

Pour Yourself A Glass of Wine, Hop on the Treadmill and Read This Book

by Roz Warren

I don't know if I'm going to get Alzheimer's, but know I don't want to. That's why I just read "100 Simple Things You Can Do To Prevent Alzheimer's" by medical journalist Jean Carper.

Doing simple things is something I'm good at. And while I'm usually skeptical about advice givers, Carper is reassuringly credentialed. She's written 23 health-related books and penned USA Weekend's "Eat Smart" column for years. Besides which she's got a personal reason to get this one right -- the book's dedication notes that she and two sisters share "a single copy of the ApoE4 susceptibility gene." ("Know About The ApoE4Gene" is one of the things she recommends we do.)

"100 Simple Things" is a grab bag of advice to follow if you want to stop the big A in its tracks, from the predictable ("Eat Antioxidant-Rich Foods") to the unexpected ("Consider Medical Marijuana.") (I'd be glad to! But first they've got to legalize it here in Pennsylvania.)

Each recommendation is presented in a concise chapter which includes the science to back it up.

The book is packed with fascinating (and potentially useful) facts, such as:

How long you are able to balance on one leg is a predictor of how likely you are to develop Alzheimer's.

Women who drink only wine and no other type of alcoholic beverages are 70 percent less apt to develop dementia.

Some people with Alzheimer's temporarily become more lucid after taking antibiotics.

I began reading the book on the treadmill, which took care of Items 99 ("Walk. Walk. Walk.") and 37 ("Enjoy Exercise"). How difficult could it be to cover all 100? I decided to try to incorporate as many of Carper's suggestions into my life as possible.

Some items were easy. For instance, "Beware of Being Underweight." Being underweight isn't something most menopausal women need to fret about. Then there are "Google Something" "Be Conscientious" and "Say Yes to Coffee" -- those three things pretty much describe my life in a nutshell.

Working in a public library, I've got "Have An Interesting Job" covered. On the other hand, that makes it a challenge to "Avoid Stress." The next time a patron hollers at me for refusing to waive his fines, I'm going to ask, "What are you trying to do, pal -- give me Alzheimer's?"

"Get a Good Night's Sleep?" No problem. Sleeping is another activity at which I excel. But my sweet tooth will make "Cut Down On Sugar" difficult. Luckily there's "Treat Yourself to Chocolate." (Cocoa increases blood flow to the brain.)

Thankfully, some of the advice just doesn't apply to me. "Think about A Nicotine Patch." "Overcome Depression." "Get Help For Obstructive Sleep Apnea." And there are some things I just won't do, however useful they may be. "Put Vinegar On Everything." "Play

video games." "Embrace Marriage" (Been there, done that. Never again.)

Some advice is easier to give than to follow. "Try to Keep Infections Away?" Good luck with that when you deal with the public all day. (Folks think nothing of sneezing on their library card, then handing it to me.)

It's no surprise that much of Carper's advice is about food and nutrition. "Eat Berries." "Eat Curry." (Not together, thankfully). "Drink Apple Juice." "Drink Wine." "Eat Fatty Fish." "Go Nuts Over Nuts." "Don't Forget Your Spinach."

I thought about preparing one gigantic meal with all the recommended foodstuffs, but I came up against "Count Calories." Not to mention "Worry About Middle-aged Obesity."

It was fun to see how many of the non-food items I could combine. For instance, I was able to "Be Easygoing and Upbeat" "Keep Mentally Active" "Beware of Omega-6 Fats" and "Drink Tea" all at the same time.

But I'm afraid that "Be An Extrovert" will forever be beyond my capacity.

Most items, like "Beware of Bad Fats," make sense at first glance. Others are more mysterious. What does "Have Your Eyes Checked" have to do with preventing Alzheimer's? Read the book and find out! If you do, you can cross one recommendation -- "Find Good Information" -- off the list yourself.

