

7 Pillars of Health



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When the foundations of health are strong, the body has an amazing ability to balance its self. With over 22 years of clinical practice I have identified the following Seven Pillars of Health that I commonly use to leverage the body's ability to self-repair.



#1 BIOCHEMISTRY – What does your unique, biochemical fingerprint look like? I consider individualized, optimized biochemistry to be a primary pillar of health. As a Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner and Board-Certified Clinical Nutritionist, I evaluate a patient's unique needs for clinical support from vitamin therapies that are required, first to achieve, then to maintain health. This clinical support system is unique to the individual. I will evaluate a patient for clinical imbalances with blood work and diagnostic testing then combine the nutritional intervention with optimization of the modifiable lifestyle factors.



2 HYDRATION - Are you properly hydrated? How much do you weigh and how many ounces of water do you drink per day? Do you regularly consume caffeinated products or alcohol that can interfere with proper mineralization and cellular hydration? Start by trying to drink 40% of your body weight in ounces of water a day and work your way up to a goal of 50%. All tissues of the body require a level of hydration to function optimally. Can you function if you drink less water than you should? Of course, but we are looking for optimal. That is foundational for Functional Medicine. There are even apps for your smart phone now that remind you that it is time to have some water.



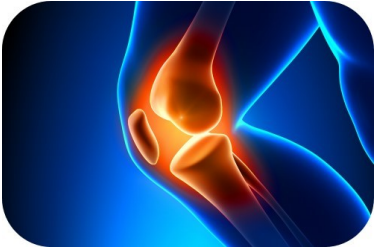
#3 EXERCISE - Do you exercise? How often and with what intensity and duration do you exercise? If you don't exercise, start with something simple like 20 minutes three times a week and slowly build yourself up. Exercise, with today's technology, can be found in hundreds of forms, most of which have redeeming health benefits. There are multiple sources of at-home exercises available. YouTube has Pilates, Yoga, H.I.I.T., Personal Training, Cardio, Stamina, Weight Resistance, Thera-Band, Orange Theory and much more available at the touch of a button. You don't even have to leave home. There are redeeming health benefits to social interaction, so if you have a gym membership or group fitness that you can participate in, this acts as a double health benefit.



#4 SLEEP - How many hours of restful sleep do you get every night? Is it easy to fall asleep? Is it easy to stay asleep? Do you require medications or sleep aids to achieve a good night's sleep? Do you have dreams? When you wake in the morning are you tired or rested? Everyone's sleep needs are different but the minimum required time I would consider for any individual is seven restful hours of uninterrupted sleep. Too much stress will frequently cause sleep disturbance as will inflammation and blood sugar imbalances. Addressing the root of sleep irregularity is the key to correction.



#5 MOOD - How is your mood? A positive mental attitude is an important pillar in overall health. Are you optimistic? Does stress seem to distract you from feeling balanced on a regular basis? Do you have hobbies or activities that bring you pleasure at least a few times on a week? Where do you fall on the “I love myself” scale? The study of psycho-neuro-immunology (how the mind can affect the body) is very progressive. Harvard is even releasing studies showing that if you stand in the posture of your favorite super hero for 5 minutes a day you can create positive changes in hormone metabolism. It is important to honor the relationship between your state of mind and healing. It can be pivotal in achieving true health.



#6 PAIN - Are you experiencing pain? Pain changes the biochemistry of the human body to a compromised and imbalanced system. Chronic pain patterns create an environment of inflammation that can change mood, motivation, hormones, quality of sleep and even have been confirmed to increase cardiovascular risk factors. Identifying where your pain comes from and addressing the root of that concern can allow the body a chance for healing.



#7 DIET - How clean is your diet? Is your plate regularly filled with processed, refined foods similar to the Standard American Diet (SAD)? Or, are you eating whole foods often enough to support and promote healing in your body? Have you identified any generally healthy foods that do not agree with your system? Food sensitivity elimination and understanding the difference between an allergy and sensitivity is very important to allow the body to heal. The media confusion and constant debate on “what is the best diet” is nothing more than background chatter in Functional Medicine. The proper question to ask is; What is the best diet for your individual needs and system imbalances at this specific time with your unique clinical presentation? Understanding that “Food is Medicine” will be a foundational pillar of your Health.

Dr. Conan Shaw is a Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner and Board-Certified Clinical Nutritionist with over 22 years of experience. Dr. Shaw works with individuals to help them achieve their health goals, often when their health goals seem out of reach.

With the use of an integrated medical approach, he specializes in treating the “why” behind a broad spectrum of health issues ranging from Immune Deficiencies to a Slow Metabolism, G.I. Issues to Mood Related Concerns, Cancer to Chronic Fatigue, and from complex Auto-Immune Diseases, Lyme Disease and Mold Born Illness.

Dr. Shaw was hired as the Clinical Nutritionist for the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2014 and works with patients at any stage of their health journey to improve outcomes.

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