

## Get well

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a half-dozen local health experts offer their advice on getting healthy and staying that way

Introduction by Cristina Olds

Albuquerque is blessed with a vast array of talented health and wellness professionals and services that are heavy on the alternative healing spectrum. A quick Yellow Pages search in Albuquerque shows 104 massage therapists, seven massage schools, 109 acupuncture businesses and 39 yoga studios.

Healthcare providers are also major employers, such as Lovelace Medical Center, University of New Mexico Medical Center, Presbyterian Health System, St. Joseph's Healthcare System and the VA Medical Center, who provide jobs for more than 12,000 people in New Mexico, according to D.C.-based policy research organization Health System Change ([hschange.com](http://hschange.com)).

Given the current state of health care, prevention arguably continues to be the smartest approach to staying healthy. Those who actually have health insurance are fortunate, but you're even luckier if you don't need to use it.

Local iQ asked six local experts in different fields for their take on preventive medicine and techniques that can be used by our readers to stay healthy and out of the doctor's office. Along with general health and wellness advice, we asked each specialist what they do for themselves to stay healthy. Obviously, the wellness experts we talked to — a dietician, a massage therapist, a Doctor of Oriental Medicine, an athletic trainer, a pilates instructor and a specialist of internal medicine — are just a small sample of the numerous branches of the overall wellness tree.

Their suggestions for the "new year, new you" make a lot of sense, and although being healthy can be as simple as eating right, many of us can appreciate extra motivational tips and tricks to keep us on the straight and narrow path.

Common themes arose from all the experts: reduce stress, eat food that's good for you and believe in your resolve and ability to reach your health goals. Acknowledging the connection between the physical body and the power of the brain may help empower us to take control of our well-being and to reach our desired goals, in health and elsewhere in our lives.

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1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

Be intimate with your essence. Call it what you want &mdash; soul, spirit or higher self &mdash; but do whatever it takes to make a connection that is direct and true. This is the essential foundation for true health. From there, learn to be master of your consciousness. So many people I see complain that they can't shut off the chatter in their mind and as a result they find it difficult to feel peaceful, to rest and restore. Those little nattering hopes, plans and fears can lead one by the nose to act in ways that profoundly interfere with wellness. Consciousness can be vast, tranquil and intrinsically loving, but we lack good role models and teachers to help guide us to access it.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

Without question, the presence of intestinal parasites is the most common health issue in America usually overlooked by most medical professionals and, if present, will undermine all attempts at establishing true health.

There are many digestive parasites, and the symptoms can be local or systemic, physical or emotional. The Center for Disease Control estimates that about one in three Americans has some type of parasite. I have specialized in treating parasites since 1980, when I passed a 14 foot long, living, moving tapeworm that I contracted by eating fresh water fish that was undercooked. ... I use herbal remedies to get the bugs out. They're gentle and I find that they work better than the drugs.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

Results. For the most part I work with people who have explored a number of other medical options before they come to me. When someone feels bad and frustrated and begins to feel well again, that's the most powerful motivation for being true to your goals.

While a good, individualized, overall health strategy is essential for long term results, it is just as critical to provide immediate results. I use hands on therapy including acupuncture, medical massage, joint manipulation and for more extreme cases, injection therapy and intravenous therapy may be needed. Real results always include improved energy and that is the common denominator for motivating any long term, successful health endeavor. Working with energy is at the root of everything I do.

