Move It, Doc!

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Your doctor nags you to take your meds, eat right and care for your health. It might be time to turn the tables and remind your doctor to take care of your health: In a recent study, doctors at a large HIV clinic didn't offer necessary cholesterol-lowering treatments for positive people.

Researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) surveyed their clinic for a year and found that nearly half the people who needed cholesterol-lowering meds weren't offered them. Most neglected were those with the highest heart-disease risk—especially women, says study author James Willig, MD.

Standard treatment for high cholesterol (which effects many positive people) starts with 12 weeks of lifestyle changes (exercise, diet) to drop the "bad" LDL cholesterol level. If that doesn't work, doctors prescribe drugs—especially for people with other heart-disease risk factors such as family history or a cigarette habit. At the UAB clinic, 44 percent of those who didn't improve after the lifestyle changes weren't offered the meds.

This type of oversight is so common that it has its own name: clinical inertia. But don't succumb to inertia: Ask your doctor if you're getting what you need.

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