

Getting the Most Out of Your Body by Maximizing Your Health:
Maintenance or Repair?

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

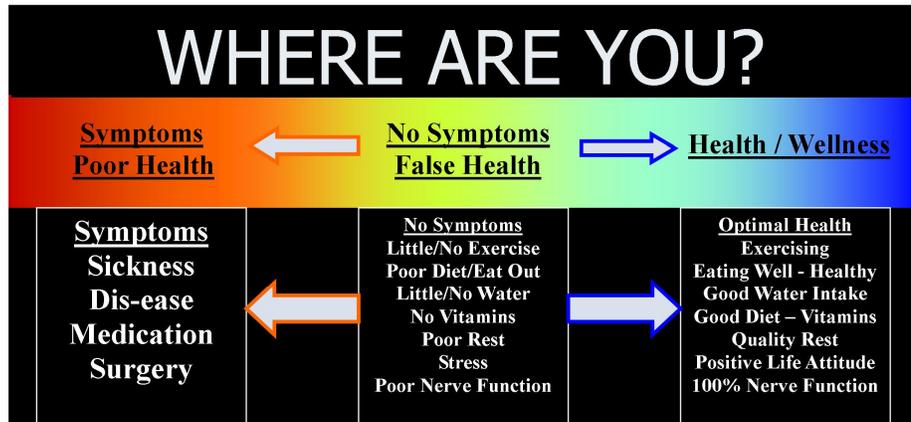
When it comes to your health it is important to make the decision **NOW** whether you are going to live by the Rule of Maintenance or Repair. Why you may ask? The decisions you make today concerning your health not only affect your immediate level of health, but also determine your quality of health in the future.

To know what is best let us first look at the definition of health. If you ask most people what the definition of health is they would say it is when you are not sick or when you do not have any symptoms. Living your life with a poor understanding of what health truly is can lead to unexpected sickness and disease and ultimately a very poor quality of life. The following is just a very small list of medical conditions that can be developing without any signs or symptoms: Heart arrhythmia, Glomerulonephritis (Kidney disease), Atherosclerosis (plaque in arteries), Hypertension (high blood pressure), Osteoarthritis, Ovarian cancer, Benign prostatic hypertrophy, Ovarian cyst, Breast cancer, Paget's (bone) disease, Cardiomyopathy, Tooth Decay, Spinal degeneration, Polyps of large bowel, Cervical cancer, Prostate cancer, and Cholelithiasis (gall stones).

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Your health is not merely about symptoms. If you have no symptoms does that mean you’re healthy? If that were the case then why do some people feel great one day and then the next day have a heart attack? Why do people go from having a normal conversation one moment to not being able to talk a minute later when they have a stroke. Every single day you are either going towards health or away from it based on the decisions you make for yourself. You have to make the decision as to what you want for your body.

You can choose whether or not to smoke that cigarette. You can choose whether or not you are going to take 30 minutes of your lunch to get on the treadmill. You can choose whether or not you are going to eat good nutritious foods. Everyday you have tons of choices that will lead you to a “healthier” or “sicker” you.

Looking at the colored chart can you pick out where you would fall on this sliding scale? If so, why do you feel you are there? What changes in your life would you need to make to increase your level of health? To make a



change for the better or for the worse it starts with “Maintenance or Repair.”

Let us look at some examples of “Maintenance vs. Repair.”

Example #1: Do you brush your teeth daily? If you do then you are taking a proactive approach of maintaining healthy teeth. If you wait until there is pain before you brush your teeth or go to the dentist then you have already waited too long. Brushing will keep bacteria from eating away at your teeth and causing cavities. Let's say you already have a tooth cavity. Is it better to go ahead and get it repaired (filled) or wait until the bacteria gets all the way down to the root and either causes you to get a root canal or lose the tooth? Of course a filled cavity is much easier on you and your bank account than getting a root canal plus you get to keep your tooth!

