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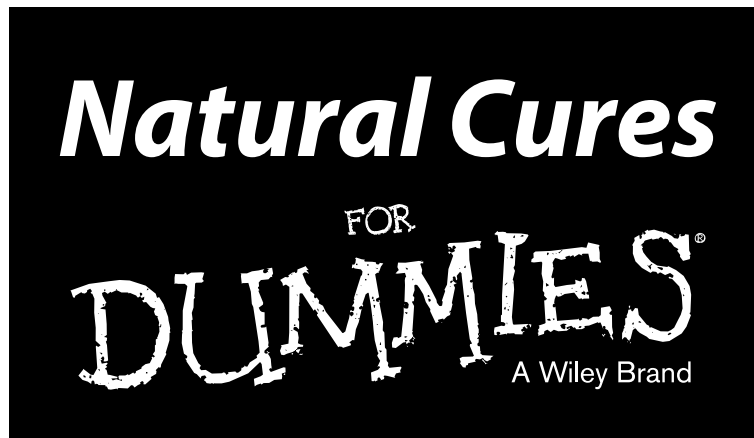
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**Scott J. Banks, DC, IFMCP, CGP, PC**  
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**Foreword by JJ Virgin,**  
bestselling author, *The Virgin Diet*







**by Scott J. Banks, DC, IFMCP, CGP, PC,  
with Joe Kraynak**

**Foreword by JJ Virgin**

*New York Times* bestselling author of  
*The Virgin Diet* and *Sugar Impact Diet*



## Natural Cures For Dummies®

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# Foreword

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I learned firsthand about the power of natural cures when a hit-and-run driver struck my then-16-year-old son Grant in September 2012. Among his injuries were a torn aorta, spinal fractures, skull fractures, and bleeding throughout his brain. As Grant lay in a coma, doctors offered a grim prognosis; they told us they could do nothing and advised us to let Grant go.

Western medicine provides numerous valuable contributions, but it often fails to see the bigger picture for healing and health. That's where some of my closest friends — progressive doctors, nutritionists, and other healthcare professionals — selflessly provided their expertise to help heal Grant.

Bucking the status quo and implementing natural cures played a huge role in keeping Grant alive when doctors argued we had no hope. Eventually, he emerged from his coma and began to speak, every word becoming nothing short of a miracle. Grant not only survived; today he thrives. If I could glean a bright spot during that challenging time other than to never lose hope, I would emphasize how providing the right nutrients and other modifications can radically heal your body. That's where *Natural Cures For Dummies* comes in.

In this user-friendly reference, Dr. Scott J. Banks couples cutting-edge information about symptoms and root causes with science-supported, safe “prescriptions” — healing foods, natural supplements, and lifestyle modifications — that, unlike pharmaceutical drugs or potentially invasive therapies, assist rather than work against your body's natural ability to heal. Consider this comprehensive, expert-curated book your go-to guide to naturally heal numerous conditions that leave you tired, sick, overweight, and aging prematurely. *Natural Cures For Dummies* will empower you to take control and provide your body the nutrients it requires for healing and abundant health.

JJ Virgin

*New York Times* bestselling author of *The Virgin Diet* and *Sugar Impact Diet*



# Introduction

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**M**odern medicine has made amazing strides toward combating infectious diseases and improving the quality of human life. Sanitation has nearly rid humans in developed countries of exposure to a host of disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and nasty parasites. Vaccines have virtually eliminated many fatal or crippling diseases and have held many others at bay. Advances in medical imaging now enable doctors to look inside the body without opening it up. Anesthesia allows for pain-free surgeries. And through the miracles of modern medicine, many people have had their hearing and sight restored, limbs replaced with robotic prosthetics, and are even walking around with artificial hearts.

Yet something is missing. The steady decline of infectious diseases is matched with a comparable rise in chronic illnesses, including Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, asthma, autism, cancer, diabetes, fibromyalgia, heart disease, obesity, and osteoporosis. And the best that modern medicine can offer in fighting this rising epidemic is a whack-a-mole approach of treating symptoms with powerful prescription medications and surgeries that then trigger other illnesses that have other symptoms that must then be treated. Over time, many patients end up on a half dozen medications (or more), and they still feel lousy.

