

Through the hazy hangover fog you reach for the headache tablets and promise this year will be different. Sound familiar? Instead of making faddy diet resolutions you'll only break (again), take control of the future of your health. Here's a few suggestions:



Prevention, not cure

If we get ill, we go to the doctor and they treat us as best they can. But Dr Sebastian Kalwij, a GP and consultant for Prescan, a company that specialises in Preventive Medical Examinations, believes this will change: 'More people are going to start taking measures to avoid illnesses and disease.'

Prescan offer an MRI service called The Total Body Scan. At about £1,500, it's not cheap, but you get a full-body screen that could detect heart and lung disease, tumours, aneurysms or cancer before they become problematic.

Undeniably, it's a scary test to take: 'Of course people are anxious about the results, particularly if their parents have suffered from strokes or heart attacks.'

Although the scan does result in good news for some, it may also find an indication of illness: 'You may be told you have an aneurysm in your brain that is small but carries no risk of getting worse, so it isn't worth the risky operation,' Kalwij says. 'Then you have to live knowing you have one. You have to decide if you want to take that risk. Before anyone comes to me, they have to ask: "What next?" They need to think about the possibility of the results.'

Critics of the scans say they are too expensive. Others fear the results will almost definitely find something wrong, which will result in further, more intrusive tests, and ones that won't necessarily save your life.

And, of course, radiation is another concern. Prescan assures us that 99 per cent of their procedure is radiation-free but it is impossible to scan the heart and lungs, the moving parts, without it. They say you will receive the same radiation during the scan as the average person receives naturally in a ten-day period.

Kalwij is yet to undergo the scan himself: 'I don't want to know if I will live to 85 years old or to 45 but common sense tells me I should have one,' he explains. 'The scans provide you with information about your body. They can tell you to adjust your diet now to save your heart in later life. Most people feel better about their future when they leave than when they come in.'

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