

Up close and personal with **Jimmy Fallon**, *Late Night* TV's new king of comedy

Here's Jimmy!

Jimmy Fallon, *Saturday Night Live* alum and newly minted *Late Night* sensation, was once famed for something other than funny one-liners—at least among a group of New York City firefighters. “I was hungover every Sunday,” Fallon recently admitted, the inevitable result of post-taping SNL parties that rocked into the wee hours of the morning. As Fallon skulked past the firehouse to his favorite Midtown bar for a little “hair of the dog” each Sunday afternoon, the city’s bravest mocked his delicate state and cracked wise, skewering the “Weekend Update” anchor’s latest performance.

Who’s laughing now? Not only is his new gig, *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon*, which he took over from 16-year front man Conan O’Brien in March, the leader in its time slot, the 34-year-old comedian, actor, musician, and talk show host has cleaned up his health act, too. And for good reason: He shoots more than 200 shows a year before a live audience, a daunting proposition for any performer.

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Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD
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“If the host calls in sick, there is no show,” Fallon says simply. “So the host can’t get sick!” Which means he’s reaching for a new kind of beverage these days. “I’ve started doing stuff like drinking raw green juice—this mixture of spinach, parsley, and God knows what else is in it—like once or twice a day. And I do fish oil supplements, eat salads, that kind of thing.”

Hoping to avoid what happened to fellow professional chatter Ellen DeGeneres, who broadcast from her hospital bed in 2007 when she injured her back, Fallon is treating “the grind, but the good grind” of putting out *Late Night*—complete with monologue, skits, musical acts, and, of course, the banter with a revolving roster of celebrity guests—like a boxer training to go extra rounds. (Cue the *Rocky* soundtrack.) These days, Fallon says, he goes out less, sleeps more, and takes care of himself.

His parents, Gloria and Jim, married 37 years and their son’s biggest fans, are right there in the ring with him. “Yeah, they’re totally into power naps now,” Fallon jokes. “They won’t miss a show, but it’s like they have to train for it. I’ll call Mom around 12:15 [a.m.], and she’ll answer the phone, all



Fallon on the *Saturday Night Live* set in 2001 with fellow SNLer Tina Fey and then-New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani.

tired and yawning and whatnot, but she’ll be like: ‘Okay, we’re up! We’re tuning in!’”

Still, he muses, he could always emulate the late Johnny Carson, the legendary host of *The Tonight Show*, who amused the masses for 30 years before he turned over the spotlight to Jay Leno in 1992.

“When Carson got sick,” Fallon says, “he’d get someone great to take over for the night. Now that might work.” You can

almost see him mentally dumping his green juice concoction down the sink at the mere possibility.

“But, you know what? I don’t actually get sick when I’m working,” he says. “It’s always when I take a week off. That’s when the body falls apart. Happens every time. My wife is always like: ‘No, no, no, no! We’re in Hawaii! You are so not getting sick again when we are on vacation!’”

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Hosting *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* with guest Kiefer Sutherland in May 2009.

THIS PAGE, TOP: EVERETT COLLECTION; NBC PHOTODISK; EDELSON; PREVIOUS PAGE: NBC PHOTODISK; SHERWOOD; AMANDA HALL/JUPITER IMAGES

(Does the body actually know when it can afford to break down? See page 40.)

One more way to beat getting sick: Fallon can laugh at his own jokes. Laughter truly is good for us, according to new research from the University of Maryland Medical Center, which links giggling to the healthy function of blood vessels. Happily pumping vessels are a powerful tool for battling mental stress, as well as a great defense against developing cardiovascular disease. Just another reason to join the 2.1 million of us staying up late to catch Fallon’s show.

Fallon’s Idol

Voted in his high school yearbook “Most Likely to Replace David Letterman,” Fallon prepped for his dream job by working smaller venues across the country and getting “the immediate results” that only stand-up comedy can bring. “If it’s funny, they laugh. If it’s not, they don’t,” he tells WebMD. “You just can’t get that kind of feedback on a movie set.”

Years of acting in Hollywood films such as *Fever Pitch* and *Taxi* removed that instant gratification. Fallon recently wrapped *Whip It!*, opening Oct. 9, which is directed by pal Drew Barrymore. Barrymore runs a production company, Flower Films, with Fallon’s wife, producer Nancy Juvonen, 42, married to Fallon since December 2007.

