This past July marked the 34th year that Alternatives has been published. This timeframe pales in comparison to publications like The Hartford Courant, the country’s oldest newspaper in continuous publication since 1764, or Scientific American, the oldest continuously published magazine in the US, which came out in 1845.

However, there are very few, if any, other health newsletters that have continuously published hard copy issues for that length of time.

July was also the month when the decision was made to wind down the publication of Alternatives, with this issue being the final one. The decision wasn’t totally unexpected, considering how much technology and the world have changed in the past 30-plus years. The majority of the population now gets information digitally. It’s timelier and far more cost effective.

I want to thank you for all your support throughout the years. I hope you will continue to follow me on the various online and social media outlets that I’ll mention later. Followers like you, who have trusted my work, have made it possible for me to continue to research and publish information that is often unavailable from any other source.

In this final issue of Alternatives, I want to cover some health guidelines that haven’t changed since I started this newsletter—*and will never change*. Practicing them has allowed thousands of people to prevent disease, and tens of thousands more to help restore their health over the years.

These are some of the guiding principles that I follow when evaluating and sorting through the latest “breakthroughs” or “miracles” touted in the headlines. And the same tools, tips, and techniques that I’ve been discussing for more than three decades are just as relevant today as they’ve ever been—if not more so.

**Definition of Health**

In the very first issue of Alternatives, I talked about the definition of health. One of the best definitions I’ve ever come across went something like this: *Health is the state of body and mind, in which the body is not consciously present to its owner. When you’re healthy, you think, eat, sleep, and move about enjoying your life to the fullest.*

Obviously, I’m talking about ultimate health—the kind of health most of us were able to experience as children. Bounce out of bed in the morning, run and play all day, collapse into bed at night, experience deep sleep... rinse and repeat.

Although our goal should always be to strive for ultimate health, the wear and tear of age and indiscretions start to throw in a few speed bumps that can manifest into full-blown roadblocks. While I’m appreciative and ever-hopeful that new discoveries—stem cell rejuvenation, joint replacement surgery, and even cancer treatment—may help us along the way, we are each responsible for our own health. And there are some very basic laws of nature that you can always rely on, regardless of any health problem you may face.

While technology is advancing at breakneck speed, our bodies haven’t changed much since creation. They still need the same raw materials—in the way of food, vitamins, and minerals—to grow, repair, and survive. They still need...
to be stretched, strengthened, and exercised. They still require the same amount of darkness, along with rest and quality sleep. They still need clean air and water. They also need the ability to remove waste material.

**Modern Conveniences Make Us Unhealthier**

Regardless of what some television commercials may say, there’s no drug (and there never will be) that can take the place of these essential elements. However, ensuring that we supply our bodies with these elements is getting more and more difficult.

Our food and water, social habits, everyday stresses, environment, and interaction with others will change more in the next decade than they have in the last few centuries.

Water is already being replaced with sodas and a multitude of highly sweetened and flavored drinks. Food is becoming more and more processed, shelf stable, and “ready to eat.” Shopping is done online with products delivered to either your car or doorstep. Social media, cell phones, streaming movies, working at home, and online computer gaming are taking the place of face-to-face interactions and outdoor activities. Some schools no longer require physical education or any form of exercise. Families rarely gather regularly for Sunday brunch or evening meals to discuss the day’s activities.

All of these changes are being sold as conveniences that will enrich our lives and make them easier and more meaningful. However, if we’re not careful, these “conveniences” can drive us further and further away from the basics of true health.

Keep in mind, I’m not talking about today’s definition of health, which has already been redefined. (Today, regardless of the amount of medication needed, anyone over 60 that can get out of the recliner and make it to the dinner table and back, and then occasionally take a car ride or plane trip to another dinner table, is considered “generally healthy.”) I’m talking about health as I described it earlier. In most cases, our actions (or lack thereof) determine our degree of overall health.

