

ISSUE 39

People are Getting Sick

The last 200 years have seen a tremendous leap in our ability to treat illnesses of many kinds. We have developed all sorts of vaccinations, antibiotics, vitamins, and treatments. We have created techniques for examining bones, tissues, and even genes to look for defects and patterns. Hundreds of separate diseases have been identified and specific treatments devised to cure them. But people still get sick. It seems that the more we know about the cause, the care, and the prevention of disease, the more sick people become.

What health problem worries you the most?

- (1) Fatigue
- (2) Weight
- (3) Stress
- (4) Smoking and/or drinking
- (5) Lack of exercise
- (6) Poor diet
- (7) Blood pressure
- (8) Family history
- (9) Other _____



->tremendous : very large in amount, extent, or degree ->leap : big jump

->vaccinate : give an injection to protect against a disease

->antibiotic : drug that cures illness and infections caused by bacteria

->devise : plan or invent a way of doing (sth) ->fatigue : feeling of being extremely tired, either physically or mentally

Sample Answers

(A) Not long ago I could put in a long day's work and still feel like going out dancing afterwards. But now, even though I do my job more efficiently, so I don't have to work as hard as I used to, all I want to do is go home and go to bed. I'm tired and *lackadaisical* all the time. I've tried taking vitamins and minerals, but nothing seems to work. What's wrong with me these days?

(B) I'm very worried about my family's medical history. Almost none of the men on my father's side has lived beyond the age of 47. I'm not sure what their causes of death have been, but I know it's a very *alarming* statistic to have to deal with. Even though I feel fine and, in fact, have never had a sick day in my life, I'm always aware that I seem to be a walking time bomb ticking, ticking, ticking. When I hit 47, will I *go off*, too?

Speak Your Mind

1. How often do you feel tired?
2. What diseases are you most afraid of?
3. Do you think stress influences your health?
4. What health problems are caused by poor diet?
5. Did you ever go to an emergency room? If so, when and why?
6. Do you regularly get a medical checkup? Why or why not?
7. A lot of people (especially among the middle-aged) are afraid of getting checkups. Why do you think this is so?

Speak Your Mind

Speak Your Mind Helpers

1. How often do you feel tired?

(A)

After lunch I get *drowsy* almost every day. But I take a *power nap* for about fifteen minutes and I don't have any problem the rest of the day.

(B)

It seems like I'm always tired. It doesn't matter whether I go to bed early or late or when I get up, I never have enough strength to get me through the day. I have trouble paying attention, I can hardly read or write, and I don't feel like moving around. Some people tell me that I'm suffering from a form of *depression* and that this condition is controllable. I hope so. As soon as I get the energy to do so, I'm going to see my doctor.

2. What diseases are you most afraid of?

(A)

All my adult life I've worried about cancer. A lot of my aunts and uncles have suffered from cancer, and about half of them have died from it. So I'm afraid of a family *disposition* towards getting it.

(B)

It seems to me that Alzheimer's is the worst possible illness. Sufferers may be otherwise extremely healthy and live long lives, but their minds and personalities steadily *deteriorate*. Their families no longer recognize them as being the same people they used to be, and they can no longer remember any of the happy times they've had or any of their friends or accomplishments. Even being dead would be better than living in such a condition.

3. Do you think stress influences your health?

(A)

Doctors used to link ulcers to stress, but it turns out they were completely wrong. Ulcers are really caused by a bacterium. So the relationship between stress and bad health doesn't seem to *hold water*.

(B)

I don't care what the experts say; I know that when I'm under a lot of stress my health suffers, and then when the stress *eases up* I feel better. It seems to me that a lot more research on the connection needs to be done.

4. What health problems are caused by poor diet?

(A)

A lot of diseases like scurvy and beriberi are directly caused by a dietary *deficiency*. And *malnutrition* is a problem throughout the Third World. But we don't give enough thought to the problems of *obesity*, especially in rich countries. There the problem is not insufficient but over-sufficient diet. Either extreme — not enough healthy food or too much of it — causes severe problems.

(B)

Even non-dietary diseases can be *aggravated* by poor eating habits. A sick person needs to eat sufficient quantities of food to keep his strength up, but if he eats too much he may gain excess weight and put more strain on his heart. Foods also affect the circulation, the storage of energy, and the digestion, all of which play a large role in maintaining health.

