

## MIND &amp; BODY

## 5 QUESTIONS

# A doctor on TV turns into real-life patient advocate

By JESSICA Q. OGILVIE

Chandra Wilson, who stars as Dr. Miranda Bailey on the ABC series "Grey's Anatomy," knows what it's like on the other side of the prescription pad. And she knows what it's like to advocate for an ill child. Her 20-year-old daughter has long struggled with mitochondrial disease, disorders caused by problems with the mitochondria, which generate energy for the cells.

## How did you first know that something was wrong?

The first manifestations were cyclical vomiting syndrome. It would usually come in conjunction with her menstrual cycle, so we figured out that was what the trigger was. But because they were so cyclic and so timely, her information was forwarded to medical genetics and her genetics levels were tested — that was when we found out.

But as a mom, you think back on how your kid grew up, and initially she was a failure to thrive. ... When you connect all those dots, in retrospect, you say, "Oh, OK, so it's been there all the time, but it just will manifest in different ways as time goes on."

## Was it hard for you to find a diagnosis and a specialist?

No, just every time she'd go into a cycle of vomiting we'd still go back to the hospital, but I would just notate everything that I saw to try to find some pattern of consistency. ... That's when I learned how to become an advocate. And I walked around with my big old folder with a true log of every episode. You can't expect that a hospital or doctor's office is going to follow everything 100% with all the patients — so that's where you come in.

## What should parents be looking for with their kids?

Like I said, her manifestations started with cyclical vomiting syndrome. That makes it different from a virus or something like



JOHN SCIULLI/Getty Images for NAACP Image Awards

**CHANDRA WILSON** speaks out on mitochondrial disease.

that — it's the nausea. It is so all-consuming. They treat cyclical vomiting patients with cancer medications and it doesn't affect the nausea at all. That's how overwhelming it is — and you know right after stomach content is gone you still feel that retching.

## How was it for you as a parent to find out that this is what she has?

Actually, once we got a name for it, it felt like now we have something to look up, something to do. The name meant everything — you'll hear that with mitochondrial sufferers across the board. It's the name that gives you power to be able to look for something and at least try to get to where you need to get.

## Your daughter is 20 now. Is it different working with a young adult to manage the disease

## versus working with a teenager?

It certainly is challenging once the teen has become an adult. When they're kids, there's no will that's in the way. But when they start coming of age, at 19, 20, 21, they say, "I am going to figure this out by myself." Well, OK, fine, that's a nice journey, but you can't do it by not taking any of your protocol just to see what's going to happen. They're not kids anymore, so they have to figure that out, and the painful part of that is that there are physical repercussions for it. But that's how they're growing up, whether it's managing illness or managing your life. I keep my advocacy there — I say, "I am no longer your manager, I'm just your consultant. So whenever you want to talk to me, I'm right here!"

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## TRY THIS!

# V-up your abdominal muscles

By MELINDA FULMER

Forget crunches. The V-up takes your abdominal workout to the next level. Orthopedist and fitness trainer Dr. Levi Harrison, who produced a DVD, "The Art of Fitness Cardio Core Workout," shows how to work up to this advanced move in stages so you don't strain your lower back.

## What it does

This intense move challenges all of the muscles in your core — front to back.

## What to do

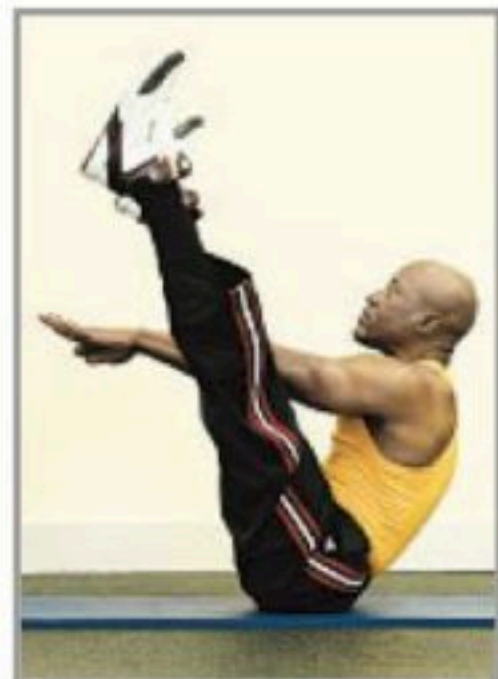
Start by lying down flat with your legs long, abdominals tucked in and back pressed into the floor. Extend your arms behind your head on the floor.

In one fluid motion, bring your arms and legs up like a jackknife, reaching your hands between your legs and just past them. Lower your arms and legs to start. Repeat.

Beginners should work up to this move, by first bending your knees slightly on the mat and reaching your outstretched arms to your knees in a sit-up.

Once you have mastered the sit-up, try raising your legs from the floor into a tabletop position above the ground at the same time you bring your arms in to touch your knees.

Then, when you're feeling strong, try to raise straight legs to the ceiling at the same time you



Photos by KIRK MCKOY/Los Angeles Times

raise your arms to touch your toes. Only when you have mastered this move are you ready to try reaching between and beyond your legs. For the most intense variation, try adding a medicine ball of 2 to 10 pounds.

## How much

Do two sets of five repetitions, working up to three sets of 10 or 15.

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