**Look at Your Genetics and Family History**

We are blessed with a body that is designed to repair and heal itself. The human body is constantly monitoring and adjusting the way it functions in an attempt to restore itself to the original DNA code it was created with. This innate ability to adapt and heal itself is one of the body’s greatest mysteries and attributes.

We constantly hear about the importance of preventing problems like heart disease, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and dozens of other issues that plague our society as a whole. However, I would suggest looking at prevention on a more personal level—one that takes into account where your particular DNA code came from. Take a little time and trace the precise illnesses that have manifested in your family for the last few generations. Learn the actual causes of death and health history of close relatives and even distant family members.

For example, if all of your uncles on your dad’s side died from heart disease, there’s a fairly good chance you are genetically susceptible to the same problem. There’s probably even a greater susceptibility if your dad has cardiovascular problems, or if you’re the spitting image of your dad, or if everyone at the family reunion says you look like your late uncle Charlie, who died from a heart attack.

If this were the case, I would suggest adapting your diet, nutritional program, and lifestyle to what it should be if you knew you had heart disease. I think one of the best ways to prevent a disease is to act as though you already
have it. In other words, adopt the therapeutic diet, nutritional program, exercise routine, etc., before you actually develop the problem.

Analyzing your family health history to uncover potential weaknesses or susceptibilities is just the first step. After that, delve a little deeper to see if there are other known factors or triggers that allow these genetic susceptibilities to develop.

For example, multiple sclerosis (MS) tends to have a correlation with vitamin D levels. Epidemiologists have shown that cases of MS are much higher in countries that are located farthest from the equator, where there is less sun exposure that allows the body to naturally produce vitamin D. So if you have a family history of MS, you would want to make sure you are taking plenty vitamin D.

On a more personal note, practically all of my mother’s brothers had heart issues (and everyone thinks I look like both my mother and my Uncle Bill). This has triggered me to adapt a more intensive heart-healthy lifestyle.

But I also know that cardiovascular disease can have strong connections to systemic inflammation. Two primary sources of chronic inflammation are periodontal disease and an imbalance of bacteria in the lower bowel. This had prompted me to pay particular attention to my dental and gut health. Regular teeth cleanings and the use of both oral and intestinal probiotics are also part of my health regimen.

On the flipside, the physical characteristics of my brother and sister tend to favor my dad and his side of the family. The health history of my dad’s family is much different from that of my mom’s. As such, their regimen to prevent harmful genetic expressions are somewhat different than mine.

Family history is a very powerful and predictive tool that needs to be strongly considered for disease prevention. Children tend to grow up and repeat the habits of their parents. Kids often cook like their mothers or fathers, who taught them. Children of parents who smoke are more likely to smoke. Children with parents who drink excessively are more prone to do the same. If you want to avoid the ill effects of past generations and break that cycle, you have to stop repeating their past harmful habits.

**Diet Is the Foundation**

One of the key elements to preventing and recovering from any disease is diet. I have no doubt whatsoever that one of the major detrimental factors involved in practically every disease process is the consumption of sugar and other refined carbohydrates. Research has repeatedly shown it has helped fuel the current epidemics of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, fatty liver disease, cognitive decline, cancer, accelerated skin and cellular aging, arthritis, gout, periodontitis, kidney disease, and many other issues.

Eliminating or reducing sugar and simple carbohydrate consumption is essential if you’re serious about maintaining your health. If you’re not convinced, try kicking the habit for 30 days. You’ll really feel the difference.

Here’s another tip that will make it easier to make this change. When you get a craving for sugar, eat a piece of whole fruit (not fruit juice or dried fruit).

Fruit does contain two kinds of natural sugar: fructose and glucose, typically in equal proportions. However, they are metabolized differently in the body than processed sugar, thanks to a combination of other cofactors like vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, fiber, and water. These tend to slow the absorption process, lessening the need for insulin and increasing the body’s ability to metabolize the
natural sugars instead of storing them as fat.

