

Self-Care Simplicity

Live Long, Live Well

It has been said, “Health is not valued until sickness comes.” Sadly, most people don’t understand the true value of their health...until they lose it. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

In fact, we now know that if people pay attention to managing their health and medical care—and work closely with their healthcare providers—it is possible to lead a long, healthy, and productive life.

And isn’t that what a great life is really all about... living long and living well?

The Benefits of Good Health

Think about the last time you were hurt, sick, or just not feeling well. If you’re like most people, you know that when that happens, it’s hard to be at the top of your game...whether you were trying to get things done at work, taking care of things at home, or just trying to enjoy yourself in your spare time. Plain and simple, not feeling well is a drag.

Now think about the times when you were at your best. There’s a big difference between the two, don’t you think? In fact, when people are in good health they’re more productive, they enjoy life to the fullest, they feel good about themselves, they appreciate the company of others, and they have a much greater sense of control. If you choose it, better health can be yours.

Practicing Self-Care

The information contained in this guide is designed to help you better manage your own health and get the most from your healthcare provider.

And, if followed, the information contained in this simple guide will have you back on the road to better health almost immediately.

As you begin moving forward with the notion of better managing your own health, it’s important to understand that this can best be done by working closely with your healthcare provider. In fact, developing and maintaining a meaningful and positive relationship with your healthcare provider will ensure that your health—and your family’s health—is in the best hands possible.

Your Self-Care Essentials

This book, ***Self-Care Essentials***, is a simple guide to managing your health care and living well. Within the following pages, you will find important information that will help you get you and your loved ones feeling better faster.

In addition to the latest information that will help you to better manage the conditions associated with not feeling well, we’ve included important information that will help you stay healthy for the long run.

The Simplicity of Self-Care Essentials

Managing your healthcare and living well doesn’t have to be a complicated proposition. That’s why we developed ***Self-Care Essentials*** as a guide that specifically addresses the main reasons why people seek healthcare and/or visit an emergency room in the first place. What’s really amazing is that when you look at the list of why people end up in the E.R. or choose to seek healthcare, many of the reasons are potentially avoidable. And that’s what this book is all about.

Coming to Terms

What Self-Care ISN'T

Many people are absolutely terrified by the thought of treating themselves or making their own healthcare decisions. Understandably, our healthcare is serious business. At the same time, self-care doesn't involve performing major surgery—or surgery at all, for that matter.

Self-care also doesn't involve memorizing complex medical terms or conditions, and it doesn't involve strange home remedies, séances, or chants. Finally, self-care isn't intended to replace the advice of your physician or healthcare provider. These individuals play an integral role on the healthcare team—and for good reason.

What Self-Care IS

If self-care isn't crystal healing or some strange home remedy, then what exactly is it?

Self-care simply means caring for yourself—it doesn't get much more straightforward than that. In essence, self-care is all about becoming an informed healthcare consumer. It's about asking, “Do I really need to see a healthcare provider, or are there things I can do to take care of the condition myself?” It's also about prevention—taking care of yourself and your family to prevent illnesses in the first place.

At first, self-care may seem like a scary proposition. However, the following information will help you better understand the concept of self-care and how you can use it to improve your health and the health and well-being of your loved ones.

Why Is Self-Care Important?

Self-care is important simply because a big part of our medical conditions and symptoms can be treat-

ed without professional medical assistance. That's right, more times than not, we can treat ourselves in the comfort of our own homes.

Consider the following statistics—they'll shed some light on just how often we visit the healthcare provider in situations when it's actually not necessary.

Consider this...

- » A significant portion of all healthcare visits are unnecessary.
- » Over 1/3 of all minor medical conditions can be treated without a trip to a healthcare facility.

Source: Larry Chapman

What You Can Learn From Self-Care

By learning more about medical self-care, you'll better understand whether your health concern requires you to get professional intervention or medical attention. Again, a large number of medical conditions and ailments can be treated safely at home. Self-care will help you recognize these conditions, and help you treat them without a costly trip to your healthcare provider's office or the emergency room.

Likewise, there are situations when going to a healthcare provider is the best course of action. Self-care will help you identify these situations and help you determine how soon you should seek medical attention if it's needed.

Self-care will also help you address a number of common injuries and illnesses in your own home. In fact, ***Self-Care Essentials*** contains specific

sections on chronic conditions and common illnesses with step-by-step instructions that will help you take charge when a minor medical situation arises.

