

28 things to be thankful for this Thanksgiving



With all the talk of turkey and the brewing madness of Black Friday on the horizon, sometimes Thanksgiving can be swallowed up by anything but thankfulness. Or, for some, it's simply difficult to look at their lives and find things for which to be grateful.

This week, I want to offer a few suggestions for those who are facing the holiday week distracted or disheartened. Here are just a few things to be thankful for this year:

1) The 100 trillion microbes that inhabit our bodies, which constitute the microbiome that reinforces our immune systems, manufactures vitamins and essential nutrients, balances our metabolisms, detoxifies our tissues, and regulates neurotransmitters in our brains



2) Our hearts that beat 2.5 billion times during the average lifetime

3) The baroreceptors in critical locations in our bodies that help us adjust to position changes by making subtle changes in our blood pressure and arterial tone

4) The differentially methylated regions (DMRs) of our DNA

which allow for finely-tuned epigenetic expression based on availability of key nutrients like folate, B12, B6 and trimethyl glycine (TMG).

5) The subtle interplay between brain, pituitary and the adrenals that supports our incredible resiliency in the face of stress

6) The enormous diversity—but overall uniformity—of human genetic material that allows us to be distinct individuals, while adhering to a basic biological blueprint which ties us together as a species

7) The extraordinary ability of humans—unique in the animal kingdom—to adapt to consumption of an extremely wide variety of foods

8) The remarkable way that nature has engineered foods that are good for us to taste delicious

9) Our brains, which still outperform the most sophisticated computers in tasks requiring judgment and discrimination

10) Our ability to use language with exquisite precision, which marks our distinction from other “intelligent” species

11) Our incredible immune systems, which have the versatility to respond to ever-changing challenges from myriad new and virulent pathogens

12) Our highly-discriminating senses—vision, taste, smell, hearing, touch—which offer us a vast repertoire of ways to experience our world

13) The amazing self-cleaning apparatus of our newly-discovered glymphatic system of the brain, which washes away accumulated waste products while we sleep

14) The amazing ability of wounds to heal and tissues to repair

- 15) The remarkable ways in which our bodies respond positively to exercise, even in aged patients with debilitating diseases
- 16) Stupendous advances in medical technology that enable us to address medical conditions once thought incurable
- 17) Expanded awareness and deployment of natural strategies for preventing and curing chronic diseases not amenable to high-tech fixes
- 18) New understanding and awareness of the consequences of exposure to environmental pollutants, toxic food additives, and antibiotic and hormone residues
- 19) Growing public familiarity with, and interest in, integrative health practices
- 20) Courageous patients who are willing to step out of the box and risk the wrath of their conventional doctors by pursuing alternative therapies like functional medicine, chiropractic, traditional Chinese medicine, and chelation or IV vitamins
- 21) Responsible and ethical supplement manufacturers who are offering the public potent and safe wellness tools to empower their self-care
- 22) The capacity of a single, readily-available vitamin—vitamin D—to influence scores of metabolic pathways within the body
- 23) The capacity of a single, readily-available mineral—magnesium—to regulate over 300 biochemical reactions in humans
- 24) The forgiving nature of the human body—its capacity to withstand years of abuse from cigarettes, alcohol, junk food, environmental toxins, stress, and yes, pharmaceutical drugs—and bounce back with the gentlest of encouragement from renewed healthy diet and lifestyle practices

25) The bounty of natural agents—many not even yet discovered—that, if deployed properly, can offer solutions to some of our most daunting health challenges

26) The uncanny ability of belief and faith to unleash the latent power of the placebo effect to bring about healing, even without material interventions

27) The Internet, which has brought about unprecedented access to health information, engendering a revolution in self-care and grass-roots activism

28) The dedication, creativity, scientific rigor and idealism of the growing world-wide community of integrative health practitioners that I proudly count myself to be among

And, finally, this audience of Intelligent Medicine stalwarts, you who continually inspire me to seek out and communicate cutting-edge and relevant news about preserving health and reversing disease.

Indeed, there's plenty to be thankful for this Thanksgiving!

Wishing all of my readers a safe, healthy, enjoyable holiday weekend.