HER Health Toolkit

Presented By
Michelle King Robson
A Letter From Michelle

I got sick and I couldn’t get well, that’s why I started EmpowHER. I needed health information, support and resources that were either not available, non-existent or that I simply could not find. I have created these tools for you to start advocating for your health and the health of your loved ones. This is the information I wish I had in my own personal health journey.

If you don’t take charge of your own health and wellness no one will. AND If you don’t take care of yourself, who can take care of your family and loved ones? We all know that women are the health advocates for their family, friends, loved ones, even strangers. We like to take care of others before taking a second to look in the mirror. It’s time to start taking charge of your own health. Change begins with you.

Best in Health,

Michelle King Robson
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How to be Your Own Best Health Care Provider

Tip 1. Sorry Doc, You’re Fired!
If you’re not happy with your doctor, fire him or her. Ask your girlfriends, family and other doctors for recommendations because “good” doctors know the other “good” doctors. They are your best resource. Don’t forget to check the doctor’s credentials and research possible violations.

Tip 2. Stop Lying
Stop lying. Did you know that studies suggest 70 percent of patients lie to their doctors? For example, we do not mention that we take aspirin, that we are not taking our medication consistently or at all. We take health supplements and vitamins but don’t consider them medications. It is important to mention because some vitamins and supplements can interfere with medications or make hormone replacement therapy less effective. Make a list of all the things you take and bring it with you to all your medical appointments.

Tip 3. Be Prepared
First, women need to do their own research. For example, understand treatments and alternatives for a potential diagnosis. Second, send a list of questions to your doctor ahead of your visit. It is estimated that patients are interrupted 18 seconds into their appointments. Few patients can say everything they want to in that time, so be prepared.

Tip 4. Take Charge of You
Many of the leading threats to women’s health can be prevented — if you know how. The top causes of death among adult women in the U.S. include heart disease, stroke, cancer and chronic lower respiratory disease, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Remember, if you don’t take care of you, you can’t take care of anyone else.

Tip 5. Find a Health Advocate
Identify a trusted friend or patient advocate, not a family member, that can go with you to appointments. This person needs to listen well, speak up and not be afraid to ask questions of specialists. The last thing you are able to do when you are sick is advocate on your behalf. Put your advocate in your Living Will and Medical Power of Attorney and let them know ahead of time that they are in charge.

It’s your body, own it! It’s critical to get all of your medical records and store them in a binder. They are your records and you’re entitled to them. Don’t leave the healthcare professionals office without them.

Health Toolkit
In order to obtain your health goals, declare them! Whether it’s to eat less, drink more water, diet or get more exercise, you have both big and small ideas on how you can improve your health. Here’s how to start declaring your goals so you can start accomplishing them.

**Step 1:** The first step is a solid evaluation of what you’ve accomplished so far. It’s important to give yourself credit for where you are now. Whether last year was smooth sailing or a year you’d much rather forget ever happened, you experienced it and you grew in some way. So look for those successes and give yourself time to appreciate them.

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<th>Take a minute to write down 5 things you have accomplished.</th>
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**Step 2:** Next, take time to think about what you want to accomplish. This is the time to re-energize yourself. Re-evaluate what things you truly love about your life and what things that are distracting you or moving you toward a more negative path. Don’t give this a passing thought or throw out the first idea that comes to you. Spend conscious time thinking about where you are in your life and what you want to do. The result might be an end goal or it might be a step toward an even bigger accomplishment years down the road. The critical thing is to decide what is really important to you.

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<th>What do you love? Write down the first 3 things that you think of.</th>
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<th>Now, what 2 things are getting in the way of accomplishing those 3 things you love?</th>
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Doesn’t that feel better? :-)

What do you want to accomplish from the list of things you love? What new things do you want to accomplish? Think about the outcome you want - maybe it’s satisfaction, happiness, success or fulfillment.

Write down what you want to accomplish:
TODAY
THIS WEEK
THIS MONTH
3 MONTHS
6 MONTHS

Continue to look back at this and re-evaluate.

**Step 3:** Look at all the things that you want to accomplish. Look at all the things that are important to you. Now... declare it. Acknowledge it. Say it out loud and tell other people: this is in me, it’s important to me and I am going to do it.

**ACTION: START.**
You need to start identifying things you love and continue to think about those things. Not once or twice, give yourself time to build that list and come back to this thinking often.

I challenge you to declare your health goals. Don’t push it back into the cobwebs in a corner of your brain. Let it out so you can acknowledge it. Then live your life recognizing that it is important to you.

Continue expanding that “love” list and start crossing off things on the “distracting” list. All you have to do now is START. Think about your health goals, write it down and say it out loud.

