KIMMEL Goes Under the Knife

JIMMY KIMMEL, the hilarious host of ABC's *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, recently had surgery to remove his appendix—and he's already laughing about it.

RD: How were you diagnosed?
Kimmel: Right before the show, I had a stomachache. I have a variety of gastrointestinal problems, so I didn't think much of it. But it got worse. The next morning, I called in sick, which I have never done before. I got on the Internet and looked up *appendicitis* out of curiosity. And it described exactly the symptoms I had. So I called my doctor and said, "I think I have appendicitis." He laughed at me and said there were about 20 things it could be. But when I got there, he said, "You may be the first person to correctly diagnose himself on the Internet." I got a CAT scan and delivered a beautiful nine-pound baby appendix.

RD: You're kidding about the nine pounds, right?
Kimmel: Really, the appendix is small, just the size of a pinkie.

RD: How was the surgery?
Kimmel: It was laparoscopic. They made a couple of incisions and filled my stomach with CO_2 and blew it up so they could get out the organ. I looked like I should be floating in the Thanksgiving Day Parade.

RD: Do you have a big scar?
Kimmel: I have three little scars. It's ruined my otherwise perfect body. They'll be covered by hair in a week.

RD: It's a common perception that men are big babies when they get sick. What kind of patient are you?
Kimmel: I'm the opposite. I went back to work the next day and spoiled it for everyone

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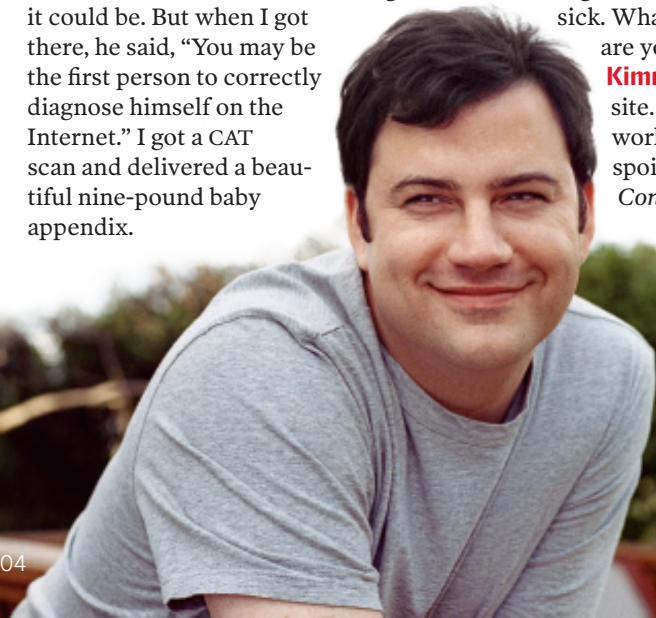
because they thought they were going to get the whole week off.

RD: *Appendix* is a funny word. Is there a funnier body part?
Kimmel: *Appendix* is good. It means "worthless." *Uvula* is a funny body part. But I think *spleen* is funniest.

RD: Did you get good get-well gifts?
Kimmel: I got something from Barbara Walters and Eminem and Larry King. Howie Mandel sent me a little plant. It's not even a plant; it's a tiny pot with dirt and a stick and 75 pages of instructions on how to care for it. I got a lot of stuff. It was better than a birthday. I wish I had another appendix, because I really scored.

RD: Well, you've got your spleen, right?
Kimmel: I think so. I think you can die without that.

RD: I think that's another "extra" organ.
Kimmel: Oh, good. I'll have that one removed next.

JODY L. ROHLENA

ELWOOD SMITH

The Comedy Cure

You're healthier now, having chuckled your way through this issue of *Reader's Digest*, than you were when you started. Laughter reduces stress, improves memory and helps keep our hearts healthy. The ability to laugh is hardwired into our systems, and new research shows that it's not only good for us, it's contagious. There's a reason sitcoms and stand-up are funnier when we're in a group: When we see someone laugh, our brain seems to activate "mirror neurons" that send us into the same fit of laughter.

A little lightheartedness can lead to a more positive approach in everyday situations, says Kelly McGonigal, PhD, a Stanford University psychologist. She teaches guided laughter, a group technique in which you prep your body for the physical work of laughter to reap the benefits: joy and social interaction. "All the efforts we put into reducing stress we ought to put into laughing," says McGonigal.

Humor therapy could one day be a part of preventive care. A good giggle helps you:

Scorch calories Laughing for 10 to 15 minutes increases your heart rate by 10% to 20%, which means you can burn an extra 10 to 40 calories a day. Over a year, that can add up to a four-pound weight loss.

Ease pain In a UCLA study funded by Rx Laughter, a group that promotes research on the connection between humor and health, experts discovered that children tolerated pain better than usual when watching a funny program or video.

Stay healthy Humor increases the production and effectiveness of natural killer cells that stomp out germs. These cells are elevated for at least 12 hours after just an hour of watching, say, Will Ferrell run around in his underwear. KATHRYN M. TYRANSKI