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

I hope I am providing true medicine. Since beginning my career over 35 years ago, I have tried to integrate the best (components) from the various medical systems from around the world. And that includes incorporating the best of biomedicine ... The word "doctor" comes from Latin meaning "teacher." It pleases me to help educate my patients. Most importantly, I really enjoy what I do.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

I sleep. Fortunately, I've been blessed by being really good at it. But, I've learned not to take that gift for granted. When I was younger I pushed myself. Like most people in our society, I lacked respect for rest. Eventually I crashed and it took a great deal of time (and energy) to rebuild my vitality. I've learned that if I make getting enough sleep a priority I am filled with exceptional energy throughout the day.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

Explore your painful places. It sounds simple enough and may have negative masochistic implications for some, but the sequestered painful spots that almost all busy people have and are unaware of, or ignore, can really undermine health and vitality. These hidden, painful places are secret messengers gently calling out, "Something is not right, please help me, please pay attention to me." These are places where energy, blood, fluid, nutrients, cellular waste, thoughts and feelings are not flowing as they should.

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Risberg is also the wildlife programs manager for Animal Protection of New Mexico ([apnm.org](http://apnm.org)), an essential organization working for the advocacy of animals. Additionally, she plays violin in the Albuquerque Philharmonic Orchestra ([nmapo.org](http://nmapo.org)), an all-volunteer group.

1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

To begin, to incorporate daily exercise, if they don't already. Walking at least 30 minutes a day is great for the entire body, including the mind. And, yoga is great for the mind, flexibility and strength.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

Stress and their jobs! It's important to practice relaxation techniques (exercise, meditation for even 10 minutes a day) and to get up and move during work and at any other time of the day.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

Having an exercise partner, for one, and just wanting to be healthy for themselves and for others who may need them. But if you can't find someone to join you, get out anyway!

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

Pain relief and relaxation, the latter of which is essential for lowering stress hormones in the body. I am also very caring and receptive to my clients' needs and provide a tranquil, nurturing environment.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

I hike in the foothills almost every day, and I do yoga at home a few times a week. I also eat very well: no white foods of any kind, no Cokes, no fast or fried food, very few processed foods and as many veggies as I can fit into a day.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

Get up and move! Whether it be hiking, biking, walking, dancing or jumping around and swinging one's arms, just do it!

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1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

Most primary care office visits and chronic conditions have an emotional component to them. Stress is killing us all in this country. There are many forms of stressors in people's lives such as marital, work, financial, environmental, family, relationships, social, religious, dietary, etc. I suggest stress management, living in the present and relaxation techniques to my patients. I want to providing a safe place for people to come and release their emotions, and commit to a different lifestyle.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

Their acceptance of having a problem and having negative emotions around that problem.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

A compassionate provider who is willing to listen and coach them through their journey of getting back to optimum health, and their own personal commitment to that process.

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

Being with my patients, listening to their stories and assessing their lifestyle in the whole context of physical, mental, social and environmental challenges.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

I exercise and meditate regularly. I eat a healthy plant-based diet and take necessary supplements to maintain my own health.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

Self care, learning to say 'no' (and knowing it is okay to do that), taking the time to relax, call friends and family members regularly, practice forgiveness and believe in the greater energy force that connects all living objects.

Jessica R. Morales

Certified Athletic Trainer ATC/LAT

Langford Sports and Physical Therapy

Morales graduated 2002 with a BS in Athletic Training from UNM. She grew up in Cincinnati, OH and has been living in Albuquerque for 10 years.

1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

My recommendation for people is to get moving and keep moving. I find that people who are active tend to be healthier and stronger and are therefore able to bounce back from injury faster.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

An unwillingness to change habits. A small change in diet and exercise can lead to enormous benefits.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

Communication is key. Throughout a patient's rehab process I am able to reevaluate progress, point out where improvement has been made and continue to make things more challenging. Keeping things new and fresh keeps everyone on their toes and excited for what is next.

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

To educate the patients. Education can include talking, handouts, homework and being able to answer questions the patients have. Education will hopefully help prevent injuries.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

To keep myself healthy I hit the gym most days of the week. A combination of weights and cardio keeps me tough and my heart happy. As far as food goes, I am a huge fan of fruits and veggies, and remind myself that goodies are meant to be eaten in moderation.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

It is very important for everyone to remember to make time for themselves. A 10 minute walk here and 15 push ups there add up and all count. Also try and plan ahead. If I know that I have a long day ahead of me, I pack everything. I make my lunch, bring a couple of snacks and pack my gym bag for a run at lunch.