Natural medicine takes a different approach. Instead of treating symptoms or even illnesses, natural medicine focuses on identifying and treating underlying causes: nutritional deficiencies, hormonal imbalances, inefficiency in digestion and absorption of nutrients, the presence of heavy metals and other toxins, food allergies and sensitivities, structural imbalances, and dysregulation of the immune system, to mention a few. Natural medicine not only cures illness, but it also optimizes wellness.

## *About This Book*

Fed up with conventional medical treatments? Welcome to *Natural Cures For Dummies*, your key to curing illness and optimizing wellness through nutrition, supplements, herbs, lifestyle changes, and other nonconventional treatments that harness the body's powerful self-defense and self-healing mechanisms.

Organized in an easy-to-access format and presented in plain English, this book introduces you to natural cures and takes you on a tour of common natural cures treatment approaches, including aromatherapy, Ayurveda,

functional medicine, herbal medicine, homeopathy, and naturopathy. In addition, you'll find guidance on dietary and lifestyle changes you can make to instantly improve your health. I also provide natural prevention and cures for over 170 common ailments, explaining which nutrients, supplements, herbs, and other treatments are most effective in addressing the underlying causes of these ailments.

You'll also find appendixes that cover vitamins and minerals, nutritional supplements, natural hormones, herbs, homeopathic remedies, and essential oils. These vital references can be used time and again as you embrace natural remedies to protect and promote optimal health in yourself and your family.

Although I encourage you to read every single word of this book from start to finish, you're welcome to skip around to acquire your knowledge on a need-to-know basis and completely skip the sidebars (shaded gray) and anything flagged with a Technical Stuff icon. Although this information may be too fascinating to ignore, it's not essential.

During the writing of this book, I adopted a few conventions to help convey the content as simply and clearly as possible and highlight important information:

- ✔ All doses given are for adults unless otherwise specified. See Chapters 3 and 12 for guidance on converting to doses for children and for adults who weight less than 150 pounds.
- ✔ Doses appear in the unit most commonly used for each supplement, usually grams (g), milligrams (mg), micrograms (mcg), and United States Pharmacopeia (USP). Colony forming units (CFUs) indicate the number of live organisms (bacteria or yeast) in a probiotic that are capable of reproducing to form a group.
- ✔ When specified, the better form of a supplement appears in parentheses directly after the supplement; for example, "vitamin B12 (methylcobalamin, sublingually in a fast-dissolving tablet)." The better form is more easily processed and used by the body or is best for a specific condition.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these web pages, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the web page.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

The fact that you're reading this book tells me that you're probably not feeling as well as you know you should feel and that you haven't had much

success with conventional medical treatment. Maybe you're taking a prescription medication that's causing side effects that are worse than the illness itself. Perhaps you're worried about the long-term effects of being on multiple medications. Whatever the reason, you're not satisfied with what conventional medicine has to offer, and you're looking for a better way.

Other foolish assumptions I've made about you include the following:

- ✔ You want to optimize health and not merely rid yourself of illness.
- ✔ You're committed to making bold changes to your diet and lifestyle to achieve and maintain wellness.
- ✔ You're eager to transition from your passive role as patient to a more active role as doctor-patient.
- ✔ You're ready to start listening to and learning from what your body is telling you it needs and needs to avoid to function at its best.
- ✔ You recognize that conventional medical treatment is required for serious physical injuries and certain medical emergencies, including infectious diseases that threaten life or limb.

## Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, icons in the margins highlight different types of information that call out for your attention. Here are the icons you'll see and a brief description of each.



I want you to remember everything you read in this book, but if you can't quite do that, then remember the important points flagged with this icon.



Tips provide insider insight. When you're looking for a better, faster way to do something, check out these tips.



"Whoa!" This icon appears when you need to be extra vigilant or consult your healthcare provider before moving forward.



Occasionally, I feel compelled to delve deeper into the biology or physiology of a given health condition or treatment. When I do so, I give you a heads up with this icon, so you can skip the details and head right to the cure.

## *Beyond the Book*

In addition to the abundance of information and guidance on harnessing the power of nature and your body's self-protection and self-healing mechanisms, you also get access to even more help and information at [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com). Go to [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/naturalcures](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/naturalcures) for a free cheat sheet that accompanies this book. It brings you up to speed on natural cure fundamentals, provides a list of junk foods to eliminate from your diet and healthy foods to eat more of, outlines a protocol for maintaining a healthy gut (the key to wellness), and tells you how to combat colds and other bacterial, viral, and fungal infections by enhancing your body's immune response.

