



## Mary Jane Minkin, 53

Clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the Yale University School of Medicine, in New Haven, Connecticut | Two children, ages 15 and 17

**Her story:** "In medical school, I realized quickly I was drawn more to preventive than therapeutic medicine. My mother died recently, and I view her death as almost a suicide: She was very bright, but she was heavy, never exercised, had diabetes, and smoked. As a result, she developed vascular dementia. Her illness made me an exercise nut, and all the more focused on getting my patients to take control of their health."

**Her exercise habits:** "I run five miles three or four times a week. I am the world's slowest runner. In road races, I'm the one who finishes last—the police see me and know they can go home. Before medical school, I was sedentary. I haven't read many books in the past 17 years—my oldest child is 17—but I've exercised religiously."

**Her diet:** "I try to eat a balanced diet, with lots of fruit, vegetables, and low-fat milk, along with some meat and good amounts of fish. And I eat some carbs—I think they're part of good nutrition. I drink a lot of water because I run. When I see a patient who weighs 300 pounds, it inspires me to run farther and faster and to eat less. But don't get me wrong—I'm not svelte. I'm a little chunky, and I wear a size 12."

**What stresses her out:** "I have trouble with things I can't control and with multiple things that need to be done at once—my daughter's college applications, my father coming to terms with putting my mother into a nursing home, dealing with my mother's medical issues from afar."

**How she unwinds:** "I exercise, call my friends, play with the kids, listen to music—occasionally, if it's



opera, I'll sing along if I'm alone. I have the worst voice imaginable, and my sister is an opera singer."

**How she stays mentally sharp:** "I have a positive outlook. I like to laugh, and I watch comedies—I seldom see serious movies. I've seen *Animal House* 10 times."

**Does she get the tests she should?** "I get my cholesterol checked, my Pap smears done, and my mammograms and colonoscopies taken care of. So I can describe them to patients who are reluctant. That said, I never do a test unless I can act on the results. Did I have an amnio when I was pregnant? Yes. But would I have the test for the breast-cancer gene? I don't know, because what would I do about a positive result?"

**Her vices:** "I love French fries and red meat, but I don't eat a lot of them. I should lose about 20 pounds."

**Her advice:** "Prevention, prevention, prevention. You're so much better off preventing disease than treating it."

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