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Women: 9 Things Your Doctor Doesn't Know About Your Health

Though everyone should have a primary care doctor she trusts and feel at ease around, there are certain symptoms and ailments your go-to physician might miss—sometimes a specialist or alternative medicine doctor might be able to better diagnose your struggles.

BY **LINDSAY TIGAR**

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That your nails could reveal vitamin deficiencies

Think back to your last physical with your primary care doctor. More than likely, they took blood



VLADIMIR-GJORGIEV/SHUTTERSTOCK

samples, had you take several deep breaths in while they listened to your lungs and chest, and asked you a bunch of questions. But did they ask you about what's going on underneath your manicure? Likely, not. However, certified culinary health educator, [Ken Immer](#) says our nail beds can be very telling. "Your nails are a window into your bone health, and is closely related to diet," he

explains. "Brittle, flaky nails can be an indication of a deficiency in vitamins A, C, or biotin. When it comes to the relationship to bones—in women especially—this could also be an early indication of osteoporosis, as both nails and bones require similar protein chemical reactions to maintain structural integrity." Find out what else your [fingernails reveal about your health](#).

That you might not be eating enough



PHOTOGRAPHEE.EU/SHUTTERSTOCK

Have a big event coming up? Or have you been super-stressed and keeping forgetting to grab lunch? [Jennifer Bowers](#), RD, PhD, says that oftentimes lack of nutrition—and calories—starts to show in symptoms that a primary care doctor might not attribute to food intake. "Headaches and fatigue may be a result of not eating enough. Women tend to cut back dramatically on their food intake in order to lose weight, with detrimental side effects. Feeding your metabolism to jump-

start it is important, and many women need to eat more regularly," she shares.

That you're not getting enough omega-3s

Not sure what an [omega-3 is beneficial](#) for? For women, getting enough of these essential nutrients may help lower your risk of heart disease.



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However, when primary care doctors test your blood level for triglycerides, they often don't add the additional screening for EPA and DHA, which are needed to see where your omega-3s are lining up. That's why [Amy Gorin](#), RD, says understanding how to address any vitamin deficiencies can help you maintain long-term health and nutrition. "A

nutritionist will advise you on how to get the proper amount of omega-3s through diet changes. You should eat at least two 3.5-ounce servings of cooked fatty fish like salmon and herring weekly—or take a daily supplement providing at least 250 milligrams of EPA and DHA," she explains. Don't like fish? Here are [omega-3 rich foods that aren't fish](#).

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That you have chronic fatigue syndrome

Feeling exhausted all the time and can't pinpoint what's causing your lack of energy and overall, poor mood? [Liam Champion](#), PT, says that primary care doctors often overlook chronic fatigue syndrome, which has no test but can be



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debilitating, especially to women 40-years old and up. "There is no known cause of chronic fatigue syndrome, although studies point to dormant viral infections, hormonal imbalance, and stress," he explains. It's important to mention your symptoms

to your doctor, or your physical therapist, who could help you manage these conditions. Women, especially in their 40s and 50s, are four times as likely as men to have it, perhaps due to menopausal changes. There's no test, so before arriving at the diagnosis, a doctor will rule out other diseases or conditions that may cause similar symptoms. Think you might have it? Here are [chronic fatigue syndrome symptoms](#).

That your sex drive has taken a nose dive



JACOB-LUND/SHUTTERSTOCK

Our sex drives—especially as women—ebb and flow. So does how we're feeling below the belt and how we respond to foreplay, intercourse, and other intimate experiences. While you should talk to your doctor to rule out any physical issues and sexually transmitted diseases, and to discuss the benefits of hormone replacement therapy (if you're nearing menopause), [Dawn Michael, Ph.D](#), a clinical sexologist, says a counselor who specializes in sexual health can also offer insight. "Many times,

pelvic pain can be due to emotional issues as well as health and hormone issues. Asking the right questions is crucial before jumping to conclusions and prescribing any hormone therapy," she says. And if you're struggling to orgasm, it might not be due to what you're doing in the bedroom or under the sheets, but rather, blood flow. "The function of the clitoris and problems with overstimulation can cause lack of orgasm and even pain. This is rarely talked about by a medical doctor," Dr. Michael says. "It's important to explain to a woman how arousal works, including the process of blood flow to the vulva. And they should

know how stress can cause lack of blood flow, leading to pain and lack of arousal."

That you're struggling with falling—or staying—asleep



STOCK-ASSO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Though your doctor may ask you how many hours you're ringing in each and every night, they may not dig deeper to see what's keeping you from getting that much-needed shut-eye for your health and happiness. "A common sleep disorder is Insufficient Sleep Syndrome, in which the person has not gotten adequate sleep most nights for three months," explains [Catherine Darley, ND](#), from The Institute of Naturopathic Sleep Medicine.

"Insufficient sleep can contribute to inflammation, poor food choices, reduced insulin sensitivity, crashes, and mood disorders." Check out these [eight little changes you can make to help you sleep better tonight](#).

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That you're low on iron

If you tell your primary care doctor that you're lacking energy, get frequent headaches and sometimes have a racing heart—they might think that you're battling [anxiety](#). But as natural health



WAVEBREAKMEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK

and lifestyle expert, [Jaya Jaya Myra](#) explains, it could be that you need more iron. "A woman's monthly cycle can take a lot out of her, causing the body to need more iron. Extreme deficiency can lead to anemia, but even if you're not anemic, you can still be deficient," she explains.

That your diet is making your hormones go out of whack



JARABEE123/SHUTTERSTOCK

Sometimes, what we're eating can be the main cause of many of our health issues, especially if we have unidentified sensitive to specific ingredients. If you find yourself struggling with imbalanced hormones, your primary care doctor might not know the specific changes you need to make to rectify your symptoms, according to chiropractor [Jackie Romanies](#), DC. "So many of the foods we eat on a daily basis are full of genetically modified ingredients, or antibiotic or hormone treated

animal meat. If you are showing signs of a hormone problem such as irregular cycles, hair thinning, or excess hair growth consider buying organic free-range meat, dairy or egg products, she explains.

That what you're *not* eating could increase your breast cancer risk

Though many [factors influence your likelihood of contracting breast cancer](#) in your lifetime—from genetics to your environment—Mark Engelman, MD, FSCM and clinical consultant for [Cyrex Laboratories](#) says that doubling up on cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts and



RUSLAN-MITIN/SHUTTERSTOCK

cauliflower) will help regulate how you break down estrogen, creating a healthier ecosystem in your body and lessening your risk for developing breast cancer.

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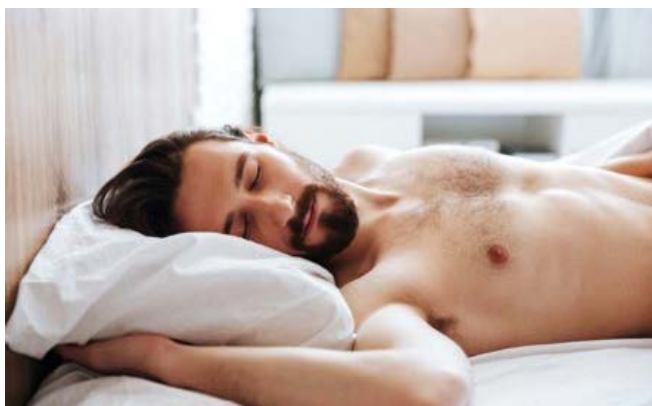
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