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## Simple, preventative health measures that transcend time

By Dr. Rebecca Parish



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As a practicing internal medicine specialist for (ahem) well more than a decade, I have loved getting to know my patients over time. Seeing them through some of life's tougher transitions and helping them create and execute a long-term plan to meet their health goals is both rewarding and challenging in an ever-changing landscape of wellness options.

I am frequently asked by my patients about preventative strategies to maintain health as they age. The dizzying array of offerings seems to keep growing; it is no wonder that many are looking for guidance. I am repeatedly struck by the "circle of life" when it comes to recommendations for health and wellness. Just like crop tops and mom jeans, even those fads that weren't so great (on anyone!) the first time seem to come back around with time and turn the heads of a new generation.

Humans are prone to vanity, to be sure. However, a bigger driver of health consumerism for many seems to be focused on longevity, independence and living well. This is evident in many ways, easily seen in what we buy: the fortune that we spend on gym memberships and home exercise equipment, supplements that promise an effect of one kind or another, and devices that track our every movement, sleep quality and heart rates (full disclosure: I am wearing one such device right now as I type) are just some examples. Because our desire to maintain a good quality of life while we are living is often on the forefront of our minds, it is hard to avoid being swayed by an article or advertisement touting the latest key breakthrough for youth and vigor.

However, medical research has shown us repeatedly that we can't "put one over" on Mother Nature. Taking supplements and vitamins has never been shown (in any well designed, large scale medical trials) to reproduce the health benefits demonstrated by eating the whole foods containing the same given ingredients. Exercising inside is fine, and better than sitting on one's couch. However, when we do those same gym movements outside, weighted MRIs have demonstrated that additional parts of our brains actually light up. I have yet to find any well done medical studies showing that a manufactured substitute can hold a candle to benefits of those that are naturally occurring.

While I've had many amazing and brilliant teachers over the years, my patients have taught me much more than those professors ever could. By keeping my eyes and ears open while caring for thousands of people, I've observed a few simple things that seem to transcend cultural, racial, gender and age differences. There is certainly no "one size fits all" approach that would make sense for people at large, but the common theme that I (and many others) have observed can be boiled down to this simple idea: move as much as you can outside, eat whole foods that contain a variety of naturally occurring hues, maintain your connectedness with your community, and never lose your sense of purpose. These simple, preventative health measures transcend all cultures and stand the test of time, surviving trend after trend . even perms.



Dr. Rebecca Parish is a primary care internist based in Lafayette and Walnut Creek. She grew up in the Bay Area and graduated from U.C. Berkeley. She received her medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine and her internal medicine specialty training at Yale-New Haven Hospital, where she participated in endocrine and metabolic research. She loves to teach and received the "Excellence in Teaching" award from the medical students at UCSF School of Medicine in 2020. Dr. Parish believes strongly in the power of local communities to help care for one another and is involved in many volunteer efforts. She and her husband live in Lamorinda with their three kids, two dogs, three cats and a rotating menagerie of foster animals. Unfortunately, Dr. Parish is not accepting new patients at this time.

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[back](#)

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