Stand-up and acting aren’t his only talents. Fallon also has musical chops. He sings in a hilarious MTV video, was nominated for a Grammy for a comedy album in 2003, and shines brightest when strumming his guitar or impersonating the industry’s biggest pop stars. He even helped woo his musical heroes, *The Roots*, to be *Late Night*’s in-house band.

Still, most performers know that live comedy takes extra guts. And Fallon is first to admit he’s no born extrovert. “I get nervous all the time. I’m just as nervous before going on stage in a small venue in Nashville as I am doing my act for the first lady.” He’s referring to his recent emcee duties for the highly publicized *Time* 100 party celebrating the world’s “most influential” people, including Michelle Obama. While he wasn’t officially honored, he was invited to the gig and asked to amuse the intelligentsia. “There were physicists there,” Fallon says, “Oprah ... the Twitter guys ... I did OK. It’s never as bad as you think and never as good.”

CHRIS LESCHINSKY/GETTY IMAGES

Scare Tactics

What to do when stage fright strikes

Whether you’re a stand-up comedian or simply standing up to address a crowd of your peers, speaking in public can send a shiver down your spine—and make your hands shake, voice crack, heart race, or body break into a cold sweat. If the mere thought of getting up on a stage makes you anxious, “your very DNA may be programmed for high-trait anxiety,” says Paul L. Witt, PhD, associate professor, Department of Communications Studies at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth.

The good news? There are methods you can learn to lessen these symptoms or even stop them altogether.

Before taking the stage. If you’re prone to sweating it out, be prepared: Dress in loose-fitting garments or a sleeveless shirt to prevent this particular symptom from going public.

Practice deep breathing (inhaling slowly through the nose, exhaling through the mouth) before your presentation. And, most important, prep yourself for success even if you should panic. In other words, give yourself permission to experience a quivering voice or butterflies in your stomach.

“It’s a bit of a mind game with yourself,” says Witt, “but it can work.”

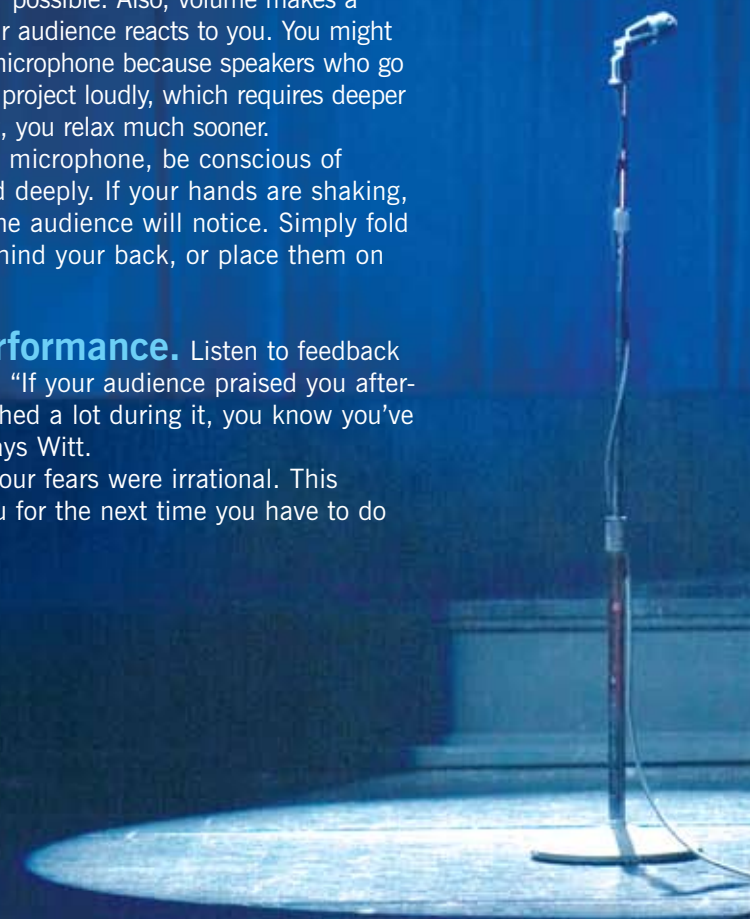
When these symptoms appear during your speech, you’ve already mentally prepared yourself for them, so you simply plow through. And the symptoms lessen as you relax.”

