



The Medicine Cabinet of Curiosities: An Unconventional Compendium of Health Facts and Oddities, from Asthmatic Mice to Plants that Can Kill

Nicholas Bakalar

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Delightful doses of medical miscellany about wacky doctors and their curious patients, from their smallest bones (the stapes) to their heaviest organs (the liver)

In this addictive collection of trivia, Nicholas Bakalar, the "Vital Signs" columnist for *The New York Times*, spoons out the things you never realized you really want to know about your body and your health.

Bakalar shares the wonders of medicine, from medical firsts (in 1667, the first survivor of a blood transfusion received sheep's blood) to medical onlys (rabies is the only infectious disease that is 100 percent curable when treated and 100 percent fatal if not). He takes a tour of diseases that belong in horror movies: liquefying organs, flesh-eating bacteria, mushrooms sprouting in the throat. He notes remarkable remedies, such as dark chocolate, which can stand in for blood-pressure pills. And he dissects the chemistry of the human body (including the 0.00000000000000015259 percent that is radium).

With a specialist's attention to the funny bone as well as the gray matter, Bakalar tickles the curiosity of both the healthy and the hypochondriac, following Voltaire's dictum that "the art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease."

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