

## Yarn In Your Medicine Cabinet?

*by Maddy Cranley*

"Knit two rows and call me in the morning" is not medical advice you will see written on your doctor's prescription pad, but if we take a closer look, knitting has some great benefits to your health and well-being. Knitting is a craft that is not only creative and mentally challenging, but is relaxing, productive and a stress-reducer.

We've all heard about the importance of exercise to keep our physical bodies limber and healthy. "The brain is like a muscle," says Arnold Scheibel, M.D., head of U.C.L.A.'s Brain Research Institute. "The more ways you use it, the more reserves you'll build and the harder it will be for diseases to break it down." The key to building your brain, says Marion Diamond, Ph.D., professor of Integrative Biology at the University of California at Berkeley, is to pick up something that is unfamiliar to you and unlike your normal routine ... take up sculpture, painting, crossword puzzles, or work on a complex knitting pattern. (Family Circle Magazine)

Now take my Aunt Hilda, who not only exercised her mental powers but decided to use knitting as an aid in curing a physical ailment. Having recently broken an elbow, impatient with weeks of slow recovery and plenty of discomfort, she went down to her local shop, bought some yarn and began to knit a sweater, finishing it within the week. To her delight, she showed off the new sweater with a pain-free elbow. She fully credits the exercise of the knitting to helping her elbow heal and increase its mobility.

Not only is physical well-being at stake, but we are now aware of the importance of keeping mental stress at a low level in our lives. A survey of Vogue Knitting subscribers concluded that 59% of knitters knit for relaxation. The second most popular reason is the satisfaction that is attained from being creative. Joseph Primavera III, Ph.D., a psychologist who specializes in health psychology, states, "Knitting contains a nice mix of cognitive and behavioral techniques to help deal with stress." While knitting, "you are relaxed, sitting comfortably, breathing easily and you're doing something you can enjoy. A sense of accomplishment comes at the end when showing off a new sweater." (Prevention Magazine) This reminds me of a friend, who spends his days in front of a computer screen designing software programs. When he gets home, he likes nothing better than to relax by working on a complex Fair Isle pattern. Knitting is found to be a calming activity that helps to release built-up stresses from his daily routine.

So take your medicine regularly - knit to your heart's content, knowing that it is beneficial to your health. Let this wonderful craft be a continuum in your life, knitting through all the stages from baby clothes to grandchildren's cardigans. Continue to enjoy its surge of creativity and take a meditative break from the stresses around us to reflect on something we knitters already knew - our beloved craft is good for us!

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