While on stage. Dry mouth is a common symptom of stage fright. Bring a glass of water with you to the podium whenever possible. Also, volume makes a difference in how your audience reacts to you. You might consider skipping a microphone because speakers who go without are forced to project loudly, which requires deeper breathing. As a result, you relax much sooner.

If you are using a microphone, be conscious of breathing slowly and deeply. If your hands are shaking, remember: Few in the audience will notice. Simply fold them, hide them behind your back, or place them on the podium.

After your performance. Listen to feedback of your presentation. “If your audience praised you afterward, or if they laughed a lot during it, you know you’ve done a good job,” says Witt.

“And you realize your fears were irrational. This will help prepare you for the next time you have to do it.”—LPK



Surprised to learn that a pro like Fallon, who has faced hundreds of live audiences (and a few hecklers) during the course of his career, still fights off stage fright? Don't be. "Almost everyone feels anxious before speaking in public," says Paul L. Witt, PhD, associate professor in the department of communications studies at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. "In fact, many Americans cite it as their No. 1 fear. But for some of us, research shows this type of anxiety trait is actually hard-wired."

Witt's ongoing studies suggest that people are born along a spectrum of anxiety, with "sensitizers" innately possessing high-trait anxiety and "habitators" possessing little or none. Most of us fall somewhere in between.

"If Fallon is nervous before every performance but loosens up as he continues," Witt says, "I'd say he was born with the anxiety trait but habituates to his surroundings. In other words, he's taught himself to adapt, to relax into the stress of performing, but he'll always face this challenge. Some folks find it impossible to adapt—and maybe they shouldn't become politicians, teachers, or comedians. But most of us can learn methods that help us to cope and succeed."

Caroline Hirsch, owner of the legendary Caroline's Comedy Club in New York City, where Fallon "cut his teeth before he hit it big," says, "Most comedians get that rush of adrenaline before going on stage—it's part of the process. Jimmy did a lot of TV and movies [before taking the *Late Night* job], which could explain his nerves now. If you're doing concerts and personal appearances before live audiences all the time—well, the more you do, the easier it gets."

"He was on the road a lot earlier this year, and it's paid off, she adds. "He's so charming, endearing, and at ease on his show."

Eyes on the Prize

Fallon is nothing short of serious when it comes to doing whatever it takes to ensure the success of his new venture. He even got LASIK. "Yeah, the vision thing has been a problem for years," he admits. "I can only see up-close, so I decided to go for it." And? "It's worked out great!"

What about contact lenses? *WebMD* asks the comedian. Or even glasses?

"Nooo, I can't do glasses," he says. "It started back on *Saturday Night Live*." Fallon was a cast member on SNL from 1999 to



Fallon and his wife, film producer Nancy Juvonen.

2004 and was widely known for sharing the "Weekend Update" desk with his four-eyed friend Tina Fey. "I tried to wear glasses, but Tina is so well-known for wearing hers, and it was just too goofy, the two of us with our glasses, reading the news, so I went without."

And the contact lenses? "I'm way too neurotic. The thought of putting something onto my eyeball every day ... ugh, I can just see

myself crashing through something, doing a funny bit for a scene, and the lens breaking into a million trillion pieces into my retina," he says. "No, no, noooo"—he's mock hyperventilating now—"can't do contact lenses."

And yet the comedian was game for getting LASIK, a surgery where fully alert patients allow an ophthalmologist to numb the eyeball and shoot a laser beam into the cornea to reshape it for better vision.

He even asked his production team to videotape the entire procedure to post on his *Late Night* blog. There, online, in all its eye-opening detail, America's favorite new host goes from being a nearsighted joker to a guy with near-perfect vision. As Fallon himself might say: "Cool."

Terrified of contact lenses but fearless when placed in the good hands of his eye surgeon, he adds: "I trust science! I trust technology!" He cracks himself up, then grows reflective. "No, but seriously, [afterward] my vision was a little blurry. They prepared me for it, so I was expecting that, but it's still nerve-racking. ... It took two and a half weeks, and then—wow! I could see."

Fit to Be Fallon

Named one of *People* magazine's "50 Most Beautiful" early this year, Fallon is still not one to sweat a buff physique. If anything, he's never met a piece of workout equipment he couldn't quip about. "I own a treadmill," he cheerfully tells *WebMD*.

