

Ten Health Trends You Can't Ignore

[Allison Van Dusen](#), 08.28.07, 6:00 PM ET

Your diet may be full of whole grain and organic foods, and your medicine cabinet loaded with the latest fat-fighting pills. But if you really want to get ahead of the health care curve, you'll need a kitchen full of mangosteens and a gym that will let you chase dragons.

Super fruits and entertaining workout equipment are just two of the newest trends in the world of health and fitness, where time-starved, stressed-out consumers are demanding new and easy ways to look and feel good.

"The biggest health and wellness issue out there right now is stress," says Barbara Katz, president of Florida-based consulting company HealthFocus International. "It's impacting people across the board. That's one of the reasons everybody is interested in antioxidants."

In Pictures: 10 Health Trends You Can't Ignore

Foods that contain antioxidants--molecules thought to prevent some diseases and promote good health-- have been increasingly popular in recent years. Consumers are seeking out foods with the highest concentrations of the stuff, like the Brazilian acai berry and the mangosteen, a fruit common in Southeast Asian cuisine. These so-called "super fruits" are increasingly becoming mainstream, says Katz.

Over the next few years, consumers should be on the lookout for so-called "nutrigenomic" foods, which contain ingredients that may affect genes responsible for disease prevention. WellGen, for instance, is developing a black tea extract geared toward helping people maintain healthy joints.

Another nutrition trend is growing concern about trans fat substitutions. Foods which contain trans fats pack a double whammy of lowering good cholesterol and raising bad cholesterol, which can clog arteries. Since the New York City Board of Health banned artificial trans fats from city restaurants, a number of national fast food chains have followed suit.

But now some nutritionists are worried about restaurants or food manufacturers using saturated fat instead, diminishing the health benefits of the ban. Research by Alice Lichtenstein, a professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts University, has shown that decreasing trans fat intake without changing other dietary habits doesn't have a very big impact on heart health or obesity.

"Trans fats have taken on a disproportionate amount of attention," Lichtenstein says.

Other health trends are driven by an aging society. As baby boomers start to feel their age, more doctors are looking for new ways to treat back pain, says Dr. Sam Bakshian, a practicing surgeon and partner at Tower Orthopedics in Beverly Hills, Calif. One increasingly popular treatment is the use of a small titanium implant to relieve pressure on the spinal canal. It's a less invasive technique requiring shorter recovery times than traditional back surgery.

Technology is also helping keep bodies healthy in the gym. In October, exercise equipment manufacturer Expresso Fitness will unveil technology aimed at providing a more addictive, entertaining experience: exercise bikes featuring front-mounted monitors and steerable handlebars, which allow users to "ride" a variety of virtual courses.

Gym rats can also exercise while playing videogames that involve slaying dragons and gobbling coins, winning prizes that can be redeemed for rewards like a free personal training session. It's all intended to attract gamers to the machine--as well as people bored of watching *Oprah* while they ride.