helpful:* Try doing the opposite of what you normally do. If you are a skeptic, try a little optimism. Consciously change

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your point of view, particularly in areas where you swing to extremes. This can stabilize your feelings.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

When you become aware of your own healing powers, you assume responsibility for your own well-being. You direct all your actions toward becoming whole.

You can go to a healer for help. But be aware that a healer is a catalyst who helps you to recognize and speed up your own reactions. In holistic medicine, ultimately you must become accountable for yourself.

The greatest responsibility is the moral fiber that you develop. The basis for self-healing is a moral and ethical order. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, for example, it comes from Exodus 15:26 where God tells the children of Israel that if they keep ethical-moral standards, diseases will not be inflicted on them. There are similar dictates in other religions. The message is the same: Following the ethical-moral life pays. ■

PODIATRY

Lloyd I. Nesbitt, DPM

Foot Pain Zapped Away

Tens of thousands of persons are benefiting from laser foot surgery to treat warts, corns and painful ingrown toenails.

Many more persons could benefit from the procedure, but they fear lasers. They see films of lasers cutting through steel and wonder if the beam may accidentally cut right through their feet. *What you should know:*

- Laser surgery is much safer and about twice as effective as alternative treatments, such as liquid nitrogen or traditional surgery with a scalpel.

- A local anesthetic makes the procedure virtually painless. Some tenderness may result when the anesthesia wears off, but the pain is no worse than the original problem.

- You can usually return to work the same day, unless the job requires a great deal of standing and walking.

How it works: A carbon dioxide laser produces a beam of extremely hot light. This beam can be focused accurately enough to cut like a scalpel. The beam strikes the unwanted tissue and vaporizes it. A small crater is formed that heals within a week. Side effects are virtually nonexistent.

Note: The laser is not recommended for calluses. Although it will get rid of them, they come right back. ■

Health Confidential interviewed Lloyd I. Nesbitt, DPM, a Canadian podiatrist in private practice and past director of the International College of Podiatric Laser Surgery, Canadian Division.