



# Looking beyond labels

## *How to choose the cleanest, safest, and healthiest foods*

About two months ago, I went to a local farmers' market with my colleague and his daughter. She was shopping for some fresh groceries to take back to college with her. No processed, unhealthy dorm food for this smart, young woman!

While shopping the aisles, I was astounded by all the non-scientific "marketing speak" being used. Nearly everywhere I turned, there were chalkboards a-plenty, claiming their food was "natural," which sounded great. Except for the fact that the term "natural" basically has no meaning...or regulation.

Let's face it—if Frito Lay can produce "Natural" Cheetos Puffs, anything can don the label.

On the other hand, "organic" has a formal definition from the USDA. But consumers still don't really understand what the label indicates. And the government hasn't done much to clear up the confusion over what "organic" implies, despite attempts by Big Food to take over the agenda. (For the real definition—and tips on how to get the most bang for your buck when buying "organic" foods—see the sidebar on page 3.)

Then there are all of the "Non-GMO" labels sprouting up on packaged foods like weeds.

And while some of these labels may actually be beneficial, how do you know which is which?

Well, as the saying goes "knowledge is power."

Let's go over some important information you need to know in order to look past the marketing hype, so you can bring home the safest, cleanest foods for you and your family.

### **The sad, disturbing prevalence of GMO foods**

GMOs are so pervasive today that they dominate traditional crops that might otherwise still be considered "healthy."

According to the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA), about three-quarters of the foods we eat today contain GMO ingredients.<sup>1</sup> (The GMA is a big fan of GMOs—which isn't surprising, considering its extensive ties to Big Food.)

And more than 90 percent of all corn and soybeans grown in the U.S. are GMO.<sup>2</sup> Other GM crops (in order of pervasiveness) include: apples, canola, papaya, potatoes, sugar beets, summer squash, and zucchini.<sup>3</sup>

To make matters worse, any attempts to enforce transparency regarding GMO-containing foods have been thwarted by the powers-that-be in Big Food and Big Government.

In other words, the federal government isn't here to help you proactively avoid genetically modified food. In fact, here's the

latest ridiculousness regarding GMO labeling...

### **USDA released toothless new GMO labeling guidelines in May**

Back in 2014, Vermont voters decided to take matters into their own hands, and passed a sensible, effective GMO labeling law. Other states followed suit, putting similar initiatives on their ballots.

But conventional food manufacturers panicked and started lobbying the federal government. The result? In 2016, state GMO labeling laws were superseded by a vague federal law pushed by Big Food—and swallowed whole by the Obama administration.

This May, as part of the new law, the USDA released its new guidelines for labeling GMO foods.<sup>4</sup> Food manufacturers are supposed to start using the new labels by 2020.

But here's the watered-down part.

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Food manufacturers claimed the terms “GMO” and “genetically engineered” have a stigma. (Hmm, wonder why?) So they lobbied the USDA to label foods as “bioengineered” or the nonsensical “BE”—rather than “genetically modified” or “GMO.”

And they convinced the USDA to create labels with the non-threatening initials “BE” surrounded by a sun with a smile icon underneath.<sup>5</sup>



Unfortunately, this subliminal messaging may turn out to be more deadly propaganda...

**So what's the problem with GMOs anyway?**

Of course, conventional food growers and manufacturers repeatedly say GMOs are healthy and safe. Their explanation? The genetically modified crops haven't been “proven” to be unsafe. (Well, *that's* a comforting thought...) But they were never required to go through testing to establish safety data in the first place.

In fact, various studies over the past few years have found that when rats and mice are fed GMO food, they have differences in their vital organs and physiological systems compared to animals that don't consume GMOs. Unfortunately, the significance behind these changes is currently unknown.

In my view, the real problem is the way GM crops are produced. They require the use of dangerous herbicides (like Roundup) that not only contaminate the crops, but

also kill every other plant nearby (while also taking down Nature's invaluable pollinators—the bees, birds, and butterflies).

This poisonous pesticide is an obvious disaster for the ecology of the planet. But Roundup's manufacturer, Monsanto, insists the herbicide is supposedly safe for human consumption—claiming it's toxic to plant cells but not human or animal cells.

However, two years ago, a research team led by U.S. naval scientist Dr. Nancy Swanson found a striking correlation between the increased use of Roundup and the rising incidence of dementia, diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, liver cancer, obesity, stroke, and thyroid disease.

Of course, as I always point out, correlation is not causation. In other words, just because scientists uncover a link between two events, it doesn't mean one event caused the other.