How You Can Benefit From Self-Care

There's no denying it, healthcare costs are going up. Doctor's appointments, emergency room visits, and hospital stays aren't cheap. In fact, healthcare costs have been rising about twice as fast as people's incomes. In preventing unnecessary healthcare and emergency room visits, self-care has the potential of saving you money throughout the course of the year.

Additionally, self-care will help you save time. Considering travel time, time spent in the waiting room, the time you're with your provider, and your commute home, a trip to a healthcare provider or emergency room can be a time-consuming

venture. But by practicing self-care you'll save time.

And don't forget that practicing self-care can also instill in you a sense of confidence, allowing you to accurately determine if, and when, professional medical assistance is needed.

Finally, practicing self-care makes you an informed consumer, allowing you to take control of your health and the health of your family. This control will help you make better health decisions—whether preventive or urgent.

Remember, practicing medical self-care need not be a daunting proposition. In fact, the more you learn about managing your own health—and working closely with your healthcare provider—the more comfortable you'll feel with the whole process. Sure, there will be some tension associated with learning new things, but in time you can be a master when it comes to self-care.

The information contained in this book has been developed to help you better understand how to treat minor ailments and better manage certain medical conditions.

The information contained in this book is not meant to replace the advice of your healthcare provider.

It's important to understand that medical information changes quickly, so if you have questions or are unsure about how to handle a specific medical condition or health concern, always contact your physician, health care provider, or 24-hour nurse line.

The information contained in this medical self-care guide can be used to increase your personal awareness of how to manage minor health issues. If you have any questions or concerns about medical issues impacting you or your family, always contact your health care provider.



Information You Can Use

Information Is Power

As our nation's healthcare system continues to advance and evolve at a rapid pace, making confident decisions about personal and family health becomes increasingly difficult and confusing. But the fact is, it doesn't have to be. Armed with the right information, you can take command over your health and healthcare. That's what this book is designed to do.

Self-Care Essentials: A Simple Guide to Managing Your Health Care and Living Well is a straightforward self-care book designed to instill a sense of empowerment when it comes to personal and family healthcare decisions. From cover to cover, you'll find the latest health information on the topics most essential to your health—and the health of your family. In the following pages, you'll learn about...

Chapter 1: Common Conditions

Many of the common conditions we face in life aren't life threatening, or debilitating in the long run. But these common conditions are almost always discomforting and troublesome. By knowing how to recognize and respond to these conditions, you can speed healing and find relief. In the section entitled, ***Common Conditions***, you'll learn how to conquer the cold and flu; soothe a sore throat; suppress a cough; fight a fever; as well as relieve nausea and vomiting.

Chapter 2: Common Conditions II

In the second section on ***Common Conditions***, you'll learn how to fight ear infections; relieve respiratory conditions; treat urinary tract infections; as well as how to respond to eye and vision problems.



Chapter 3: Aches and Pains

Though aches and pains are a common part of life, we don't have to resign ourselves to suffering with them. In fact, there are a number of strategies to help prevent aches and pains from occurring—as well as speed healing when they do occur. In the section entitled, ***Aches and Pains***, you'll learn how to treat back pain; find relief for headaches; deal with abdominal pain like gas or diarrhea; as well as manage pain in general.

