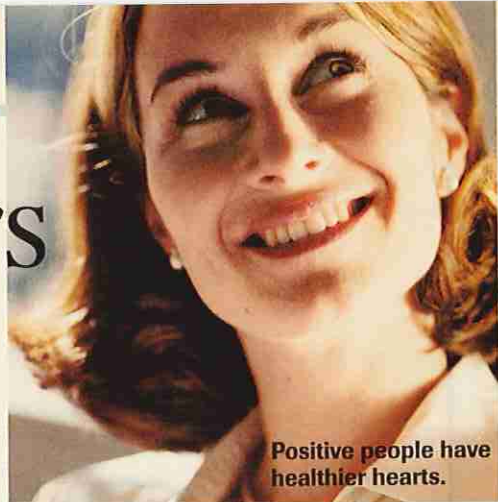


# Healing Powers of Optimism



Positive people have healthier hearts.

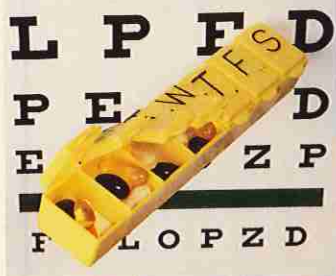
**O**ptimists are not only happier, they may also be healthier. A recent report shows that positive people may have a lower risk for heart disease. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University evaluated 586 men and women between the ages of 30 and 59 who had a family history of heart disease. Study participants took a questionnaire about their well-being and outlook on life, they had their body fat measured and also took tests to determine blood pressure, blood sugar and blood fat levels. Their health was re-

evaluated 5 to 12 years later. Researchers discovered that people who had a brighter outlook on life had half as many heart attacks, sudden death incidents and other cardiac problems. One possible explanation for this is that positive thinkers may produce lower levels of stress hormones, which helps protect them from disease. While more research is needed, a positive outlook appears promising as an important protector against heart disease, says senior study author Diane M. Becker, Sc.D., M.P.H.

## New Eye Savers

A combination of supplements may reduce the likelihood of developing the advanced form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) by 25 percent in those who are at risk for the disease, according to a new study. (AMD is the top cause of blindness among people age 65 and over.) This is exciting news because this is the first time a possible preventive treatment has been discovered for AMD, says

Emily Chew, M.D., deputy director of epidemiology and clinical research at the National Eye Institute. Researchers found that the following daily dosages delayed the progression of AMD: 500 mg of vitamin C, 400 IU of vitamin E, 25,000 IU of beta-carotene, 80 mg of zinc along with 2 mg of copper. Before taking these supplements, be sure to check with your doctor.



## Women in Danger

Fifty-five percent of women avoid going to the gynecologist, according to an American Social Health Association survey. Even more alarming, 43 percent are self-diagnosing conditions like yeast infections, which share symptoms (discharge, vaginal itching) with other infections, including bacterial vaginosis. Left untreated, bacterial vaginosis can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and even infertility. Women should avoid self-diagnosing vaginal infections and should visit their gynecologist at least once a year for a routine exam.

## q&a

### Can eating certain foods prevent skin wrinkles?

Yes. In one particular study, published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, researchers found that consuming lots of leafy green vegetables, onions, garlic, dried beans, fish, lentils, apples, prunes, berries, olive oil, nuts, multigrain bread and tea protects against actinic skin damage, which can lead to wrinkles. Skip butter, fatty processed meat, full-fat dairy and sugary treats, which may promote skin damage.



Christine Brophy is an editorial assistant at FAMILY CIRCLE.

### Ritalin Warning

Preliminary data show that methylphenidate (Ritalin) causes longer-lasting changes in brain function than previously believed. These changes are similar to those caused by other stimulants such as cocaine and amphetamines. Fortunately, there is no evidence this drug causes addiction or leads to drug abuse. However, more research is needed to determine its effects on the brain.

University of Buffalo

### Hope for Osteoporosis

A new drug is in development for osteoporosis, a disease that affects 8 million women. Currently under review by the FDA, the drug Forteo builds bone mass and reduces the risk of breaking a bone by up to 53 percent.

PhRMA

### Advice for Caregivers

Women who provide care to ill or disabled relatives may be at risk for stress-induced illnesses, but can significantly improve their health by exercising four times a week. Caregivers who exercise were found to sleep better and have lowered blood pressure reactivity in response to stress, which may lower their risk of heart and blood pressure problems.

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