But biological plausibility is also important. And mounting evidence shows that Roundup interferes with many metabolic processes in plants and animals.

Plus, even if Monsanto's claim that Roundup doesn't affect human cells is true (which is highly unlikely), they failed to consider the effect of Roundup poisoning on the probiotic bacteria in the human GI system. These bacteria make up the all-important microbiome, which is critical for optimal health.

As I've mentioned before, probiotic bacteria influence your digestion, metabolism, immunity, central nervous system, and other bodily functions.

And several studies link glyphosate,

the active ingredient in Roundup, with damage to the microbiomes of rats and mice.

And a new study found that long-term dosages of Roundup affected the probiotic composition in the guts of eight out of nine female rats. Plus, those rats exhibited signs of liver dysfunction.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, these are animal studies. But there are enough of them to create concern over what Roundup may be doing to the human microbiome—and how that could be affecting virtually *all* aspects of our health.

### 5 easy ways to make sure your foods are toxin-free

So what can you do to avoid GMOs, pesticides, and other harmful contaminants—and find healthier foods in general?

Here's what I recommend:

#### 1) Avoid the top genetically modified foods:

- **Soy**, including soybeans and soy flour. Soy is also found in vegetable proteins, textured vegetable proteins (TVP), tofu, tamari, and tempeh.
- **Corn**, including corn flour, cornstarch, and cornmeal. And by all means, avoid high-fructose corn syrup, which has been linked to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.
- **Processed vegetable oils**, including vegetable oil, vegetable fat, and margarines. These are made with GMO canola, corn, cotton seed, and soy oils. Instead, use organic sources of coconut, grape seed, hemp seed, and extra virgin olive oil.

Unfortunately, these are common

ingredients in most of the packaged goods you'll find lining supermarket shelves. So, the easiest way to keep these GMOs out of your kitchen is to avoid processed foods altogether.

#### 2) Limit your sugar consumption.

Of course, it's not the first time I've told you this. But here's yet another reason why you should avoid sugar. More than half of all U.S. sugar beets produced today are GMO. And sugar beets are often mixed with cane sugar to make what we call "table sugar."

If you absolutely must eat sugar, look for products made with 100 percent cane sugar—or, even better, use organic honey as a sweetener.

And don't try to swap out artificial sweeteners for sugar. As I've written before, research shows these fake foods can actually cause you to *gain* weight. Plus, aspartame—the ingredient in NutraSweet® and Equal® artificial sweeteners—is often genetically modified.

#### 3) Know the "Dirty Dozen."

Every year, the nonprofit Environmental Working Group (EWG) researches which types of produce are most contaminated with pesticides. The EWG's 2018 "Dirty Dozen" list includes<sup>7</sup>:

- Apples\*
  - Celery
  - Cherries
  - Grapes
  - Hot peppers
  - Nectarines
  - Peaches
  - Pears
  - Potatoes\*
  - Spinach
  - Strawberries
  - Sweet bell peppers
  - Tomatoes
- (\* *also GMO*)

So if you're only able to buy select organic fruits and vegetables, these are the ones you should focus on.

If you don't know whether or not

the produce in your supermarket is organic or not, look for a PLU, or price look-up code. I'm sure you've seen these before. They're the small numbered stickers you peel off your produce before you eat it.

A four-digit number on the label means the produce was conventionally grown. Five digits, starting with 9, means the item is organic.

### How to get the most value when buying "organic"

For the record, if a food is labeled organic, it should in no way include chemical pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers.

It's also supposed to be free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for the obvious reason that they can't be grown without the obligate use of pesticides.

But, keep in mind, many of the designer, organic foods on supermarket shelves are a waste of your money. Just because something has the organic label doesn't mean it's healthy.

For instance, you can eat all the organic macaroni and cheese you want...but that doesn't make it healthy.

Also, be wary of overpriced, marketing-focused grocery stores like Whole Foods. These profitable purveyors of foods claim health and environmental benefits for their trendy products. But you pay far more for their products than necessary.

To find more affordable organic foods at local farmers markets and in the supermarket, use the tips I outlined on pages 3 and 4.

These are the *real* problems government agencies should be dealing with, instead of chasing down their favorite politically correct health and environmental risk factors—about which they have been all wrong, all along.

**4) Embrace the “Clean Fifteen.”**

These are the fruits and vegetables the EWG has found to have the *fewest* pesticides.