Chapter 4: Chronic Conditions

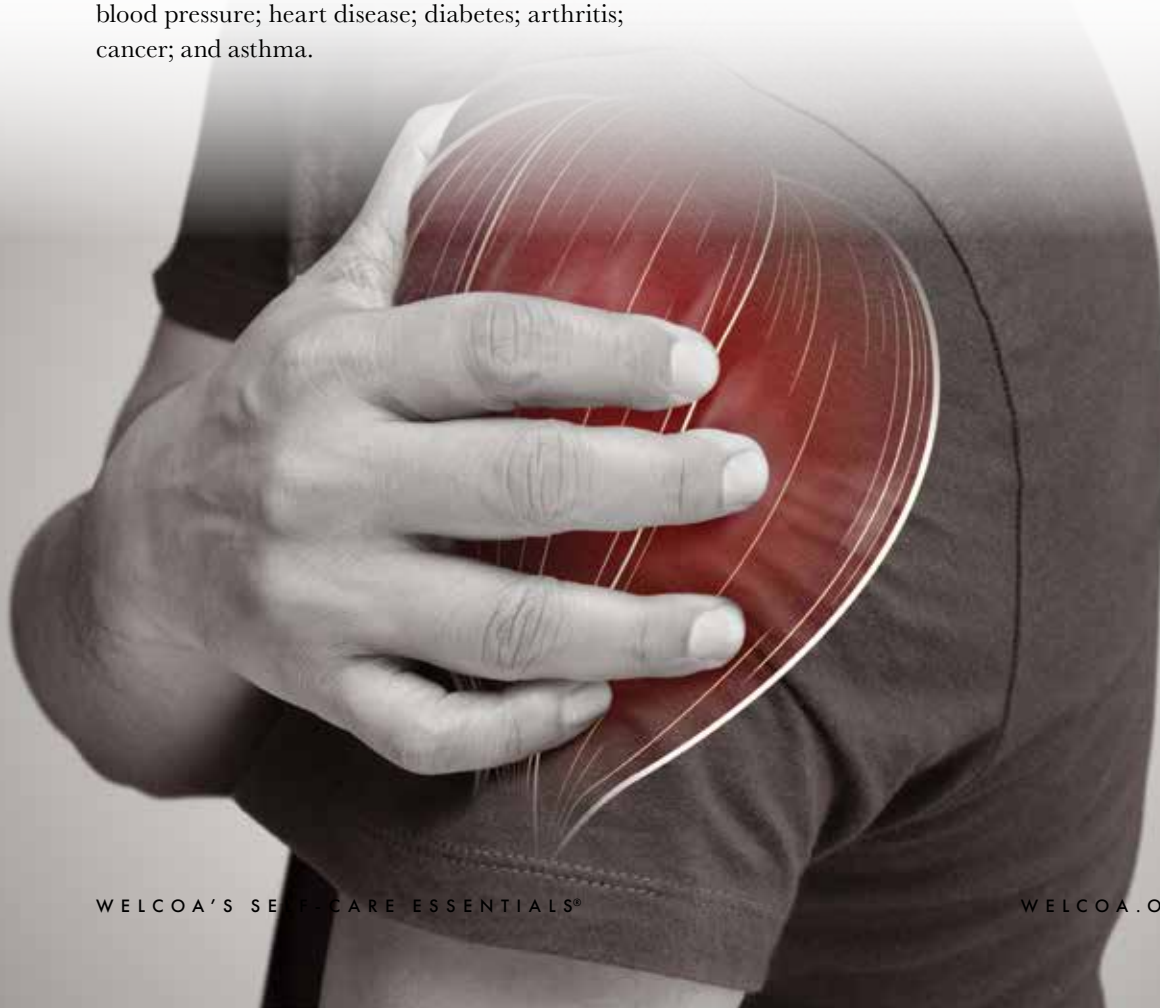
In an age of rapid medical advancements many chronic conditions like asthma and diabetes can now be managed—with the help of your healthcare professional—in the comfort of your own home. In fact, by employing the strategies outlined in this section, it's possible to live a relatively normal and healthy life, despite having a chronic condition. In the section entitled, ***Chronic Conditions***, you'll learn some valuable strategies for managing many chronic conditions including high cholesterol; high blood pressure; heart disease; diabetes; arthritis; cancer; and asthma.

Chapter 5: Medical Consumerism

Becoming a wise medical consumer is an important step to leading a long and healthy life. A wise medical consumer is able to negotiate the healthcare system with ease, as well as maximize interactions with their healthcare team. The section on ***Medical Consumerism*** outlines key information on visiting your healthcare provider; understanding medical screenings; managing medications; avoiding medical errors; and utilizing health risk appraisals.

Chapter 6: Getting Active

Most Americans get little vigorous exercise at work or during leisure hours. Today, only a few jobs still require vigorous physical activity. Evidence suggests that even low to moderate-intensity activities can have both short- and long-term benefits. In this section, you'll learn some valuable strategies for how you can increase your physical activity and reap the benefits.



Practicing Self-Care Essentials

Practice Makes Perfect

Self-Care Essentials is an important tool at your disposal for taking care of yourself, as well as your loved ones. In fact, self-care books like **Self-Care Essentials** have improved health, saved lives, and saved countless hours and dollars spent in, and on, unnecessary healthcare and emergency room visits.

But the fact of the matter is, this book won't be very helpful if you don't know how to use it, or if it isn't handy when you need it most. The following suggestions will help you maximize the power of **Self-Care Essentials** in improving your health, and the health of your family.