Also, when it comes to our diet, I think it will become more and more important to recognize the effects technology is having on the food we consume. We tend to get mesmerized by the ever-increasing variety of snacks, shelf-stable foods, and new food products that are being introduced. Most people have started to choose convenience over content. Using raw ingredients and cooking from scratch is becoming a rarity.

From a health standpoint, our society is headed in the wrong direction based on our food choices. As we’ve shifted to a diet filled with more processed foods, our overall health has deteriorated. All the while, we ignore that history has repeatedly shown that one of the quickest ways to regain health is to revert back to a natural, basic, clean, unprocessed diet.

Two great examples of this are the Paleo and Mediterranean diets. While they differ in many ways, both incorporate minimally processed foods over processed ones. Both stress the importance of consuming a variety of vegetables, natural fats, and other foods that our ancestors lived on. And both steer clear of processed sugar.

Followers of these diets report the same positive changes in their health that have been demonstrated in study after study. These diets have been shown to both treat and reduce the risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, and arthritis.

Although we know these diets (I hate to refer to them as diets… they are really permanent styles of eating) are essential tools to disease prevention and longevity, it seems like they have to be “rediscovered” every 10 or so years.

If you haven’t already, I would strongly suggest you begin to incorporate one of these or a combination of these diets into your lifestyle. Not only can it help reverse any health problem you might have, it will keep you from getting caught up in the health-robbing convenience food roller coaster, like the majority of our society. If your goal is to live longer and disease free, you can’t follow the standard American diet.

I’m not naïve enough to believe that everyone can consume a perfect diet all the time. I certainly don’t. It’s practically impossible if you travel, eat out, try new foods, celebrate the holidays, have children, etc. Personally, I shoot for trying to eat right 90–95 percent of the time. If I hit 85 percent, I’m happy. Knowing I can’t do it 100 percent of the time is just one of the reasons I take supplements every day.

And speaking of supplements...

Supplements Fill In the Gaps

Dietary supplements are another one of the health tools I highly recommend incorporating on a regular basis. As I just mentioned, if you live a typical American life, it’s difficult to eat right all the time. Supplements can go a long way in making up for many shortcomings.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that around 10 percent of the population has one or more nutritional deficiencies. I suspect the percentage is actually much higher than that.

For one, their figures are often based on the “recommended daily intake,” which is the amount needed to keep you alive, not the amount necessary to achieve optimal health.

Here’s a short list of the more common nutritional deficiencies in this country:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin B6
- Vitamin B12
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin E
- Calcium
- Copper
- Folate (Vitamin B9)
- Iodine
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Potassium

It’s important to keep in mind just how prevalent digestive issues are in this country. Even if you ingest the recommended daily intake of a vitamin or mineral, it certainly doesn’t mean it is being absorbed or assimilated by the body.

The latest figures show one-third of all Americans experience heartburn every month, and 15 million experience it every day. That’s why antacid sales top $10 billion annually. In addition to antacids, there are 15 million taking prescription acid blockers (PPIs) and even more people taking the over-the-counter PPIs.

Both antacids and PPIs interfere with the digestion of protein and
minerals. The use of PPIs has been linked to a 17 percent higher death risk from cardiovascular disease, stomach cancer, and chronic kidney disease.

Antacids and PPIs aren’t the only drugs that deplete vitamins and minerals from the body. All drugs—every single one of them—have side effects. And many of those side effects can be traced back to either the interference or depletion of various vitamins and minerals. If you take any medication, you should be taking supplements.

It is for these reasons that I highly recommend taking a high-quality multivitamin/mineral supplement every single day—preferably one that includes digestive enzymes. A good supplement will also contain every single one of the vitamins, minerals, and compounds found on the list of common deficiencies.

Without the 24-hour cellular support and antioxidant activity provided by vitamins and minerals, the immune system is compromised. You never know when an exposure to some environmental toxin, poor food choice, sun ray, virus, bacterium, etc. is going to trigger a cellular mutation or other event in the body that might lead to cancer or another harmful cascade of events.

