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# Healthful Hints

## Fifty tips to care for your next 50 years

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1. Start the day with a cup or two of dark roast coffee; without sweeteners or cream it's all natural with no calories.
2. Do not leave home without some food in your tummy. If you're in a hurry, try a large Tablespoon of peanut butter.
3. New Orleans produces about the best municipal water on the planet; drink it from the tap.
4. If you have a bottled water fetish, know its provenance. Long-term storage and high temperatures release trace chemicals from plastic bottles, such as synthetic estrogens.
5. Exercise age appropriately. Transition to more walking, swimming, bicycling, tennis and yoga after age 40.
6. Time spent in the library is more important than time spent in some gym. For bodily exercise, take the stairs and walk when possible.
7. A varied and balanced diet and a little sun exposure supply all the vitamins and minerals needed to reach age 100 and beyond; obviously medical exceptions exist.
8. The best medical care comes with an identifiable lead physician.
9. Two glasses of wine a day is OK for most folks. If you consume daily or weekend alcoholic beverages, cut back each decade – most people in their 60s can't handle two martinis a day like they could in their 30s.
10. Avoid cigarette smoke like it's a Zika vector, but smoke an occasional cigar. (Bet you didn't think you would get that advice from a physician.)
11. Keep your caloric intake in check. Healthy obesity is a myth; adipose tissue serves as an in vivo chemical factory fueling diabetes, heart disease and diabetes.

12. Cut back on simple sugars. If you acquired a taste for sweetened coffee and tea, give it up. Pralines and beignets are tourist food; OK, maybe once or twice a year for natives.
13. For fresher and more wholesome foods, be a regular at a local farmers' market.
14. Shop on the periphery of every grocery store where you typically find fresh produce, dairy products, and meats.
15. Drink a glass of water before every meal; stomach distention just might decrease caloric cravings.
16. Make your dinner plate a rainbow of brightly colored foods. A truly balanced diet includes a range of fruits, vegetables and proteins.
17. Look at yourself naked in the mirror once per week. If there's too much there, downsize to a nine-inch dinner plate and pack your lunch for work.
18. Plant a celeste fig tree in your back yard. No July breakfast is better than fresh figs right off the tree followed by the lagniappe "system cleanout" that follows.
19. Raise chickens in your backyard and enjoy fresh eggs; you'll never again want an anemic store bought egg. Plus, chickens love roosting in fig trees.
20. Read something you disagree with every day and you'll find that you'll be less disagreeable and better informed.
21. Avoid soda drinks, including the diet ones. The extinction of soda drinks would be a true "one giant leap for mankind."
22. Replace soda drinks with unsweetened beverages such as iced teas or plain water. Chemical sweeteners may not contain calories, but they trigger brain centers that stimulate unneeded caloric intake.
23. Put down your electronic devices at mealtime.
24. The best equipped home has a round dining room table, a rocking chair and two dogs.
25. Taking decongestants or vasoconstrictive nose sprays daily all year long is a mistake.
26. Most sinus infections are really allergies, so antibiotics don't help. To prevent and treat recurrent sinus congestion problems, use a Nettie Pot to wash out all that inhaled dirt, pollen, roach parts and the like; make certain to follow manufacturer instructions.
27. It is OK to pee in the shower as healthy urine is sterile, but don't pee in the swimming pool or hot tub as odors can linger.
28. For run of the mill lower back pain, start with a good chiropractor or physical therapy; most lower back pain resolves with tincture of time.
29. A diet high in garlic and raw onions can be good protection against sexually transmitted diseases.
30. Boycott fast food establishments after age 25.
31. Take an 81 milligram aspirin every day after age 30.
32. Travel: Exposure to new foods and culture is good for the soul.
33. In the absence of a positive family history, benefits versus false alarms for mammograms are harder to prove for women before age 50 and older than 75 (ScreeningForBreastCancer.org).

34. Unless there are symptoms “down there,” most women don’t need routine pelvic examinations after menopause.
35. The need for a routine yearly Pap test exists primarily in the minds of old-fashioned gynecologists. Low risk women only need testing every three years at the most and can stop at age 65.
36. The best 50th birthday present both sexes can give themselves is a colonoscopy at age 50.
37. Get a pedicure; let a professional cut your toenails after age 55.
38. Sleep with a pair of loose fitting socks on your feet all year long after age 60. Cool blood in the lower extremities aggravates circulation problems.
39. If you snore or don’t dream, see a good sleep specialist; restorative sleep is essential for optimal health. Sleep disorders are likely the greatest undiagnosed adult disease today in which effective treatments make a difference.
40. Treat sleeping pills like insurance. Better to have and not use than to need. Anyone taking sleeping pills on a regular basis needs to see a physician with skills beyond writing prescriptions.
41. Decrease stress. For some folks this means retire early. For others, it means never retire. Hang out with people you enjoy.
42. Routine PSA screening for prostate cancer belongs on that shelf with the leech jars. To paraphrase a mentor, I’m not anti-PSA, I’m just pro-patient.
43. If a physician says immunizations might cause autism, find another doctor.
44. Challenge yourself mentally every day with a crossword puzzle or such – and read books.
45. Get outside and get some sun; it reduces depression and creates increased levels of Vitamin D.
46. Lift heavy objects correctly by bending your knees, not your back.
47. Meditate 10 minutes per day. It makes for a nice calming start to the morning.
48. Skin cancer is the easiest cancer to spot; get your skin checked regularly.
49. For optimal medical care, pick a good primary care physician and see the specialists on his or her team. “Patients and their families need one doctor, not a committee ... not an institution or a building.”
50. All life comes to an end. The best way to go is to die fast and at home. Until then. check out the health news each month in New Orleans Magazine. n

*Compiled by Dr. Brobson Lutz, an internist in New Orleans, with inspiration and quotes from Dr. George Burch. Dr. Burch may not have been the greatest medical school department head in the world, but he was the best Lutz ever knew. In addition, Lutz acknowledges and appreciates input from multiple members of the Tulane Medical School Class of 1974 and from Dr. Charles Ochello, East Jefferson General Hospital.*