Ready set...go!
By having regular blood tests, you can learn a lot about your health. The more you know, the better you are able to take care of your body.

Your blood can tell you something is wrong even before you know there is something wrong. It is important to establish your personal baseline to measure against for the future.

The list below does not include full medical descriptions and should not be used for diagnostic treatment. They are simply to help guide you to find out what tests are best for you.

Make sure to talk with your doctor regarding your laboratory tests so you can take charge of YOUR health.

- **Comprehensive Metabolic Panel**: Gives you information about your kidneys, liver, electrolyte and acid/base balance, levels of blood glucose and blood proteins.
- **Lipid Profile (Cholesterol, HDL, LDL and Triglycerides)**: Measures cholesterol in your body and determines your risk of heart disease.
- **TSH (ultra sensitive)**: Evaluates thyroid function.
- **T3**: Helps diagnose hyperthyroidism.
- **T4**: Helps evaluate thyroid gland functions.
- **FSH**: Measures the amount of follicle-stimulating hormone in the blood, which can be used to determine infertility.
- **Estradiol**: The predominant sex hormone which impacts reproductive and sexual functioning, bone health, heart health nerves and metabolism.
- **Testosterone (Free and Total)**: Helps test for conditions relating to infertility, low libido and signs of masculinization.
- **CA 125**: Identifies cancer cells and may be used to test for ovarian cancer.
- **NTx**: Used to determine bone resorption. Important for women in menopause, women with eating disorders and certain breast cancer patients.
- **Cortisol (Free and Total)**: Measures hormone levels that may show problems with the adrenal glands or pituitary gland. Important for energy and to manage stress.
The Importance of Blood Tests - Cont.

- **Serum Ferritin Level**: Measures iron in the body.
- **Vitamin D, 25-Hydroxy**: Measures Vitamin D in the body which helps control calcium and phosphate levels.
- **DHEA-Sulfate**: Used to check the function of the adrenal glands.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS! It is the single most important thing to know about your health.

Every lab is different so make sure to use the same lab for comparable results. When you are consistent with one lab you know when something is off. If a number went up or down you always want to know why. You have got to know your numbers.

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Sources include Sonora Quest Laboratories, Lab Tests Online, MedicineNet.com, PubMed.gov, Medicine Plus.
It’s time to stop procrastinating and make your health a priority. There are 5 important health checkups that are extremely important to your health as a woman no matter what age you are. You may not need all of these checkups right now, but make sure you know about them and talk to your doctor about when you should make your appointment.

1. **Get your mammogram**
   Many women are concerned about the radiation exposure or the fear that something might be found. However, the odds of surviving breast cancer are strongly tied to how early it’s found. Women with stage 1 breast cancer have a 88 percent 5-year survival rate according to the American Cancer Society.

   As mammograms are now covered by insurance under preventive services, there is no excuse not to have your breasts checked out. The current recommendation is to do this every two years starting at 40 years old (unless other risk factors dictate yearly) then yearly once a woman reaches 50 years old.

2. **Get your colonoscopy**
   As intimidating and unpleasant as it may sound, this is the primary way to evaluate for colon cancer or polyps and needs to start at 50 years old. Someone who has a personal history of colorectal cancer or adenomatous polyps, ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s disease, or a family history of colorectal cancer will need to start sooner.

   Make the appointment, do the prep and get it over with. A normal result means you do not have to do it for another 10 years.

3. **Do a fasting blood glucose and hemoglobin A1c**
   These tests evaluate for diabetes or pre-diabetes. Normal blood glucose should be between 75-99mg/dL while pre-diabetes falls between 100-125 mg/dL, and 126 mg/dL and above is considered diabetes.

   A pre-diabetic hemoglobin A1c is between 5.7-6.4 percent while 6.5 percent and above, on two separate tests, is considered diabetic. Understand your numbers as diabetes can cause a lot of damage and lead to serious health consequences, but remember that with changes in diet and exercise may be prevented.

4. **Get an eye exam**
   Many people cannot remember the last time they had a full comprehensive eye exam that checks for visual acuity, visual fields, pupil reaction, as well as for glaucoma and cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic changes. Eye issues can sneak up on you therefore it is important to catch any changes early.
5. Get a full body skin check
You should request that your health care provider or dermatologist examine your skin from scalp to toe nails. This is important to assess for skin cancer such as basal cell, squamous cell and melanoma.

It can also teach you what to watch for and to further evaluate non-cancerous lesions such as eczema, skin tags, or psoriasis.

Talk with your health care provider today about starting the year off healthy with these five exams or tests. You will be happy to have these checked off your list.