So if you're buying conventional, you'll be safest with this list<sup>8</sup>:

- Asparagus
- Avocados
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cantaloupe
- Cauliflower
- Eggplant
- Honeydew melons
- Kiwi fruit
- Mangoes
- Onions
- Papayas\*
- Pineapple
- Sweet corn\*
- Sweet peas

\* *Due to GMO concerns, I recommend buying organic.*

**5) Buy locally.**


It's generally less likely that the food you buy from a local farmers' market will contain GMOs, compared to food from a large commercial farm or supermarket.

Plus, local foods grown within 50 “food miles” (the number of miles food travels from farm to consumer) are exempt from counterproductive federal regulations that favor Big Food.

I suggest getting to know the sellers at your neighborhood farmer's market. The truth is, many farmers at my local market sell produce grown without pesticides...but they

can't afford to apply for federal “organic” status. The same often goes for farmers who raise grass-fed beef and free-range chickens.

So, ask around and talk to the farmers themselves. You might be surprised by what you learn. Very often, you can get “organic” and “sustainable” produce right down the street. And it will cost a whole lot less than what you'll pay at Whole Foods.

There's no getting around the fact that our food is getting “dirtier” and less safe every day. But if you follow this guide, it will ensure you're eating the cleanest, healthiest, and most nutritious, food year-round. 

## Six “healthy” hygiene habits that can actually make you sick

### *Plus easy, effortless strategies for keeping clean*

We tend to think about hand washing and other healthy hygiene practices during cold and flu season.

However, viruses and infections don't take a summer vacation. Daily hygiene habits are just as important in July as they are in January.

Of course, you may think your personal hygiene practices are just fine...and they may very well be. However, many popular hygiene habits (promoted mainly by the consumer products industry) may actually do more harm than good where your health is concerned.

Here are my six hygiene habits that need to be rinsed down the drain and what you should do instead..

**High-tech handwashing.** As I wrote in the June issue of *Insiders' Cures* (“Seven keys to a whole-body

health reboot”), research shows that good old-fashioned soap and water are just as effective—and much less dangerous for your health—than “sophisticated” antibacterial soaps and hand sanitizers. (Subscribers can revisit this article by logging into the Subscribers Sign-In via [www.DrMicozzi.com](http://www.DrMicozzi.com).)

Back in 1997, my daughter Alicia's middle school science project demonstrated that using antibacterial soaps can help breed antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria. If a bunch of pre-teens could figure this out, you'd think FDA scientists could as well. And yet, antibacterial soaps are still on the market.

And that's not the only problem with these products. Up until the FDA finally banned them about two

years ago, antibacterial soaps and hand sanitizers commonly contained triclosan and triclocarban—which have been shown in studies to disrupt hormones.

Of course, the FDA failed to address the other dangerous ingredients in commercial soaps and hand sanitizers, like artificial fragrances (which often contain allergenic and hormone-disrupting chemicals).

But you can avoid all of these chemicals by choosing organic soaps and hand sanitizers—which are sometimes even cheaper than their conventional counterparts full of fancy ingredients.

**Hand dryers full of hot air.** The word is out on hot-air hand dryers. These inefficient noise hazards fail to remove the bacteria remaining on

your hands after washing.

In fact, according to a study I wrote in the February 2015 issue of *Insiders' Cures* (“The shocking source spreading cold and flu viruses”), hand dryers actually suck bacteria right up and blow it back out all throughout the bathroom—and unfortunately, right back onto you.

Some misguided healthcare professionals claim hot air dryers are more “efficient” and less wasteful than using a paper towel (which has to be manufactured in a high-volume paper mill and then transported). But don't be so sure.

Hand dryer blowers are high-intensity and use a lot of power. In contrast, using just one paper towel (from recycled paper) is actually more efficient and ecologically friendly. You can also take the paper towel with you and use it to open the door while exiting the restroom, so you don't contaminate yourself all over again with a filthy door handle.

**Hot showers.** Of course, showering is a big part of proper hygiene. But contrary to what you might think, taking a long, hot shower isn't the best way to get clean.

Showers, no matter the temperature, remove bacteria—including healthy, probiotic bacteria—from your skin. (As I wrote in last month's *Insiders' Cures*, probiotics are important for the skin microbiome, as well as your gastrointestinal tract and metabolism.)

But hot showers are a double whammy. Not only do they wash away probiotics, but they also strip protective oils from your skin.

Your skin consists of three layers and showering, bathing, and hand washing affect the outermost

layer—the epidermis. The epidermis not only protects the other layers of your skin against the environment, but it also helps your skin retain moisture by producing a thin layer of oil.

