

# HEALTH & FITNESS

## Heading Toward Health

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The Clock Tower in St. Mark's Square, overlooking the waters of Venice, was completed in 1499. It was an incredible feat of mechanical precision that indicates time, moon phases and the reigning zodiac sign. The Doge Agostino Barbarigo commissioned the tower and Giampaolo Rainierie and his son, Giancarlo, constructed it. Those two master mechanics became its custodians and this began a tradition that lasted five centuries wherein the custodians and their families live inside the tower while watching over it.

We are our own custodians. We watch over our health, and if we do that in a masterful approach, our time on this planet will last longer. Our parts wear out too. We can keep them well oiled and in more precise function by taking care of the tower we reside in for our entire life.

We have known for centuries that healthy living includes a well balanced

diet, exercise and controlling stress.

*An apple a day keeps the doctor away. Stop and smell the roses. Use it or lose it.* These are everyday sayings that have been around longer than this author or those of you who are reading them.

What medicine just recently understands is that a good night's sleep is just as important. It's not how much or how little we sleep...it's the quality of sleep that is important. Just as St. Mark's Clock needs an occasional tune up, we as humans should get a tune up each night as we sleep.

This happens when we attain the deep level of sleep. During REM (rapid eye movement) sleep our brains basically paralyze our muscles and they become rejuvenated. We feel better; have less pain, function more normally. Many of us, however, either don't get enough REM sleep or some of us even stop breathing several times an hour.

Since we are asleep, we

don't even realize it. It's like taking your car in for a tune up and then taking it back home without the mechanic even looking at it. Without our tune up, the sludge and unwanted nasty chemicals are not flushed out of our cells and build up to the point where damage occurs.

If you are tired often upon awakening, if you snore, if you are tired during the day, your doctor should evaluate you. When you are checked, make sure you inform him or her of your tiredness or snoring. Your clock might be winding down much sooner than you or your family is ready for.

Sleep apnea is dangerous. It can make you sick with multiple medical diagnosis such as type 2 diabetes, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, headache, concentration disorders, etc. It can kill you.

That's the bad news. The good news is that it is controllable. Take care of yourself. You are important to a lot of people.