You can also head to [www.dummies.com/extras/naturalcures](http://www.dummies.com/extras/naturalcures) for a few free supplemental articles that I think you'll find helpful as you begin your journey to optimal health and well-being. Here you find out how to restore healthy gut bacteria after antibiotic treatment, discover ten key supplements to always keep on hand, and come to recognize why taking vitamins and minerals in their better forms is so important.

## *Where to Go from Here*

I structured this book so you could use it in a couple different ways. To get the most out of it, read it from cover to cover so you don't miss out on any valuable information and insight. You may also use it as natural cures desk reference; when you're not feeling well, simply look up your illness in the table of contents or the index and flip to the designated page to find the cure for what ails you. The appendixes also provide several quick references to nutritional and natural remedies.

I do recommend, however, that you start with the chapters in Part I. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the natural cures approach to wellness and gets you up to speed in a hurry on the theory behind the practice. In Chapter 2, I recommend diet and lifestyle changes that form the foundation of good health. And in Chapter 3, I take you on a tour of the different treatment approaches that comprise natural medicine, including Ayurveda, chiropractic, homeopathy, and functional medicine.

As you embark on your journey to optimal health, keep in mind that you're a unique individual. Your DNA, body chemistry, and even the microbes living inside you are all very distinctive, so there is no one-size-fits-all path to wellness. I strongly recommend that you consult with a qualified natural medicine practitioner — a functional medicine practitioner, naturopath, osteopath, chiropractor, or other practitioner who has advanced training in functional medicine and natural cures — for an initial evaluation to identify any deficiencies or other conditions that may be getting in the way.

## Part I

# Stepping into the Wonderful World of Natural Cures

getting started  
with

**natural  
cures**



Visit [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) for free content that helps you learn more and do more.

## *In this part . . .*

- Get up to speed on the natural cures approach to curing illness and optimizing wellness through nutrition, lifestyle, herbal tonics, physical manipulation, homeopathic remedies, and other nonpharmaceutical treatments.
- Build a solid wellness foundation by eliminating junk “food” from your diet, stocking up on healthy foods, establishing a reasonable exercise routine, and making other adjustments to your diet and lifestyle that provide your body with everything it needs for self-defense and self-healing.
- Tour the various treatment approaches that make up natural medicine’s healthcare model, including aromatherapy, Ayurveda, biofeedback, chelation, functional and herbal medicine, acupuncture, osteopathy, naturopathy, chiropractic, and nutritional medicine.



## Chapter 1

# Getting the Lowdown on Natural Cures

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding nature's role in curing illness
  - ▶ Weighing the pros and cons of natural cures
  - ▶ Knowing when to seek conventional care
- 

**M**odern medicine does a pretty good job fighting infections and acute illnesses. Unfortunately, its track record for preventing and treating chronic illness is abysmal. In fact, many chronic illnesses, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and arthritis, are now epidemics. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), people in the United States spend 86 percent of their healthcare dollars on chronic diseases — most of which are preventable through diet and lifestyle changes.

When you go to a conventional doctor, however, you rarely get educated or trained in proper nutrition or a healthy lifestyle. Instead, the doctor hands you a prescription for a medication that typically treats the symptoms and has a laundry list of very scary side effects, few of which are mentioned at the time.

There's a better way: Nature's way.

## *Wrapping Your Brain around the Concept of Natural Cures*

Over the course of a couple million years, the human body has evolved to develop incredibly efficient self-defense and self-healing mechanisms. Yet when you visit a doctor complaining of an illness, the doctor typically

disregards what nature has so carefully crafted and offers treatments cooked up in a laboratory, many of which degrade your body's own healing power. Consider the use of antibiotics, which kill not only harmful bacteria but also healthy bacteria in your gut — bacteria that are essential for proper digestion, nutrition, and immune response.

Natural medical practitioners take a different approach. They work with nature to strengthen the body's ability to fight infection and heal itself. In this section, I provide additional insight into the natural cures approach, provide some background on its history, reveal the science that supports it, and let you know what to expect from it as a patient.