A hot shower softens the oil on your skin, like when heat is applied to butter. And the longer you apply the heat to your skin's oils, the more moisture your epidermis loses. This makes you more susceptible to skin diseases and bacteria. Your skin can also crack and bleed, increasing your chances of infection.

That's why I recommend lukewarm showers for no longer than 10 minutes once a day—or even once every other day, if you're not particularly dirty or sweaty.

Timing is also important. Research shows that taking a shower is more beneficial in the evening.

This is due to thermodynamics, also known as evaporative cooling. When you step out of the shower, the warm water molecules on your skin evaporate. This water vapor takes heat away with it, which is often why you feel cold before wrapping yourself up in a towel.

Evaporative cooling also triggers your body to slow down metabolic processes like breathing, digestion, and heart rate—which helps you prepare for relaxation and sleep. So, an evening shower should be an important part of your bedtime routine.

Finally, keep an eye on your shower head. One study found that shower heads can be loaded with a type of bacteria that causes pulmonary disease.<sup>1</sup> Researchers recommend avoiding plastic shower heads (which are more susceptible to harboring bacteria), and replacing any shower heads that have crusty

deposits.

**Scrubbing yourself “smooth.”** You may have heard that this is a “must” for any anti-aging or skincare regimen, however, there is *never* a need to exfoliate your skin.

While loofah sponges and other harsh scrubbing agents may remove dead skin cells, they also aggressively strip your body of probiotic bacteria and oils.

It's not even necessary to remove dead skin in the first place. You shed all of your skin cells every two to four weeks. And it's much healthier to just let nature take its course—rather than “helping it along” with unnecessary exfoliation.

If you really want to make your skin “glow,” just use a washcloth in the shower and apply a natural moisturizer afterwards while your skin is still wet. This keeps your skin soft and supple...with a natural, healthy glow.

### **Lathering, rinsing, and repeating.**

Just like your skin, your hair also has natural oils (called sebum) that are excreted from your hair follicles. These oils lock in moisture and prevent the hair and scalp from drying.

A majority of shampoos—whether they're labeled as “natural” or not—can strip your hair's oils as part of the cleansing process. While different types of hair may benefit from various kinds of shampooing, almost no one needs to shampoo every single day.

I suggest you stop shampooing and observe how long you can go before your hair starts to look greasy or dirty. Of course, in the summer—with heat, humidity, and increased sweating—you may want to shampoo more frequently. But

generally, try to wait a few days between cleansings.

You should also choose organic, natural shampoos without:

- Artificial fragrances
- Paraben preservatives (which are linked to reproductive and endocrine system issues)
- PEGs, or polyethylene cleansing agents (which contain a probable human carcinogen)
- Sodium laureth sulfate (SLES) (a very strong detergent that strips hair of oil and moisture)
- Triclosan (an antibacterial agent also linked to endocrine system issues)

To see how your favorite shampoo rates on the toxin scale, visit

the nonprofit, nonpartisan Environmental Working Group's Skin Deep Cosmetics Database at [www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep).

**Q-tip wrangling.** You've heard about cerumen (otherwise known as ear wax). It gets brown and sticky, and may appear dirty and in need of cleaning.


But this "wax" is simply a combination of oils and secretions in your outer ear canal and skin. It's part of the way your ears protect themselves, and helps preserve hearing.

Cerumen is self-cleaning—but sometimes it can get impacted and interfere with your hearing. In those cases, *do not* try to remove blockages by yourself. You could damage your ear or eardrum.

If you can't get to a doctor or healthcare clinic, try putting a drop or two of mineral oil in your ear every day for a few days. This should slowly loosen up the cerumen blockage. When it begins to loosen up, gently squirt clean water into the ear canal with a bulb syringe, and wipe with a clean towel.

But unless earwax is impeding your hearing, just leave it there. In other words, "If it ain't blocked, don't fix it."

I encourage you to take a look at your normal daily routine, and see which habits could use a change.

More or less, I recommend just letting Nature take its course and allowing your body to do what it was built to do (within reason, of course). Your health (as well as your water bills) will be a lot better off for it. 

## Big pharma's two top-selling blockbusters: BUSTED!

### *How to save yourself from their deadly web of lies*

For years, I've been warning you about the perils of prescription antidepressants and about statin drugs for cholesterol.

Not only have statins been linked to diabetes, breast cancer, kidney disease, weight gain, and muscle disorders, but—ironically—they've even been shown to contribute to the cardiovascular disease they're supposed to *prevent*.