Hardly a year has gone by in the last 40 that we haven’t seen some study claiming that vitamins are unnecessary and a waste of money. Many doctors still tell their patients that vitamins do nothing but produce expensive urine, or that vitamins probably won’t hurt you but they won’t help either. Don’t believe it. Thousands of studies have shown otherwise.

Supplements are what my dad calls “cheap insurance,” and I couldn’t agree more.

I take numerous supplements, and many of those are based on my family health history, as well as potential health threats that might arise from my own activities and lifestyle.

For example, I routinely lift weights, so I want to supplement with things that support joint health and flexibility. I’ve also found that I feel and function better by providing additional support to my adrenal glands and thyroid. As a subscriber, you’ve probably read past articles where I’ve outlined how you can self-check for adrenal and thyroid issues, and how to support them nutritionally. If you don’t have these articles, you can find them on my website.

Each of us are biochemically different. We eat differently. Our activity levels, stress levels, and environments are different. As such, each of our nutritional needs will differ and I can’t cover all the various situations in this article. But, in addition to a multivitamin, a quality probiotic is the other supplement I believe everyone in this country should be taking daily.

In a nutshell, the organisms that reside in our gut make up the majority of our body’s immune system, manufacture necessary vitamins, influence brain activity, aid in the digestive process, and have a direct influence on inflammation levels throughout the body. In short, we can’t be healthy without a healthy intestinal microbiome.

Unfortunately, that microbiome is under assault every single day from factors like chlorinated water, medications, food preservatives and additives, excess dietary sugars, and environmental toxins.

Consistent consumption of fermented and high-fiber foods and probiotic supplements are the only ways to maintain a healthy microbiome.

Granted, if you eat a perfect diet with a wide variety of fermented and high-fiber foods every day, then maybe you don’t need a probiotic supplement. Personally, I try, but sometimes fall short. That’s why I also take a probiotic every single day…to fill in the gaps. Again, it is “cheap insurance.” I’d rather pay a little money now for prevention than pay a lot of money later for treatment.

Clean Water Is Essential

I mentioned chlorinated water and how it can disrupt the microbiome in the gut. Chlorine’s ability to destroy bacteria is why it is added to water in the first place. Unfortunately, chlorine doesn’t distinguish between harmful and beneficial bacteria. It kills all bacteria. And it doesn’t just destroy bacteria in the gut, it also disrupts the beneficial bacteria that reside in the bladder and urinary tract.

Besides air, water is the one item that you introduce every single day into your body. For the majority of the population here in the US, that water is chlorinated. Although chlorine has made water safer to drink and saved millions of lives, most people don’t realize that it can also cause bladder cancer. Studies have shown a 2.6-fold increase in bladder cancer in individuals under 65 years of age who drank chlorinated water and a 3-fold
increase in those over 65 years of age.

The longer you drink chlorinated water, the greater your risk of developing bladder cancer. (Also, surface water typically contains more chlorine than ground water. Surface water has much higher levels of organic contamination from runoff and manmade chemicals from industrial, municipal, and sewer waters.)

The ill effects of drinking chlorinated water may not be noticeable overnight, or even after a few years. Irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, leaky gut syndrome, Crohn’s disease, or other digestive tract issues may become a problem. However, rarely will doctors ever ask these patients if, or how long, they’ve been drinking tap water.

If you have no choice but to drink chlorinated tap water, there are some easy, inexpensive methods to neutralize the chlorine.

You can simply draw the water into a pitcher and let it sit on the counter before drinking it. It takes time, though, depending on temperature, surface exposure, etc. For example, 10 gallons can require as long as four and a half days for the chlorine to diffuse and evaporate. Ultraviolet light (sunlight), heating, boiling, agitation, and aeration speed up the process considerably.

Chlorine can also be removed through a carbon or charcoal filter. Reverse osmosis units often incorporate carbon block filters for this purpose, or you could buy a filtration pitcher.

