

Got a cure? I'M THERE!

New studies abound with advice for what ails you. Our humor writer can't help but try them all.

BY JAY DYCKMAN

RECENTLY, WHILE CRUISING the Web, I came across three headlines that read: "Tangerine peel could help fight cancer;" "Study finds spinach, eggs ward off cause of blindness" and "Birth control may cut cancer risk." My mission was clear: Buy tangerines, spinach and eggs, and find a doctor willing to put a 30-something man on the pill.

Now, I have no idea if these claims are valid. But it hardly matters. Show me a way of fighting off disease and I'll jump every time. And I mean *any* way. I'm the person researchers have in mind when they release these studies. "Let's announce that squirrel tail fights off dementia," they'll conspire, and then fall over laughing at the (quite accurate) image of me running into the front yard with a butterfly net and a pair of scissors.

Just hint at a way to avoid any ailment, which I'm always fairly certain I have or soon will get, and I'm in. Some people call this condition "hypochondria," but because I doubt there's a pill for that, I don't.

No, I'm just one of those people highly susceptible to studies that promise a means of preventing any and all maladies. There are, of course,

A study recommended daily laughter, so I told boring friends goodbye.



the basics: Eat healthfully, exercise regularly, get enough sleep. But how boring is that? I mean, why limit yourself to the obvious when you could be doing shots of sea kelp every morning to keep carpal tunnel syndrome at bay?

Sadly, I've always been this way. Growing up, our family bathroom looked like something out of Dr. Jekyll's apothecary. Fennel seed? Check. Aloe water? Absolutely. Eye of newt? Had my father not put his foot down, almost certainly yes.

The best part is that these "New study finds" announcements are never-ending. Every day brings another report on how I should be living. There's always something new for me to ingest, apply, gargle, perform, inhale, sprinkle and, on one notably regrettable occasion, lick.

I suppose it's possible that I sometimes overreact to these reports. Recently, for example, after reading a report that daily laughter reduces problems associated with high blood pressure, strokes, arthritis and ulcers, I was forced to call several of my less-entertaining friends and inform them that we could no longer speak to one another. I imagine it wasn't easy for them to pick up a voice mail saying, "Your vapid tales of work and family are literally killing me." But we're talking about my health here. What was I supposed to do — suffer in silence? I think not.

Some studies have found that marriage improves a person's health. But, really, how

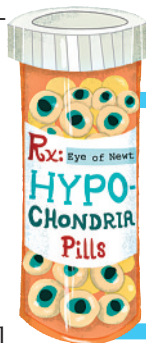


Researchers probably invent outrageous cures just to laugh when people like me take them seriously.

can that be true? I mean, if that were so, wouldn't the vow be, "In health and ... well, just health. Speak now if you've heard differently or forever hold your peace."

The worst, however, is when researchers announce conflicting information on certain foods. Fish? Good. Mercury? Shoot. And then there's coffee. Apparently it staves off Alzheimer's, which I, like any 34-year-old, lie awake at night worrying about. But coffee also disrupts sleep, a key to good health. This is one of those tough calls, but I'm more anti-brain degenerative disease than a night of tossing and turning, so pour me another cup.

Good health these days isn't easy. It takes work. Lots of work. Choking-down-tangerine-peels-three-times-a-day kind of work. But, as a friend once told me, "Hey, at least you have your health." And he was right. I do.



Some people call my condition "hypochondria," but I don't — because there's no pill for that.

Sadly, though, I had to end our friendship. "At least you have your health?" How boring is that? No, that didn't make me laugh at all. In fact, I could feel an ulcer growing the entire time we were talking. He might as well have just shot me right there and been done with it.

So, maybe good health isn't so hard to find these days. But good friends are. **W**

JAY DYCKMAN last wrote about the new Olympic sport snowboard cross.