Read It Before You Need It

By reading **Self-Care Essentials** now, before a medical situation arises, you'll be better prepared to respond should you need to. Start by paging through the book, looking over each of the following sections to get a handle on the information within. Next, look over the sections on conditions you're most likely to experience, or that you experience frequently. Then, look over the sections on any chronic conditions that you may be experiencing.

Then, read about the remaining conditions, should those specific situations ever arise. Lastly, read the section on Medical Consumerism to find out how you can maximize your experiences within the healthcare system itself.

Becoming a well-informed medical consumer is an important part of taking control of your health and your healthcare. **Self-Care Essentials** can help you get the job done.

In addition to just treating common and non-life threatening medical issues, **Self-Care Essentials**

also helps you to prevent problems before they occur. In the last two sections of this book, we address the topics of exercise and managing weight. When practiced together, these two health behaviors can help you and your family avoid numerous health issues and increase your likelihood of living long, healthy and vibrant lives.

Keep It Handy

Keeping your self-care book in a convenient, accessible location will help to ensure that you find the answers you need, when you need them. A good place to store your self-care book is with your first-aid kit. By storing this book with your first-aid kit, you'll have the information and the tools at hand when you need them the most. Throughout this book, different self-care techniques are discussed, and often times, these techniques require the resources of your first-aid kit. Having your self-care book and first-aid kit hand-in-hand will help you respond quickly and speed relief when faced with a medical situation.

Step By Step

When a medical situation arises, **Self-Care Essentials** will help you make decisions about the best course of treatment for your condition. But remember, if you are ever in doubt about whether you need to seek professional medical assistance—SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE OR CALL 911.

The following steps will guide you through the self-care decision-making process.

Decide whether or not to seek professional medical assistance. In many cases, the information in this book will help you to better understand when you can effectively manage a healthcare concern at

home. However, there are times when it's less clear. In these instances, when you have questions or concerns, it's always wise to touch base with your healthcare provider, physician, or pharmacist.

Look up your specific condition. Each of the conditions addressed in **Self-Care Essentials** is organized in a way to help you better understand your condition and how to treat it most effectively. Once you've found your condition, refer to the specific subsections that include: About The Condition; Signs & Symptoms; When To Seek Care; Home Treatment; Frequently Asked Questions; and Prevention for more specific information about the condition you're experiencing.

Treat your condition—if appropriate. The self-care suggestions offered in the “Home Treatment”

sections under each condition are designed to help you treat your specific condition in the comfort of your own home. If you have any questions about treating your condition, contact your healthcare provider for information more specific to you. If you have any doubt about whether your condition is in need of professional medical attention, seek care immediately.

Review, Review, Review

Be sure to constantly review the information contained in **Self-Care Essentials**. The more familiar you are with the specific conditions and treatments addressed within the pages of this book, the better you will be at responding to and making confident decisions about your health, and the health of your loved ones.



Dancing With Your Doctor

Put Your Right Foot In

Interacting with your healthcare provider is a lot like dancing...and it definitely takes two to tango. Although it sounds a little bit hokey, the image of dancing with your health care provider is a pretty good one. Both parties need to do their part in order for everything to work. And, when it comes to managing your health—not to mention the health of your loved ones—the better the interaction with your healthcare provider, the better the potential outcome.

To help you interact more effectively with your healthcare provider, use these important tips.

TIP #1: Share in the Responsibility

Although this may come as a surprise, it is important to understand that your provider can't do it all—they need your help. In order to make the most out of the relationship, you must assume your fair share of the responsibility...to be a good partner, you've got to learn the right steps to take and then move in harmony with your provider.

Remember, no matter what changes or where you go, YOU are always there.

TIP #2: Keep Good Records

As you age, your medical file becomes more complex. These days, your medical record may be stored electronically with various health care providers. Plan for emergencies by having a readily available personal record of your current health status, medications, and past medical history—the information contained in the rest of this book will help you do that.

Also remember to be thorough in your collection of data—it's a good bet that your medical records will be scattered throughout different healthcare systems.

