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## A Lesson from Mom: Don't Be a 'Good' Patient

Posted By [Dr. Mercola](#) | October 22 2010 | 14,322 views

Elizabeth Cohen tells the story of how her mom's outcome ended up well after she ignored her internist's advice to 'just slow down,' and sought a second opinion.

She also offers advice on how to take care of your own health to make sure that you and your health practitioner are seeing along the same lines: Ask a lot of questions, don't worry whether your doctor likes you, and remember you're paying your physician for a service.



### Sources:

[CNN Health September 30, 2010](#)

### Dr. Mercola's Comments:

Elizabeth Cohen offers some excellent patient advice in this CNN Health report:

1. **Ask lots of questions.** If you don't understand something, ask for clarification... Remember, your health depends on your ability to comprehend what the doctor is telling you.
2. **Don't worry whether your doctor likes you.** ... While it's a natural inclination to want to be liked, your health comes first and your popularity second.
3. **Remember that this is a business transaction.** You're paying the doctor for a service; you're not in a popularity contest...

Not wanting to appear "difficult" is a natural inclination that most people are likely to feel at some point or another. Couple this inclination with the conventional ideology that doctors "know best," and you could easily end up putting your health in jeopardy... especially when you feel that something is indeed wrong but your doctor isn't taking your concern seriously.

Although Cohen does not address this in her article, another factor that I'd like to remind you of is that many health care professionals are quite limited by their employment circumstances when it comes to giving you advice that might fall outside of conventional treatment protocols. In many cases doctors have to abide by "standard," conventional treatment protocols or they'll jeopardize their jobs.

This too can have a significant and detrimental impact on your health outcome.

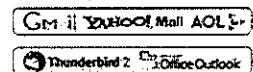
Regardless of their personal beliefs about alternative medicine, for example, they may not be allowed to discuss such options with you – even if they believe they would be safer, or even more effective. That's the system we currently have, and this is a major part of the problem with the conventional paradigm.

Doctors are not allowed to administer whatever treatment they see fit. They have to follow treatment protocols established by the hospital, which in turn may have been dictated by some insurance company...

One way of circumventing this is to *ask questions*.

They may not be able to prescribe alternatives outright (if they did, they could risk losing their medical license), but if you were to ask for their personal opinion, they may very well give it to you, or recommend an alternative health practitioner that can guide you further.

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### TRANSLATE THIS PAGE:



This does place a certain amount of responsibility onto you, the patient. Because although there may be much safer or alternative means to help with your ailment, if you go to a conventional physician, he or she is likely not going to tell you about them unless you ask, and ask in an appropriate way.

### Trust and Self-Responsibility

According to the most recent Gallup Poll from November 2009, 65 percent of people polled believed their doctors were honest and ethical.

Yet, nearly one in six patients believes their physician has made a wrong diagnosis or a treatment error, according to another recent survey. And roughly one in seven changed doctors as a result.

Clearly, there seems to be a disconnect between the amount of trust given to doctors, and the results you get in return.

However, as far as I know, there are no studies showing how involved patients are in their own care and how well they understand the system, and I believe that's a crucial part of the equation.

You clearly need to take responsibility for your own health, and also become aware of the many limitations placed on conventional care facilities, if that's where you go.

### Taking Control of Your Health

If you carefully follow some basic health principles -- simple things like exercising, eating whole foods, sleeping enough, getting sun exposure, and reducing stress in your life -- you will drastically reduce your need for conventional medical care in the first place.

But if you do end up having a health problem, it's essential to realize that you do not suddenly lose your power as an independent individual! You have the RIGHT to ask questions, to ask for second and third opinions, and you still have the right to refuse drugs or any other treatment you believe is not in your best interest.

However, discussing these things with your health care professional may be uncomfortable.

Accept that this is part of it...

Part of taking control of your health includes staying involved in your treatment, from start to finish, and not blindly handing over your decision-making capabilities to someone in a white coat -- who may or may not have the same beliefs about what constitutes 'health' as you do.

### A Healthy Lifestyle Equals Fewer Hospital Visits

With all of that in mind, prevention is clearly the best 'cure' for any health problem.

Below are my top 10 recommendations for a healthy lifestyle that will minimize the possibility of having to seek medical care in the first place.

