



THE LIGHTNING ROUND

If you had one of the world's foremost medical experts cornered at a party, what would you ask him?

By DR. MEHMET OZ

Is reading in dim light actually bad for your eyes?

No. You'll probably get a tension headache from all that squinting, but your eyesight isn't affected at all.

When someone sneezes and touches a doorknob, how long before the germs disappear?

In general, the time viruses live outside the body varies with

the type of germ and whatever surface they're sitting on. For the common cold, you can figure anything from 4 to 24 hours. Wash your hands.

What do you personally use on your face after you shave?

Dr. Perry's DaySkin from New Vitality, because it has a mechanical sunblock (zinc oxide). Chemical sunblocks usually have to

be absorbed for 15 or 20 minutes before you get protection. But the important thing is to use an aftershave that contains sun protection, period.

All those powdered drinks that supposedly help ward off the flu: bullshit?

Bullshit.

There's nothing wrong with my skin that I can see, but someone told me it's a good idea to see a dermatologist once in a while. Do you agree?

For the most part, your skin takes care of itself, so I'm not big on seeing a dermatologist unless you actually think there's something wrong. Now, what's wrong could be obvious, like a rash that won't go away. But unfortunately, the big thing that could be wrong, melanoma—the deadliest form of skin cancer—isn't obvious unless you know what to look for, so remember the ABCD rule: If you have a mole or other mark that's Asymmetrical, that has irregular Borders, that isn't a solid Color, and/or has a Diameter greater than a pencil eraser's, see a doctor. Check yourself every month or so.

You don't hear people talking about MSG anymore. Did it turn out not to be bad for you after all?

The panic that surrounded MSG appears to have been unfounded. It's simply not toxic in the levels you encounter in food. But it does cause some people to become flushed, wheezy, or headachy. If you're one of them, just avoid it.

How come cold weather makes your joints stiffer and in warm weather they feel looser? Isn't it always 98 degrees inside the body?

In the winter, you have less vitamin D because you're getting less sun, which means some

of your immune functions become weaker. So you end up with a less resilient body across the board, and that tends to result in stiffness. Try taking a vitamin D₃ supplement during the winter in addition to your daily multivitamin.

I'm looking for a new physician. What's the single most important skill a doctor can have?

That they treat people like you. They'll be familiar with all the common (and not-so-common) issues people your age face. And, not to be morbid, but you want your doctor to be around your age or younger (unless you're 17). That way you can have a doctor for life, and that continuity is a big help in diagnosing and predicting problems as you age.

I want to be healthier. I don't want to have flab. I don't want to get winded. What can I do?

Without question: Walk more. It's simple, you won't get hurt, and it's the foundation of every other physical program. But it has to be automatic—you can't have to think about it every day. So just pick one simple thing—I'm not using the elevator anymore, or I'm not going to drive to our local store—that from now on you're going to do to be more physically active. It'll add up. The Amish walk more than 14,000 steps a day, and they have an obesity rate under 5 percent.

What is the healthiest candy bar? If you had to pick one.

Any dark chocolate with nuts (not peanuts—the kind that grow on trees). Nuts contain good fats and fiber. And compared with milk chocolate, dark is lower in saturated fat and full of antioxidants called flavonoids.

Dr. Mehmet Oz is a heart surgeon and the coauthor of You: Being Beautiful.

▶ A CELEBRATION OF UTTER UTILITY: THE OCCLUSAL GUARD

Two words will save you many thousands of dollars: *occlusal guard*. If your dentist hasn't mentioned it—and chances are, the bastard hasn't—tell him you want one. Pronto. Because every night, you, me, and the Dalai Lama are inclined to grind our teeth in our sleep. And our teeth—and our old fillings—will wear down, costing us a grand or two to fix and crown each, at least. Trust me, this is true. I have lived it. A fitted guard will help prevent these things. No, it isn't sexy. Nor, I'm sad to say, are you. But at least you can be smart.

—SCOTT RAAB