Get your annual exams! If you’re like many people, you have great intentions to do this. But planning to squeeze it in at the last minute is really a plan to fail. No matter what you are due for – your annual Pap smear, blood workups, mammogram, hormone levels, prostate test, colonoscopy or getting your teeth cleaned – call now and set up the appointment. If you find out six months from now that you didn’t pick a good day, you can always change it later.

Posted on EmpowHER.com - authored by Dr. Carrie Jones

SOURCES:


How to Be the Healthiest Version of Yourself

Our old patterns, beliefs and thinking can keep us stuck in rut where we are constantly playing the blame game. Whether it’s the situation, our genetics, our environment or whatever, rather than looking deeper…how we are thinking. Our thoughts are powerful. We can choose to be the healthiest and happiest version of ourselves by taking some simple steps.

1. **Choose to Be Happy**
Choose to fill your day with happy thoughts. Stop worrying, stop stressing, stop unpleasant thinking…just stop. Life is just too short.

2. **Let Go!**
What’s bothering you? Do you want it to keep affecting you? You can choose to let it go and move on to more positive thinking. You have to allow yourself to let go.

3. **Take Control**
Look at the thoughts that you are thinking throughout the day. Are they the thoughts that make you happy and motivated? If not, change them. Take control of your life by first taking control of your thoughts. YOU are in control, don’t forget that.

4. **Be Your Own Best Critic**
How do you want to be perceived? Strong, confident, loyal, lovable? You need to first see yourself in those ways. Words are powerful, including the words you say to yourself. Tell yourself what you like, recognize your positive characteristics and applaud them.

5. **Change Your Environment, Change Your Life**
Surround yourself with people who make you feel happy or inspire you to be healthier. We've all heard it...you become your surroundings. Change your environment, change your life. Well it’s really that simple.

6. **Pay Attention to YOUR Body**
Your body reacts to the first bite of any food you put in your mouth. You may decide you like it, or you may immediately notice that it’s too salty. More significant reactions often don’t show up until later. For example, you may feel bloated or feel full faster than normal. You might also have swelling in your hands or get indigestion. All those symptoms can be tied to what you eat. So if you notice that you are reacting to something, pay more attention to what you are putting into your body. That
How to Be the Healthiest Version of Yourself - Cont.

will help you figure out what doesn’t agree with you so you can decide what you need to leave out of your diet to help yourself feel healthier.

7. Take Some “ME” Time
When is the last time you gave yourself a time out? Give yourself permission to take a half hour break.

8. Stop the Excuses
Decide how YOU can become healthier right now. Stop making excuses for yourself. What would make you feel healthier? Don’t think about yesterday or what you should have done or at some point need to do. Think about what could make you feel healthier in this moment.

It’s up to you to decide what you want to do with your time. Meditate, do yoga, soak in a hot tub surrounded by candles... the list of guilty pleasures is endless. So take away the guilt and give yourself permission to enjoy the peace of a half hour all to yourself. It’s an important way to be kind to yourself.

9. Say No
Don’t overextend yourself or make promises you can’t keep. That’s a bad cycle to start. If you are tired, don’t go to that dinner. Go home and take care of yourself. If you can’t be there for someone or make it somewhere, don’t say you will. Saying no is a whole lot better than saying yes and not following through.

10. Get Moving
If you are not a gym person or feel intimidated by working out around people, that’s ok. Turn on your favorite music and move! Go outside and walk around your neighborhood. If you’re watching tv, get up during the commercials. Exercise doesn’t have to mean being in a gym, just get moving. Incorporate movement into your day and you will feel better.
Remember - Take Charge of You

- If you think something’s wrong... something IS wrong and you need to take charge until you get to the bottom of whatever it is.
- Understand your body, so you can properly take care of it.
- If you feel like you’re not being heard by your doctor, find a new one - you need someone in your camp protecting and listening to you.
- This book saved my life. Check out “Screaming to Be Heard” by Dr. Elizabeth Vliet
- Know your numbers! Your bloodwork, your hormone levels - the numbers that apply to you and your body that affect your health
- Take time for yourself. It’s ok… those around you will benefit from this too. You deserve and you know it.
- Live by your healthy habits!
- Find resources, information, tools and people to help you stay well

Get Support & Validation
Ask health questions and get the support, validation & answers you need.

Talk to Women Like You
Join or start a group & connect with others around health topics that matter to you.

Start the Conversation
Share your insight by contributing health info, useful tips & personal stories to help others.

ASK A Health Question  CONNECT In Health Groups  SHARE Info, Tips & Stories
Together we can make a difference.

EmpowHER

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