5. Did you ever go to an emergency room? If so, when and why?

(A)

The last time I went to an emergency room, none of the doctors or nurses seemed to think there were any emergencies there. Patients were sitting or lying around, many of them suffering from severe wounds or *traumas*, with no one available to take care of them. I sat there for over two hours before any doctor examined me, and then it took another two hours to get treated. I feel that I could have stayed home and let nature *heal* me, and I wouldn't have been any worse off. But then I would have *missed out* on that *inflated* bill the hospital sent me!

(B)

Last spring my appendix burst. I was immediately taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital and given first-class treatment. In less than an hour all the paperwork was completed, I was prepared for surgery, an anaesthetic was administered, and I was operated on. When I woke up I was in a regular *ward* in the hospital, but the emergency-room doctors came by every day to check up on my progress. I owe my life to their quick and professional treatment.

Speak Your Mind

Speak Your Mind Helpers

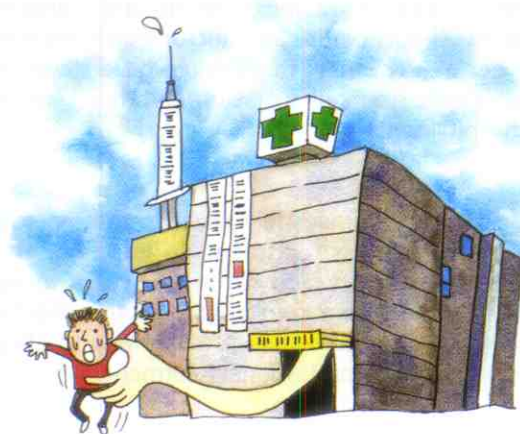
6. Do you regularly get a medical checkup? Why or why not?

(A)

I used to get a checkup every year, but I stopped. The doctor never found anything wrong with me, so he would tell me things I already knew (like “Maybe you should lose some weight” or “It would be a good idea if you stopped smoking”). Eventually this just seemed like a waste of time and money, so I quit going. And I’ve never felt better!

(B)

The older I get, the more careful I am about my health. I always get a complete *physical* every year on my birthday, and sometimes I go in every few months for some specific tests. It’s not that I feel bad; mostly, I feel pretty good. But I know that many diseases may be *at work* in my body a long time before I start feeling any effects, and that early *detection* may mean the difference between life and death. I haven’t tried death yet, so maybe I’m prejudiced, but I know at the moment I prefer life.



7. A lot of people (especially among the middle-aged) are afraid of getting checkups. Why do you think this is so?

F : I missed you yesterday. Where were you?

M : I had to go to the hospital for a checkup.

F : Why? Do you feel sick?

M : No, not at all. But I just don't want to take any chances, so I get a checkup every year.

F : Do you have your results yet?

M : No, the doctor said they'd be ready next week. But I'm not worried about them. I'm sure there aren't any problems. What about you? When did you have your last physical?

F : I don't know. It's been so long I forget.

M : That's not very smart. You're not getting any younger, you know. You need to take care of yourself.

F : I do take care of myself. I'm careful about the foods I eat, and I work out in the gym almost every day.

M : But that's not enough. You need to have some tests done, too. There might be something wrong with you that you wouldn't know about until it's too late.

F : Well, I know, but I'm just too busy to get it done. I keep *procrastinating*, and the next thing I know, another year has passed. But I'm not too worried; everything seems fine.

M : Nonsense! No matter how busy you are, you know you can take a day off to see a doctor. I think you should make an appointment right now, before you forget again.

F : No, I can't do it now. I have a big contract I'm working on and I can't afford any *distractions*. Maybe next month. Remind me then.

M : What are you afraid of?

F : Nothing. I just don't have time right now. But I'll do it. I promise.

M : I think you're worried that the doctors really will find something wrong with you. You'd rather be foolishly optimistic about your health than get bad news. But ignoring the problem and pretending it doesn't exist can be fatal, while finding out and then doing something about it could save your life. The best thing that could happen would be that the doctor can't find anything wrong with you — and then you wouldn't have to worry.

F : But the worst thing would be to find out I had an *untreatable ailment*.

M : No. The worst thing would be not finding out you had one that was treatable!

->**procrastinate** : put off doing (sth), esp. out of habit

->**distraction** : (sth) that gets one's attention and prevents one from concentrating on (sth) else

->**untreatable** : (of a patient, a disease or other condition) for whom or which no medical cure is available or possible

->**ailment** : illness, usually not a serious one