## *Defining natural medicine*

*Natural medicine* is any healing practice that harnesses the power of nature, including the human body's self-defense and self-healing mechanisms, to prevent and cure illness. Natural medicine includes the following practices:

- ✔ **Aromatherapy:** Essential oils extracted from plants are used in numerous preparations, including massage oils and bath salts, to enhance physical and psychological well-being.
- ✔ **Ayurveda:** This traditional Hindu system of medicine seeks to establish healthy balance in mind, body, and spirit through diet, herbal formulations, and yoga.
- ✔ **Biofeedback:** This healing technique helps you control bodily processes normally thought to be outside an individual's control. It does so by providing real-time monitoring and information about those processes as you perform techniques to regulate them.
- ✔ **Chelation:** Detoxification of heavy metals and other toxins from the body gets rid of harmful substances that your body isn't geared to eliminate on its own.
- ✔ **Functional medicine:** Functional medicine is personalized medicine that recognizes and addresses each person's individual genetic uniqueness and the complex interactions among genes, diet, and lifestyle.
- ✔ **Herbal medicine:** This practice treats illness with plants or plant extracts and is perhaps the oldest form of medical practice.
- ✔ **Homeopathy:** Homeopathy treats illness by giving the patient minute doses of natural substances that would cause the same symptoms in a healthy person. The concept behind homeopathic remedies is similar to the concept behind vaccination, which deliberately exposes people to dead or weakened bacteria or viruses to protect them from infections caused by those organisms.

- ✔ **Massage and bodywork:** Manipulation of the body, primarily the bones, muscles, and nerves, to relieve tension and pain, establish balance, promote detoxification, or treat specific conditions comes in many forms, including chiropractic adjustments, traditional massage, acupuncture, reflexology, rolfing, Reiki, and shiatsu.
- ✔ **Naturopathy:** The Swiss Army Knife of natural healing, naturopathy uses numerous alternative treatments to promote healing and health, including diet and lifestyle counseling, herbs, homeopathy, massage, aromatherapy, acupuncture, and biofeedback.
- ✔ **Chiropractic treatment:** Chiropractic treatment seeks to realign the spinal column and joints that cause pain and dysfunction related to the nerves, muscles, and organs of the body. Many chiropractors follow a functional medicine approach. Look for a chiropractor who's received advanced training in functional medicine.
- ✔ **Nutritional medicine:** This approach uses food along with vitamins, minerals, and other supplements as medicine to cure illness and optimize health.

For more about these natural healing disciplines, check out Chapter 3. Head to the chapters in Part II for details on treating specific health conditions.



No two individuals are alike; effective treatment requires a personalized treatment plan. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to visit an Institute for Functional Medicine Certified Practitioner (IFMCP) doctor or a naturopath for an initial evaluation to determine whether you have any food allergies or sensitivities, nutritional deficiencies, digestive disorders, or genetic vulnerabilities that need to be addressed. To find a practitioner who has trained with the Institute for Functional Medicine, visit [www.functionalmedicine.org](http://www.functionalmedicine.org) and click Find a Practitioner. To find a naturopath, visit [www.naturopathic.org](http://www.naturopathic.org) and click Find a Doctor.

## *Sifting through the science behind natural cures*

Conventional science often questions the effectiveness of natural medicine by citing the dearth of well-designed clinical studies, but natural medicine actually has a growing body of scientific evidence to back it up. This evidence comes primarily in two forms:

- ✔ **Randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled (RDBPC) clinical trials:** RDBPC studies, which test the effectiveness and safety of medications, are the gold standard in the pharmaceutical industry. More and more, these

same studies are used to test the effectiveness of alternative treatments, including nutritional supplements. In the U.S., the National Institutes of Health's National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) is devoted exclusively to studying and reporting on the safety and effectiveness of alternative and complementary treatments; visit [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) for details.



RDBPC studies aren't always suitable for testing natural treatments, however, because these treatments are often tailored to the individual patient's needs and involve a combination of interventions, including dietary changes, nutritional support, exercise, and physical manipulation.

- ✓ **Investigations into human biology and physiology:** Advances in technology are revealing more and more about how the human body functions and how genetic, environmental, and lifestyle variables alone and together influence health and illness. For example, a recent study published in the journal *Cell* found that some of the bacteria living in the human body produce antibiotics, which help prevent and fight infections from certain harmful bacteria. This study provides additional support for the natural cures approach of supporting a healthy immune system with probiotics and avoiding the overuse of broad-range antibiotics that kill beneficial as well as harmful bacteria.