Another easy method is to add vitamin C to the water, which can neutralize chlorine almost instantly. You can use either ascorbic acid or sodium ascorbate. Ascorbic acid is slightly acidic, which will lower the pH of the water. Sodium ascorbate is neutral and won’t change the pH and is probably the best choice, especially if anyone in the family experiences bowel issues. Roughly 2.5 grams (2,500 mg) of either will neutralize about five gallons of tap water. (Sodium ascorbate has been used for decades to neutralize the chlorine in tap water so it can safely be used in aquariums without killing the fish.)

You can buy food-grade, bulk sodium ascorbate from Bulk Supplements (bulksupplements.com). It’s relatively inexpensive. They sell a kilogram for just over $20. In addition to neutralizing the chlorine in your water, you have the added benefit of getting a little extra vitamin C.

Personally, I’m surprised that water quality isn’t a bigger issue in this country. Although all municipal water supplies are treated to eliminate bacteria and other pathogenic organisms, few are filtered and treated to remove herbicide and pesticide residue, medications, and other known contaminants. It’s probably because the side effects of these chemicals show up so much later in the population that it is hard to make the connection, and there’s no feasibly economical method of testing for, much less removing, all these chemicals.

Sleep Is Still Underappreciated

Sleep quality is another area that needs to be addressed if you want truly good health. Lack of sleep is so common in our society that it’s joked about more than it’s taken seriously.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that as many as two-thirds of all Americans don’t get enough sleep. It’s one problem I’ve personally had to work on for my own health.

I have to work to clear my mind before I go to sleep at night. Otherwise, I tend to work all night in a dazed slumber trying to solve all the world’s problems. Afterward, I wake up exhausted, and without any solutions.

Most people just accept and try to compensate for sleep issues rather than solve them. That’s a huge mistake. It’s well worth whatever time and effort it takes to correct sleep issues.

Our body requires consistent amounts of sleep for growth and never-ending repairs. Restoring proper sleep patterns can help correct everything from chronic fatigue, high blood pressure, and cardiovascular disease to poor metabolism and depression.

Every cell is affected by the body’s internal 24-hour clock known as the circadian rhythm. The circadian rhythm influences changes in body temperature, respiration, blood pressure, hormone levels, alertness, and the sleep-wake cycle.

If you have sleep issues, re-synchronizing your circadian rhythm is one of the first orders of business. Ideally, you want to maximize the difference between when you should have peak alertness during the day and maximum rest during the night.
This allows the hormone melatonin to work its magic.

Melatonin is produced by the pineal gland, which is located in the brain, just behind the eyes. Melatonin production is regulated by light entering the eyes. It is the key player in regulating the circadian rhythm.

(As we age, melatonin production begins to drop. Ideally, the goal is to return levels to those we had in our 20s. If you’re in your 40s, this can be accomplished by taking up to 2 mg; in your 50s, up to 2.5 mg; in your 60s and early 70s, up to 5 mg. If you’re over 75, take 5 mg. (In most circumstances, I don’t recommend that anyone younger than 40 take melatonin. At that age, the body should be making adequate amounts, and sleep problems can be corrected with other methods outlined below.)

Melatonin should always be taken at bedtime. As your body clock resets, you may need to adjust the dosage. If you feel “hung over” or have difficulty waking in the morning, cut back on the dosage accordingly.

While melatonin can be a very useful tool, it’s not always the end-all solution. There are other factors or “disrupters” that can override its effects, and these disrupters need to be eliminated. To do that:

* Make your room as dark as possible. It’s very important to sleep in a completely dark room. Otherwise the light will stop your pineal gland’s natural production of melatonin. Make sure any light from a window, under the door, television, alarm clock, or other appliance is off or covered. If this isn’t possible, wear a sleep mask.

* Keep a regular schedule. Going to bed and arising on a regular schedule will help keep the circadian rhythm intact.

* Minimize light exposure before bedtime. The blue light from computers, mobile phones, and televisions just prior to bedtime can be a major disrupter. Computers and most phones now have a night setting to help reduce this exposure. But it is best to just refrain from their use at least an hour before bedtime.

