

How to Win the War on Cancer? Better Shoes, Fewer Vitamins

On '[Daily Dose With Jillian Michaels](#),' Jillian talks with renowned oncologist David Agus about his controversial approach to the war on cancer, his thoughts on multivitamins, and a hidden killer in your own closet. By [Allison Takeda, Senior Editor](#)

More people fear getting cancer than Alzheimer's and heart disease combined, according to research from the MetLife Foundation.

For half of all men and a third of all women in the United States, that fear will come true. But it doesn't have to be that way, says David Agus, MD, world-renowned oncologist and author of the best-selling book *The End of Illness*.

Agus, who was on the team of doctors that treated Steve Jobs, said he believes we can win the war on cancer — but not the way we're fighting it now.

"We've made almost no impact on making people live longer with [cancer](#)," he says in an interview for *Daily Dose With Jillian Michaels*, noting that the death rate is down only 8 percent over the past six decades.

Part of the problem, he tells Jillian, is the way we think about the disease. "Instead of just trying to shrink the cancer, which buys a little bit of time, I want to change the entire state of your body. But I know, as a cancer doctor, I'm not that good. And I know that I lose two or three patients a week — and I don't want to do that anymore."

The solution, he explains, is not to [treat the disease](#) but to stop it from happening in the first place. "Most cancers *are* preventable. We've got to take aggressive stances in that regard."

Here, five things Dr. Agus recommends to bring us one step closer to end illness:

Get to know your food. A healthy diet is key to preventing disease, Dr. Agus tells Jillian. And that means knowing not just *what* you're eating but where it came from. Ask questions when you go to a grocery store or restaurant: Is this salmon wild? Is this beef grass-fed? Are these chickens free-range? Look for simple ingredients (think real vs. processed foods) and seasonal produce. And don't get hung up on whether something is "organic" — it's more important that it's fresh. "People say, 'Organic is better.' Well, it *may* be better, but an organic fruit or vegetable that's been sitting on the shelf for two or three days has zero nutritional value. It degrades," Agus explains. "You want to get what's raised locally. Go to the farmer's market or, if you can't do that, get flash-frozen, which in general is a lot better than something that's been sitting at the fancy organic store for a couple of days."

Wear comfortable shoes. Any woman who has ever teetered around on 4-inch stilettos for a day knows that style comes at a cost. But blisters are just the down payment: The real price, Dr. Agus says, is a shorter lifespan and a higher risk of serious

illness. "Inflammation is the root of cancer, [heart disease](#), and neuro-degeneration," he explains. "At the end of the day, if your feet hurt, that's inflammation."

Ditch your multivitamin. "A vitamin is something the body can't synthesize or create on its own. For example, a mouse has the gene where it can make vitamin C, so vitamin C isn't a vitamin to a mouse," Agus explains. It *is* a vitamin to us, but there are healthier ways to get it — such as in food — than by popping a daily supplement. Research says vitamins show no significant effect on cancer survival and may actually damage your DNA.

"When you give a large dose in a pill, you downregulate the receptor and screw up all the signaling," Dr. Agus tells Jillian. "The body, for example, needs 10 to 15 units of vitamin E, yet a pill has 400 units. Who said more is better?"

In fact, more can be worse, according to one recent study from the ***Journal of the American Medical Association*** that looked at the effects of multivitamins on 39,000 women. "The women who took the multivitamins were actually healthier — [they had] lower BMIs, they had less diabetes going in, and they exercised more," Agus says. "[But they also had] **a 15 percent higher death rate.**" Which is not to say vitamins — the nutrients, not the pills — are bad for you. **"In food, [they're] awesome. Eat the real food."**

Address the problem before it starts. Conventional thinking about cancer tells us you can't attack the disease until you have it, but Agus says conventional thinking is wrong. "I want doctors to treat toward health and not toward disease," he writes in his book. "We've forgotten that curing cancer starts with preventing cancer in the first place." One great example of how to do this, he tells Jillian, is a study from 2004 in which [breast cancer](#) survivors were given either a placebo or a drug that builds bone for osteoporosis. "People said, 'Why would you do that? These people may have years to live. Why put them on a clinical trial?'" Agus explains. "Well, [because] breast cancer goes to bone. You change the soil, the seed doesn't grow."

Talk with your doctor. Dr. Agus stresses that his prescription for healthy living is not a "one-size-fits all" doctrine but a guide meant to ignite discussion and debate between doctors and patients. Statins, for example, have been shown to decrease disease rates and help people live longer — but they may not be right for individuals at high risk for diabetes. The point isn't that everyone should take statins; it's that everyone should at least talk about statins. "I want the conversations to happen," Agus tells Jillian. "I don't want some guy or girl behind a curtain making the decisions for you. I want you to go in with the data and discuss it." And remember, MD's in the US have very little nutritional training in medical school. They listen to the same commercials we do. They know drugs not nutrition!

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