Antidepressants are just as deadly. They've been linked to suicide and violent behavior, heart disease, organ damage, breast cancer, and bleeding in the brain.

But it seems like every time data questions the efficacy and safety of statins and antidepressants, doctors hem and haw about "special

circumstances" (apparently known only to them). Or they use their credentials to deflect patient questions. *They're the doctor...they "know best," right?*

Wrong! The data shows doctors who continue to dole out these dangerous drugs actually don't know much at all...

But it's going to be hard for even the most clueless of doctors to argue with two recent, major studies showing that statins and antidepressants can actually be harmful to your health.

The good news is, you can prevent heart disease and alleviate depression without big pharma's "help." I'll tell you how in just a moment.

But first, let's take a closer look at how these best-selling blockbusters got "busted"...

#### **Research finds cholesterol is actually good for you**

A group of international researchers reviewed 19 studies involving nearly 70,000 people over age 60. And what they found discredits the very premise behind statin drugs.<sup>1</sup>

These researchers discovered there's no link between so-called "bad" cholesterol and heart disease deaths.

In fact study co-author, Dr. Malcolm Kendrick said, "What we found in our detailed systematic review was that older people with high LDL (low-density lipoprotein) levels, the so-called "bad" cholesterol, lived longer and had

less heart disease.” As I’ve reported, we’ve know for at least three years that statin drugs have no benefit for people over 70.

But this new research shows we should take that even further. According to another one of the study researchers, Professor Sherif Sultan, an expert in vascular surgery at University of Ireland, “Lowering cholesterol with medications for primary cardiovascular prevention in those aged over 60 is a total waste of time and resources.”

Of course, I’ve been warning you for years that the benefits of statins have been wildly exaggerated.

But as more and more evidence continues to come out, it appears the so-called “benefits” of statins have not only been exaggerated—but completely fabricated.

And yet, less than two years ago, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (a panel of so-called health “experts”) issued new guidelines calling for about one-third of adults between age 40 and 75 to consider taking statins. This follows the recommendation of both the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association.

It’s virtually impossible to find large group of physicians with no ties to the crony-capitalist medical industry that pushes statins.

Instead of embracing statin drugs and the myth that cholesterol and dietary fat lead to heart disease, check out my comprehensive, online *Heart Attack Prevention & Repair Protocol*. This comprehensive, step-by-step guide outlines all of the safe, natural, drug-free approaches that actually work to prevent—and reverse—heart disease. You can learn more about it, or enroll today, by calling 1-866-747-9421 and asking for order **EOV3U700**.

When it comes to the crony-capitalist medical industry pushing dangerous drugs, let’s move on to another big pharma blockbuster to get “busted” by science...

### The depressing news about antidepressant drugs

Back in 2011, a groundbreaking study came out showing that only one in seven people actually benefit from the most popular type of antidepressants—selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)—like Prozac®, Paxil®, Zoloft®, Lexapro®, and Celexa®.<sup>2</sup>

And in the March 2016 issue of *Insiders’ Cures*, I wrote about how research also shows that SSRIs increase the risk of violence—to others *and* to oneself (including suicide).

The third strike-out for antidepressant drugs came from a recent study published in *The Lancet*. The researchers analyzed 34 studies involving 5,260 children and adolescents who took 14 different types of antidepressant drugs.<sup>3</sup>

The researchers found that only *one* of those drugs— fluoxetine

### Five safe, natural ways to lift your mood

While the government-academic-industrial complex continues to spend our tax dollars researching failed drug approaches, the natural solutions for depression are literally all around us—in nature and in our communities. Here’s what I recommend:

**1.) Talk therapy.** A therapist can use behavioral therapy to help you turn your negative thoughts into positive thoughts. In fact, one study showed that after beginning talk therapy, people who suffered from suicidal depression had 26 percent fewer suicide attempts over the next five years. And all it took was a total of six to 10 counseling sessions.<sup>4</sup>

**2.) Spend time in nature.** Many studies show that getting out in the fresh air can improve your health and help reduce depression. And in a March 2015 *Daily Dispatch* (“Trees may hold the secret to a happier life”), I wrote about a study that concluded Londoners who live on streets with the most trees use the fewest antidepressants.

