

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Joseph Baker

Laugh Yourself Healthy

When comedian Robert Schimmel was told he had Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, he didn't miss a beat. "Just my luck," he said to his surgeon. "I got the one not named after the guy."

Schimmel's story is all about choices. He could have chosen to dive off the emotional deep end and allow cancer to overshadow his life — and the lives of those around him. Instead, one of the biggest names in comedy chose to incorporate humor into his healing as much as possible — a decision he believes dramatically influenced his body's ability to fight, and win, his battle with cancer.

The healing power of laughter is well documented, whether a patient suffers from cancer, multiple sclerosis or less-dire challenges. Research also suggests that a sound sense of humor may prevent health problems from occurring in the first place.

Dr. Baker promotes laughter as an all-natural pain reliever. Countless studies show that a good case of the giggles bolsters pain tolerance by escalating the release of endorphins: the body's "feel good" hormones. And, laughter simultaneously suppresses production

of the stress hormones cortisol and adrenalin.

According to the late British philosopher and essayist Bertrand Russell, "Laughter is the most inexpensive and most effective wonder drug ... a universal medicine." (*Urol Nurs* 2000;20:382.)

Best of all, its only side effect is a sense of well-being and contentment. And that's important to Dr. Baker, who believes in addressing the underlying causes of disease and illness — not merely masking symptoms with potentially deadly drugs.

What Really IS So Funny After All?

Humor is difficult to define. "It is not strictly a physical response, and it has different meanings for different people." (*J Clin Oncol* 2005;23:645-8.)

According to Robert R. Provine, PhD, psychology professor and assistant director of neuroscience at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, most laughter doesn't occur from listening to jokes; it comes from spending time with family members and friends.

People also tend to laugh more when in groups. Provine theorizes that's because laughter truly *is* contagious (*AORN J* 2004;80:241).

The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor defines therapeutic humor as "any intervention that promotes health and wellness by stimulation of a playful discovery, expression or appreciation of the ab-



surdity or incongruity of life's situations." (*J Clin Oncol* 2005;23:645-8.)

Immune Booster, Inflammation Reducer

A strong immune system is crucial to optimal health. That's why Dr. Baker provides patients with a wealth of immune-boosting information regarding proper nutrition, exercise and the benefits of scheduling regular chiropractic appointments.

Laughter, it turns out, also has a positive effect on the immune system. It does this by increasing the production and release of natural killer (NK) cells. Research reveals that "low NK cell activity is linked to decreased disease resistance." (*Altern Ther Health Med* 2003;9:38-45.)

Laughter also diminishes inflammation within the body, further preventing disease processes (*Fam Pract News* 2001;31:19).



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Crack Up for Cardio Health

Research presented at the scientific session of the American College of Cardiology found that laughing for 15 minutes substantially bolsters the dilation of blood vessels, “which reduces the risk of a range of conditions, including migraine, high blood pressure and atherosclerosis [hardening of the arteries].” (*GP* 2005;NA:13.)

The report, published just four months ago, also included some impressive study results. Of 20 nonsmoking volunteers, 19 showed a 22 percent increase in circulation after watching 15 minutes of humorous film clips. The flipside? When these same volunteers were shown 15 minutes of stress-inducing clips, 14 suffered a 35 percent restriction in circulation.

Humor Helps What Hurts

One way laughter promotes health is by keeping our minds off of our aches, pains and illnesses.

When a group of youngsters were asked to submerge one of their hands in 10-degree water for as long as possible — up to a maximum of three minutes — the average time was 87 bone-chilling seconds. When they were shown comedy videos during the procedure, however, “their heart rate, blood pressure and breathing all improved and they were able to put up with the pain for 125 seconds: 40 percent longer.” (*Nurs Stand* 2004;19:18.)

The key, according to the authors of another study, is that “patients need to be active participants in the type of material selected.” (*South Med J* 2003;96:25.) Which just underscores that the definition of “funny” is purely subjective. For instance, while millions of people think comedian Raymond Romano is hilarious, not *everybody loves Raymond*.

Smile Away Stress

Zap stress with laughter, say researchers.

Humor helps us make sense of, understand and cope with reality. It also

“serves as nature’s biofeedback, stress-control system.” (*Nurs Adm Q* 1993;18:80-9.)

In addition to quelling levels of the stress hormones cortisol and adrenalin, researchers in Australia note that laughter also enhances creativity and helps us to forget what was bothering us in the first place (*Aust Fam Physician* 2001;30:25-8).

Look to Chiropractic to Prevent the Ravages of Stress on the Body

Stress takes three major forms: chemical, emotional and physical. Like most chiropractic offices, we teach patients how to prevent harmful stress and its effects on the body.

Unchecked, stress wreaks havoc on the body. For instance, stress is linked with dysfunctional areas in the spine called *vertebral subluxations*. This condition is the enemy to wellness. It is associated with a plethora of disorders, ranging from ear infections to back pain to infertility.

Doctors of chiropractic correct vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called *chiropractic*

adjustments. In addition, chiropractors teach patients how to prevent the various forms of stress that may foster spinal problems. Laughter is just one of many prevention-oriented approaches embraced by the chiropractic lifestyle.

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Here are some jokes the entire family can enjoy:

*When everything is coming your way,
you're probably driving in the wrong lane!*

A bakery customer carefully eyed all of the rich-looking pastries on display, imagining what each one would taste like. When the clerk approached to take his order, the man said, "I'd like the chocolate-covered, cream-filled doughnut; the jelly-filled doughnut; and the cheese Danish." Then, with a sigh, he added, "But I'll take an oat-bran muffin."

*Change is inevitable ...
except when you expect it from a vending machine!*

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it's two-tired!

A flying saucer was low on fuel, so it landed by a gas station on a lonely country road. On its side were the letters "UFO." Stunned, the gas station attendant asked, "Does that stand for Unidentified Flying Object?" The space-weary traveler responded, "No. It stands for 'Unleaded Fuel Only.'"