The bottom line is this: have ready access to your electronic medical record, keep a copy of all of your records or obtain a summary of office visits and hospitalizations. Specifically, you should always have the capability of knowing the following:

- » Immunizations and dates
- » A current medication list including herbs, supplements, etc.
- » Updated family history
- » Allergies
- » Operations and dates
- » Active medical illnesses

TIP #3: Know Your Numbers

Most adult Americans have had their cholesterol measured at one time, but few individuals know their total cholesterol levels or the breakdown of the good and bad cholesterol. The common response of many patients is that “my previous healthcare provider said everything was OK.” Instead, know your most recent total, LDL (bad), and HDL (good) cholesterol values, as well as triglycerides.

Also, it's a good thing to know your blood pressure readings and record them. Keep track of your weight and height, too. As you age, weight can slowly increase each year and height eventually will decrease slightly. Finally, know your fasting blood glucose (sugar) value.. These seem like simple numbers, but these may be very important values for your present healthcare provider. With obesity, diabetes, and osteoporosis (just to mention a few) increasing at an alarming rate, it's a good idea to keep close track.

Again, always obtain a copy of your tests. You may not understand the terminology, but the results may be very useful to your current healthcare provider.

TIP #4: Practice Medical Self-Care

To get the most out of the experience, keep track of your symptoms and signs. When did they begin? How have they progressed? What symptoms are you presently experiencing?

Perhaps more importantly, what have you done to address your issues? Believe it or not, a lot of conditions can be treated by you...at home.

Again, we'll cover more of this information in other sections; still you'd be surprised how useful and effective self-care can be to you and your healthcare provider.

TIP #5: Be Honest

It sounds simple, but many times, we minimize our bad behaviors. If your healthcare provider asks about risky or sensitive behavior, be frank and truthful.

TIP #6: Engage and Enjoy

Do not feel intimidated. Instead, use your time wisely and comfortably, prioritizing your thoughts and concerns. Write down your concerns ahead of time, but do not pull out a list of 100 questions. Also, be sure to prioritize your questions.

In many respects, visiting your healthcare provider should be like taking your car in for accident repairs. Avoid the trap of bringing a long list of things that need to be done. It will only overwhelm the person who can help you most by leaving little time for major work. Work with your healthcare provider... connect...partner...and most of all...relax.

TIP #7: Be Willing to Subject Yourself to Probing and Prodding

Tests take time. Nothing is easy. Close quarters with some tests can cause uncomfortable feelings. Metal probes, rubber hoses, and latex gloves can also be

a little unnerving. But do your part. Ask for help or alternatives if you are really concerned. You'd be surprised, most medical staff will work hard to help to ease any discomfort.

TIP #8: Take Notes

Healthcare providers sometimes forget that they talk in strange terms. Ask for clarification if a term is not familiar. Medications often have long unfamiliar names, both generic and trade names. Diagnoses appear to be written in foreign languages. Ask for the proper spelling and meaning. Healthcare providers often abbreviate words and most medical records seem confusing. Take notes, ask questions, and get clarification.

TIP #9: Get to Know the Office Staff... Jot Down Names

Some of the most important medical office allies you'll ever have are the office staff. Get to know the front office, the scheduling secretary, nurses, and billing representatives. These individuals are the key to your satisfaction with your healthcare provider. Establish a meaningful relationship with these folks and you are a step ahead of the game.

TIP #10: Follow Through

Oftentimes, people will go to great lengths to feel better fast. But here's a strange thing...just when they find relief, they discard all of the information previously given to them. If you want to dance well with your healthcare provider, follow through on their recommendations—even after you start to feel better.

Learning More

Knowledge is key during the decision making process. The more you know about health problems, how to take care of health problems, and the healthcare delivery system, the more confident you will

be that the choices you make are going to be safe and effective.

There are a number of resources at your disposal to help you become self-care savvy. Some possible resources include...

» **Medically sound self-care books.**

A variety of reputable organizations publish self-care texts that walk you through treatment options step-by-step.

» **Healthcare providers.** Don't be afraid to contact your healthcare provider to ask questions and determine a course of treatment that's appropriate.

» **Non-profit health organizations.**

The American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association are excellent resources you can use to learn more about your health and well-being.

» **Health related websites.** The rapid growth of Internet technology has given us instant access to a wealth of health information—some good, some bad. Reliable websites like WebMD and MayoClinic.org can be utilized to educate yourself on salient health topics.

» **Government publications.**

Government organizations often publish reports on common health conditions. These reports are helpful, and can be easily accessed online.

In Summary

Your healthcare relationship is a dance between you and the provider. Each has a responsibility. Knowing this relationship will give you and your doctor the best opportunity to maintain your health.