* Treat sleep apnea/snoring. These can be serious issues and need to be corrected or treated. It may require a prescribed CPAP device.

* Limit stimulants. Drink caffeine earlier in the day. Avoid heavy or spicy meals near bedtime. Don’t exercise or engage in stimulating activities just before bedtime.

* Limit alcohol. Although alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant, it can interfere with sleep and increase snoring. The sedative effect on the muscles in the jaw and throat causes them to collapse into the airway, restricting airflow.

* Keep your blood sugar in check. If you go to sleep quickly but wake up after a few hours, this can be a sign of weakened adrenal glands (hypoadrenia). If blood sugar drops too low during the night and the adrenals are too weak to compensate, your body will awaken in an effort to stimulate the adrenals. Additionally, you can consume a small amount of uncooked cornstarch with water at bedtime and it will help prevent a drop in blood sugar during the night (1 to 2 tablespoons in water, milk, or yogurt).

And Finally, Exercise

Love it or hate it, you can’t avoid exercise. It is a critical component to good health that will never be outdated or replaced by a drug. Every couple of years, there’s some study claiming researchers have discovered a drug that supposedly delivers the same benefits as exercise. Don’t wait for that one to become available.

Drugs like methamphetamines (“speed”) can increase metabolism, cause weight loss, and mimic some aspects of exercise. However, their actions are far from natural. They are highly addictive and destroy the body. Drugs like these don’t give you energy, or anything other than misery. They stimulate or force the body to greatly increase or decrease functions it would normally perform at a controlled and reasonable degree.

Our bodies are designed for, and need, exercise. I don’t need to repeat all the benefits. Everyone
knows them. I’m a firm believer in exercise. It’s the one thing that helps you to keep functioning at a much higher level as you age. You may have a different incentive, but exercise has allowed me continue to participate in other activities that I enjoy.

Don’t get me wrong, I am not always in the mood to exercise. At times, staying motivated is a struggle, to say the least. But two key factors have helped keep me on track.

First, I established an initial benchmark and keep a written record of my progress. When I feel like I’m not accomplishing anything worthwhile, I go back to my notes to see the progress I’ve made. It may be how much more weight I can lift, how many more pullups or pushups I can do, how far or fast I walk/run, etc. When I can see change and improvement, it motivates me to keep going.

Second, I force (more like trick) myself into being consistent. There are days when I’m just not up to exercising for 45 minutes or an hour. So I make myself exercise for 5 or 10 minutes, and then stop. While it may seem like a waste of time, mentally I didn’t skip that day. Whether you exercise every day or three times a week, once you start skipping, it’s much easier keep skipping and quit altogether. Worse, it’s then much harder to get started again. At least that’s the way it is for me.

It’s never too late to start. Walking combined with light weightlifting is great, but regardless of what form of exercise you choose, start slow. For me, I worry more about exercising safely than breaking records. Recovering from injuries takes longer as I’ve gotten older.

If you still have a negative view of exercise and it seems boring, repetitious, and something that requires a lot of thought, equipment, or effort, watch this short video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycJwrwYyGM or search for “Never Stop Playing.” It proves that exercise can be whatever you want it be.

**Thank You, and I’ll See You Online...**

I have spent my entire adult life searching for ways to improve health and cure disease. Alternatives has been the vehicle that has allowed me to share those findings with you and hundreds of thousands of other people. I’m honored and will be forever grateful that you’ve been a part of this journey. Rest assured, my searching the world for health-promoting tools and techniques is not going to end...just the method of sharing that information will.

Communicating through Facebook, drwilliams.com, and healthydirections.com will allow us to have more direct and timely interactions. I’m excited to now have the ability to communicate with you not only through articles, but also through videos and live online events.

As always, I value and welcome your feedback and questions. After all, I’m here for, and because of, you. I look forward to continuing this journey with you. And don’t forget to invite your friends and loved ones along as well.