**3.) Exercise.** Research shows that simply getting out and moving helps lift depression. In one study, researchers gathered 126 people who had been taking SSRIs for at least two months but still felt depressed. After just four months of mild exercise, nearly one-third

of the people reported that their depression had disappeared.<sup>6</sup>

**4.) Eat right.** Finally, mainstream psychiatrists have admitted in a major medical journal that good nutrition can prevent and even treat mental health problems, including depression.<sup>7</sup> And, even better, good nutrition boils down to four simple guidelines:

- Cut out sugar and processed carbs like white bread and pasta.
- Eat seven to eight servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Eat protein with every meal. Research shows that the top mood-boosting proteins are meat, eggs, seafood, and organ meats.
- Include healthy oils like olive or nut oils in your diet every day.

**5.) Supplement.** The following supplements have been shown in hundreds of scientific studies to help fight depression:

- **B vitamins**— take a high-quality B-complex every day
- **Magnesium**—200 mg daily
- **Omega-3 fatty acids**—5-6 grams of high-quality fish oil daily
- **Vitamin D**— 10,000 IU a day
- **Zinc**— 40 mg a day

(Prozac®, Sarafem®, Adofen®) was more effective than a placebo at relieving depression.

The researchers rather tepidly concluded that antidepressants don't have a "clear advantage" for treating children and adolescents with major depressive disorders. And the results "could apply" to adults as well.

Fortunately, there's a variety of effective natural alternatives to relieve depression. See the sidebar on page 7 for my recommendations.

The bottom line is that while there are a few medications that are actually safe and effective (metformin, for instance), you simply can't rely on big pharma

to fix what ails you.

In fact, more often than not, the pharmaceutical industry makes things worse. So when it comes to statins, antidepressants, and most other drugs, just say no. And say yes to effective, natural alternatives. **IC**

*Citations for all articles available online at [www.DrMicozzi.com](http://www.DrMicozzi.com)*

## NEWS BRIEF

### Four sound strategies for maintaining impeccable hearing—no matter your age

Hearing loss can be a major problem as you get older. But that doesn't mean you need to suffer in silence.

In the April issue of *Insiders' Cures*, I wrote about how food and nutrition can support hearing and prevent—or even reverse—the hearing loss that commonly accompanies aging.

Today, I'd like to discuss some easy, effective lifestyle changes you can make that will also help maintain and improve your hearing.

#### How modern technology is sabotaging your hearing

Unfortunately, mainstream medicine ignores the natural approaches to prevent and reverse hearing loss, focusing instead on high-tech hearing-aid devices.

But ironically, as the mainstream looks to technology as a solution for hearing loss, it turns out that technology itself is actually the problem.

In the "old days," blasting loud music from car radios, "boom boxes," and live concerts was bad enough. But now, hearing experts say that the widespread use of earbuds and headphones has amplified the problem by channeling loud noises directly into the ear canal. (Not to mention the dangers of walking around or driving in a bubble without hearing your surroundings.)

And these earbuds and headphones

are usually connected to smartphones and personal audio players. The widespread use of these devices allow for non-stop streaming of music, movies, and more. This results in constant overstimulation and damage to your hearing.

Both of these newer sound hazards lead to high-frequency hearing loss—similar to the type of damage caused by loud gunshots, for example. Studies have shown that this type of hearing loss is typically not detected by many routine hearing tests.

So what can you do to protect yourself?

#### Four simple steps to better hearing

First, if you're already struggling with hearing loss, consult an audiologist. Unlike ear, nose, and throat doctors, audiologists take a holistic approach to hearing. Sure, they may recommend hearing aids or cochlear implants, but they also specialize in creative problem solving and social skills. Meaning, they're not averse to recommending lifestyle changes and other natural approaches to support your hearing.

Next, lower the volume. Hearing experts recommend the 60/60 rule: Keep the volume on your device below 60 percent when using earbuds or headphones, and only listen for a maximum of 60 minutes

per day.

And if at any time you hear ringing in your ears after you pull out your earbuds—or if the noise around you sounds muffled—it's absolutely time to turn down the volume.

Third, rethink your cell phone use. I keep an old-fashioned flip phone for emergencies when I'm away from my home or office. Every 6 months or so, I purchase \$50 worth of minutes.

When I go to the cell phone store to buy time for my phone, I'm often met with disbelief from younger clerks that I still get by with my "ancient" cell phone.

Truthfully, I prefer email. I find that email communication is even more efficient than a phone call. And email is virtually silent, which will save your ears from the sonic strain of a telephone.

Of course, there will be times when you do need to take a call. Which brings me to my fourth and final recommendation...

Put your cell phone on speaker. The further the device is from your ear, the less opportunity for high-frequency hearing loss.

That's it! Just four simple lifestyle recommendations that can make a significant difference in protecting one of your most valuable assets—your hearing.





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