Example #2: When it comes to your car do you change the oil around the 3,000 miles mark or do you wait until your oil light comes on? I would hope you take the proactive approach to changing the oil before you see the oil light flash! The longer that oil stays in your engine it will fill with impurities and begin to do harm to your engine. If left long enough your engine will break down and you might find yourself on the side of the road waiting for the tow-truck! Any mechanic will tell you that it is much easier to maintain your car than to repair it!

The two different examples above give us the same conclusion. It is much easier and wiser to maintain than to repair. Everyday we rely and trust in our homes and cars to take care of us. Without your roof you would be left in the rain. Without your walls you would feel the brisk, ice shivering wind during the winter. Without your car you would have a hard time running your errands, getting to work, or taking your kids to their ballgames. To keep them in good shape and running smooth the smart and obvious choice is to have routine maintenance to ensure they take care of you when you need them most.

Just for the sake of argument let us look at a life of "repair." If you wait until your car has a tire blowout before changing them then you risk: a dangerous accident, being stranded on the side of the road, difficult driving in dangerous conditions like rain or snow, possible damage to your car, and puts you and your passengers at risk of injury or possibly death. If you add the above risks to the time it takes to change a spare on the side of the road or the time to get a tow truck plus the cost of repairing your car it makes much more sense just to replace your tires as recommended (maintenance!).

Whether it is your car, your home, your lawn mower or any other possession you own you want to keep it well maintained so that it will last you the longest amount of time with the least amount of trouble. Why would it be any different for your body and your health? You are more demanding on your body than you are on any other material possession.

The average heart beats about 75 times per minute, amounting to about 40 million times a year, which adds up to more than 2.7 billion times in a 70-year lifetime. Every time you take a step your feet absorb 3 – 4 times your body weight through them. (Think about it! If you weigh 150 lbs. then your feet are taking 450-600 lbs. of force through them with each step!) If you're a runner then magnify your weight by 15 times! (If you weighed 150 lbs. then this would equal 2,250 lbs.) Your body is the most valuable piece of machinery you have and works harder than anything you own. Unfortunately, many times we spend more time, money, energy, and resources on other material things (cars, clothes, eating out) than on our own bodies.

It is great that many people decide to take care of themselves when their body starts to fail. To be completely honest however, most doctors will tell you their patients

wait way too long before coming to see them. I see this every day in practice. Action rarely gets taken until the pain or symptom is over bearing. The problem with this is that now the problem has usually become chronic and it is much harder to correct.

Instead of waiting to try to repair your body after it breaks down, choose today to start a proactive wellness lifestyle. Choose to put your body on a regular maintenance plan. Look at all aspects of your health. Create a “Wellness Healthcare Team” for you and your family. Your wellness healthcare team should include a dentist, family medical doctor/pediatrician, optometrist, and a family chiropractor. Just as it is important to have regular dental check-ups, the same holds true for all your other healthcare professionals. Your teeth will decay without proper care. Your eyes can deteriorate quickly without proper corrective lenses, your spine will decay without proper care, and your body’s health will fail if it is not cared for properly through diet and exercise.

Ask your healthcare provider any questions you have so that you will be able to make an informed decision. If you are uncomfortable with their recommendations then get a second opinion. Be sure to take caution if your health care provider tries to convince you not to see another doctor or health care profession. Too often I hear people tell me that they were told never to see another health professional or that they would just have to live with their condition. A good health professional will want to work with other health care providers to co-manage your family’s needs. If you are not getting the results you are looking for see another healthcare provider!

Your health and the health of your family should always be first. Your body is your most valuable possession and should be taken care of as your top priority. Do not wait until your body needs repair and instead use your time, energy, and resources to start taking a proactive approach to your health. It is much cheaper and less work to take care of your body versus waiting to repair it. It was Elbert Hubbard who said, “If you have health, you probably will be happy, and if you have health and happiness, you have all the wealth you need, even if it is not all you want.” We put value in what matters most to us. Never forget how much your body does for you each and every day!

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