Written by Gene Stone, a bestselling health-savvy journalist who’s investigated, firsthand, virtually every form of regimen, diagnostic test, therapy, and fad, The Secrets of People Who Never Get Sick, a fascinating and original book of science, tells the stories of 25 people who each possess a different secret of excellent health—and shows how we can all use these insights to change our lives for the better.

Meet Bill Thompson, an entrepreneur in his early sixties who has the EKG of a 20-year-old and hasn’t had a cold in over two decades Bill’s secret? Every morning he dunks his head in a basin of warm water and hydrogen peroxide, a powerful natural germ killer that has the added benefit of making Bill feel as invigorated as a teenager when he comes up for air. Meet Dr Robert Fulford, whom Andrew Weil considered one of the world’s greatest healers, and who, even into his nineties, continued to see patients and was healthier than most people half his age. His secret: a daily set of stretching exercises that he claims stimulate the body’s life force, a force too easily blunted by illness, trauma, and even bad breathing habits. Meet Barbara Pritzkat, a now 83-year-old archaeologist with incredible stamina and health, who attributes her well-being to a morning tonic of brewer’s yeast—a treasure trove of B vitamins that’s also protein-rich and a good source of selenium, copper, iron, zinc, and other minerals.

The stories make it personal; then comes the science, the authority (with experts’ conflicting opinions on if and how it really works), and the nuts and bolts—how to bring each secret into your own life. From probiotics to veganism to a daily dose of garlic, from yoga to cold showers, it’s an invaluable list: 25 secrets to health, and how to make each work for you.
My Personal Review:
The four endorsements by leading MDs offered on the covers offer a clue as to the quality of the research - these particular MDs are among the best-known doctors for their focus on prevention of chronic diseases, which is the theme of this book.

Few writers can navigate the complexities of health claims ranging from Acidosis to Zoonoses in an engaging 200 pages. Stone manages to do it with interesting narrative, supporting science, and, where needed, caveats to keep the readers enthusiasm in check. The format generally includes the experiences of one or more individuals, some historical perspective, and then a prescriptive overview of the `secret.

As a healthy and very health-conscious vegan, I had to first verify that the author covered plant-based diets before buying a copy. He did not disappoint (see 17). That and calorie reduction (3) are the only `secrets of the 25 that are generally viewed as `restrictive behaviors (i.e., dont eat animal products and dont eat high caloric foods), and these two recommendations actually overlap. Other restrictive behaviors, such as dont smoke, dont use crystal meth, dont race motorcycles while smoking and using crystal meth arent included, but its no secret that restricting these behaviors will lead to a longer life.

I was not pleased to see the inclusion of chicken soup, but given the status of chicken soup in common health lore, I had to concur that its inclusion was appropriate. Happily, I found that the author did not give it the lightweight treatment often given elsewhere. He explains that ...the chicken may not matter as much as the rest of the soup... in relieving cold symptoms, and that the high sodium content (i.e., salt) in chicken soup may ...negate the soups benefits, and he further offers the approximate sodium content of one cup of canned chicken noodle soup (1,100 mg) and vegetarian vegetable soup (800 mg). I was also encouraged to see weight lifting (14) and running (20) included. While he didn't include swimming, he did offer a through review of the benefits of anaerobic exercise, which applies to (competitive) swimming. Other secrets include cold showers (8), eating dirt (7), herbal remedies (12), hydrogen peroxide (13) and yoga (25).

This book is arranged for casual reading of individual topics, not sequential reading, so it is ideal bedside reading if you tend to read a few chapters a night. It may be tempting to skip the introduction and to get straight to the bits that most interest you. Thats what I did. Fortunately, I did come back to the intro after finishing the book. It was a treat, and it cautions us to take control of our own health. As examples, Stone cites discredited treatments (e.g., using arsenic to treat blindness) previously offered by `experts and a published study that showed ...that the probability of cancer increased by 75% in people who used tanning beds before the age of thirty, which ...led the International Agency for Research on Cancer to reclassify tanning beds as `a definite carcinogen....
Because I don't keep a copy of Lancet at my bedside, I rely on books like this to extract and summarize such findings for me, and when it comes to preserving my health, if one of these `secrets extends my life by even one day, it will be well worth the cover price.

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