Science not only supports the use of natural medicine, but it also drives its development. Many reputable nutraceutical manufacturers now have their own research departments to develop and test products. (A *nutraceutical* is a food-based product that's used as a medicine.) Among other advances, this research has helped to develop vitamins and minerals that are more easily and fully absorbed by the human body, probiotics that survive stomach acid exposure so more live microorganisms can populate the gut, and formulations that provide the right mix of nutritional supplements to support the proper function of various systems in the body, including the digestive, cardiovascular, and immune systems.



Buy products only from reputable manufacturers that have researched their products for effectiveness and that adhere to strict quality-control standards and practices; look for those that are Good Manufacturing Processes (GMP) certified. I've been treating patients for 33 years and practicing functional medicine for over 20 years. I've seen many fly-by-night nutraceutical companies and poor-quality products come and go. Take the supplements in the form I recommend from reputable manufacturers. Otherwise, your body may not absorb them properly, and they may simply not work.

## *Knowing what to expect from natural medicine*

Natural medicine requires that you become an active participant in your own health. It requires commitment and sacrifice. You may need to eliminate from your diet some of your favorite foods and beverages. You need to exercise at least 30 minutes every other day. Most importantly, you need to invest time and effort in exploring what makes your body tick and figuring out what's causing certain symptoms or what your body needs and isn't getting to achieve optimum health.

The payoff is good health and vitality. Inflammation, at the root of many chronic illnesses, dissipates. You feel less congested and bloated and achy. You're less susceptible to infections and chronic illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. You add years — quality years — to your life. And if you do become ill, you know exactly what your body needs to kick its self-healing powers into high gear.

## *Recognizing Natural Medicine's Many Benefits and Its Few Drawbacks*

Before investing time, effort, and money in any endeavor, it's a good idea to weigh the pros and cons so that you can make a well-informed decision regarding the type of healthcare you want. In this section, I highlight the potential benefits and drawbacks of natural medicine as compared to conventional medicine.

### *Highlighting the benefits*

A natural cures approach to health and healing offers numerous benefits, including the following:

- ✓ **Provides a user-friendly alternative to the typical doctor-patient interaction.** Natural medicine practitioners tend to treat people instead of illnesses. You're more likely to get personalized care.
- ✓ **Treats the cause, not just the symptoms.** The natural cures approach attempts to identify and eliminate illness instead of merely suppressing symptoms. This approach is more likely to result in a cure.

- ✔ **Empowers you to take control of your own health.** A good natural healer is an educator, teaching you about your body and what it needs to be healthy. She doesn't just hand you a prescription and send you on your way.
- ✔ **Eliminates or reduces prescription medication side effects.** One goal of natural medicine is to reduce or eliminate prescription medications from your daily regimen. Less prescription medication means fewer medication side effects. No prescription medication means no medication side effects.
- ✔ **Improves your overall health.** Natural medicine doesn't merely eliminate illness; it strengthens the body overall. A body that's in optimal condition is better able to fight infection and cure illness. Being healthy is far more desirable than merely being not sick.
- ✔ **Strengthens your immune system.** Your digestive tract accounts for 70 percent of your immune system. Conventional treatments often undermine gut health by killing beneficial microbes that reside in the gut. Natural medicine promotes gut health by enhancing digestion and nurturing a healthy environment in which beneficial microbes thrive.
- ✔ **Enhances your mood, energy, and endurance.** Conventional medicine screens people for illness. Natural medicine screens for deficiencies, allergies, and sensitivities to find out what to eliminate that's making you sick and what your body needs for optimal function. As a result, natural medicine improves how you feel overall.
- ✔ **Saves money and time, due to fewer doctor visits.** Natural medicine teaches you how to be healthy so that you can develop the knowledge and skills to prevent illness and heal yourself. You may spend more time getting up to speed on the basics and more money on groceries and supplements, but preventing very costly chronic conditions that degrade your quality of life will likely save you much more in doctor bills, prescription costs, and time off work due to illness.

## *Acknowledging a few drawbacks*

Admittedly, natural medicine has a few drawbacks, including the following:

- ✔ **It's not always easy.** Natural medicine isn't as easy as popping a pill. Overhauling your diet, exercising regularly, reducing stress, and learning about your body all require time and effort.
- ✔ **Sometimes, you have to fly solo.** If you can't afford a doctor and your insurance refuses to cover alternative healthcare options, you may need to fly solo with information in books and magazines and online.