Becca Stofac

Certified Pilates Instructor

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1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

I recommend that people try to move through life being mindful of how they sit, read, walk, stand, etc. For example, when you sit at your desk on the computer are you slumped over? Is your neck protruding forward so you can read, drive, see? When you walk, are your feet pointing forward or externally rotating? When you stand, do you cock one hip to the side? Is your 10 pound purse always on the same shoulder? I recommend that people use their Pilates breathing throughout the day so their core is strengthening and they are consistently supporting their spine.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

Sugar! Empty calories! People don't get that food is a huge part of why they look and feel the way they do. Exercise alone is not enough. Pilates will change the way you carry yourself, the way your mind and body connect to one another, but you have to eat to support the strength you are creating when you are practicing Pilates.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

Consistency and results are what most help my clients stick to (in order to) achieve their goals. You will feel different after your first Pilates session. Depending on a person's goals and their starting point, they will look different within weeks of beginning Pilates. As long as a person is consistent with the work and has realistic goals, results will follow.

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

A new or renewed sense of self. Pilates helps one to gain a mind and body connection. By strengthening your core, you will not only look taller, longer, leaner, but you will feel it as well. Your posture will improve, aches can subside; a strong core will lead to a stronger sense of self. The feeling of overall health and well being will translate into every aspect of a person's life.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

Besides practicing Pilates, I mostly commute by bike, walk my dogs, try to buy local and organic foods whenever possible and laugh often.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

Pilates.

Marcy Lawless

Registered Dietitian, MS, RD, LD

University of New Mexico Hospital

Lawless is a registered dietitian who currently works with post-surgical, high risk pregnancy and orthopedic patients at UNMH. Her master's work focused on whole foods nutrition and cooking for prevention and healing.

1. What are a few behavioral changes you recommend to people seeking a healthier life?

Include at least one vegetable and one fruit with every snack and meal. This way you are getting the recommended daily dose of fruits and vegetables, including powerful antioxidants and nutrients to keep you healthy through cold and flu season. Vegetables and fruits also keep weight down by providing a filling alternative to empty calories from sweets.

Speaking of empty calories, drink water as your beverage! Don't waste precious calories on soda, juice or 'energy drinks.' Water cleanses the body and ultimately keeps your energy up by keeping your body hydrated. Eat lots of healthy fats, such as nuts, seeds, fish and nut oils. These keep your brain thinking clearly, your joints well lubricated and actually keep your bowel function regular.

2. What is the most common issue you encounter as a roadblock to clients' health?

The psychology of eating. For most of us, food is linked to our emotions, both good and bad. Thus, before we can get into the behavior/food choice options, breaking the emotional barrier of why we choose the foods we do, has to come first.

3. What do you find most helps clients stick to their goals to improve their health?

Confidence. If you continue to tell yourself you cave in to bad cravings or that you will never be able to attain your health goals, you won't. So, in essence, people need to remind themselves of the power of suggestion and thought. (If you) tell yourself you are healthy and will continue to make healthy choices, you will.

4. What is the most important aspect of the services you offer?

Meeting clients where they are and not having unrealistic nutrition goals. I can have all the great ideas for healthy eating, but if I am not prepared to offer just one realistic goal, I have not done my job.

5. Besides the work you do in your field, what do you do to improve and maintain your own health?

By only purchasing foods that optimize my nutrition in some way at the store. This way I don't have to worry about succumbing to a craving at home, since cravings, I believe, are unavoidable. It is part of the human psyche to have cravings.

6. What is the one thing you'd most recommend to busy people who want greater health and more vitality?

Cook and store. Pick one day a week to cook up a few basics to eat on the go. For example: breakfast breads/muffins, stews or soups, rice dishes all in bulk, so you can freeze some, but also to have some on hand.