An added bonus of following a healthy lifestyle is that when you're generally healthy, it becomes much easier to discern when something really is out of whack -- you can *feel* it, because you're more in tune with your body, and your body is not constantly reacting to side effects from various drugs or combinations of drugs.

1. **Learn to effectively address your stress** -- In my past experience treating patients with serious chronic illnesses, the vast majority have encountered previous emotional stress that they could not compensate for and then this contributed to their problem. And for most of the serious illnesses, the trauma stems back to their childhood before the age of five or six when the conscious mind forms.

Meditation, prayer, physical activity and exercise are all viable options that can help you maintain emotional and mental equilibrium. I also strongly believe in using tools such as the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) to address deeper, oftentimes hidden emotional problems.

2. **Optimize your vitamin D levels** -- Vitamin D is different from other vitamins in that it influences your entire body, from your brain to your bones. Studies have shown you can decrease your risk of cancer by MORE THAN HALF and lower your risk of many other common diseases simply by optimizing your vitamin D levels with sun exposure.
3. **Eat a healthful diet that's right for your Nutritional Type** -- My nutrition plan, based on natural whole foods, is your first step toward increasing your chances of living a longer, healthier life. The heart of my program is the elimination, or at the very least, drastic reduction of grains and sugar/fructose in your diet, while focusing on the foods that are right for your unique biochemistry.

I now also offer the entire online nutritional typing test for FREE.

4. **Eat plenty of raw food** -- Even when you choose the best foods available you can destroy most of the nutrition if you cook them. Ideally you'll want to eat as many foods as possible in their unprocessed state; typically organic, biodynamic foods that have been grown locally, and are therefore in season.

I personally try to eat about 80 percent of my food raw, including raw eggs and meats.

5. **Optimize your insulin and leptin levels** -- Eating sugar and grains will increase your insulin level, which is one of the fastest ways to premature aging.

Leptin is another heavyweight hormone associated with the aging process. Ron Rosedale, MD, one of the leading experts on leptin, does an excellent job of explaining the links between insulin, leptin, your weight and your overall health, and has done so in numerous articles posted on my site.

Your diet, as discussed in steps three and four above, is the key to maintaining the balance of these two hormones.

6. **Exercise** -- The benefits of exercise are staggering, and if you think you can achieve or maintain optimal health without it, you're deceiving yourself. To truly maximize the health benefits from exercise, I urge you to incorporate high-intensity, peak interval training exercises such as Peak 8, as this is the only type of exercise that will optimize your natural human growth hormone (HGH) production.
7. **Consume healthy fat** -- The science is loud and clear on this point: omega-3 fats are essential for optimal health. For more information, I highly recommend listening to my recent interview with industry expert Dr. Rudi Moerck, who also gives solid advice on the best sources of these vital nutrients.
8. **Limit your exposure to toxins** -- The number of toxic chemicals and their sources is so large, addressing them all could easily require an entire library, but I believe you can help you keep your toxic load as low as possible by becoming an informed and vigilant consumer.

This includes tossing out your toxic household cleaners, soaps, personal hygiene products, air fresheners, bug sprays, lawn pesticides, and insecticides, just to name a few, and replacing them with non-toxic alternatives.

For a review of some of the most common sources of household dangers, I suggest you review this previous article, or search my site for any number of different toxins by name.

9. **Make pure water your primary beverage** -- Water is absolutely essential to life. You can easily tell what your water requirement is by using your thirst and the color of your urine as guides. Your urine should be a very light-colored yellow. If it is a deep, dark yellow then you are likely not drinking enough water.

As for obtaining clean, pure water, installing a water filter in your home is your best bet. For recommendations on the methods that work best to remove impurities and toxic byproducts caused by water chlorination from your tap water, please review this previous article, Tap Water Toxins—Discover Your Three Best Solutions, Straight From the Experts.

I strongly believe that sticking as close to raw, pure, natural water as possible is your best bet, as opposed to regularly drinking distilled or alkalized water.

10. **Get plenty of quality sleep** -- As I discussed in this recent article, lack of sleep, or poor quality sleep can have a profound influence on your physical health, affecting everything from your mood and weight to your risk for heart disease and cancer. For tips on how to improve your sleep, see my recently updated article, 33 Secrets to a Good Night's Sleep.

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