"I've gone so far as to plug it in. I've never actually been on the treadmill. I did try Wii Fit, though," he adds, referring to the popular Nintendo video game where players practice yoga, strength training, and even skiing—virtually. "Is that exercise?"

Wii Fit may be better than nothing, but—much like Fallon's dreaded green juice—it's only a start, says Samantha Heller, MS, RD, and author of *Get Smart: Samantha Heller's Nutrition Prescription for Boosting Brain Power and Optimizing Total Body Health*, out in 2010 from Johns Hopkins University Press.

Heller says the comedian needs "regular exercise, plus a balanced diet, including many different fruits and vegetables, to boost stamina and keep his immune system strong. I hope he isn't gulping down his green juice with a cheeseburger and fries!" She adds:

"I want to create a safe place for my guests so they can feel relaxed and be loose with me."

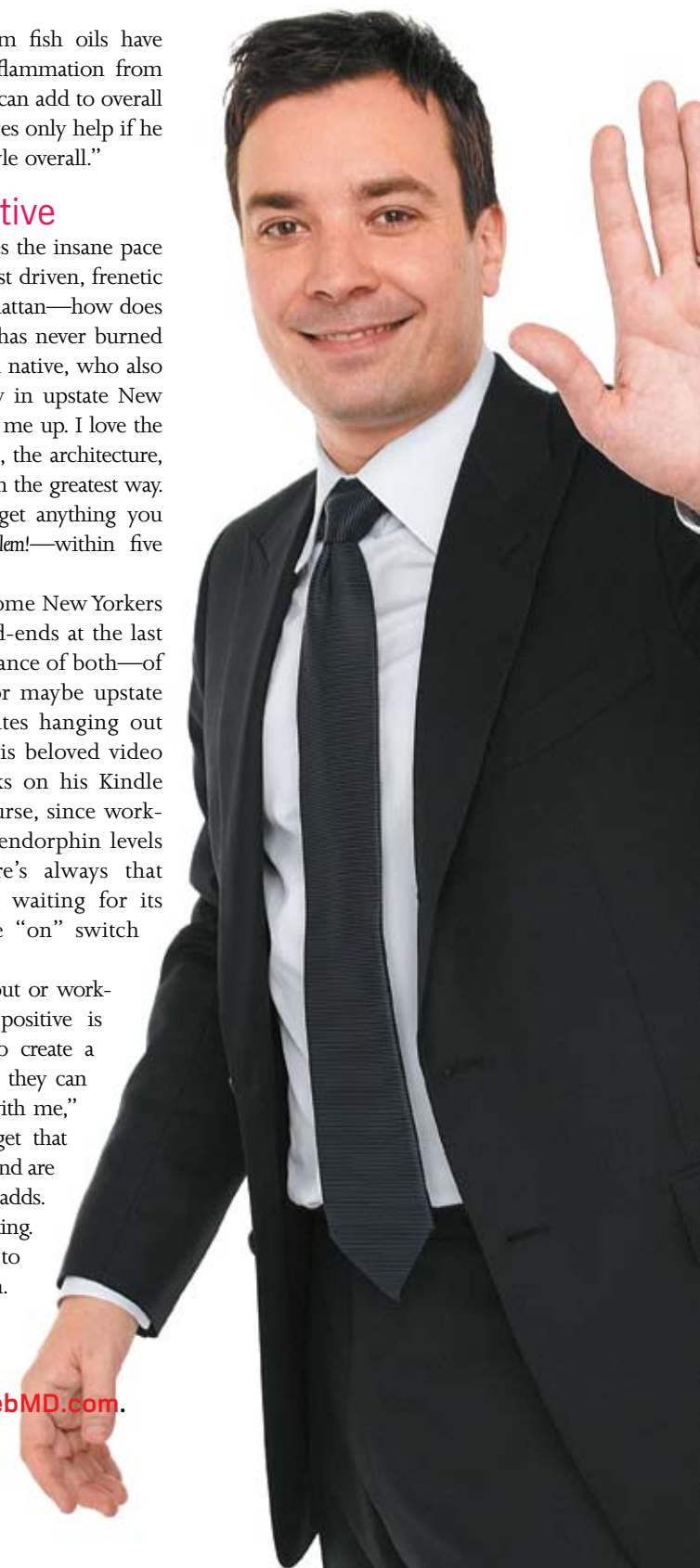
"Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils have been shown to reduce inflammation from stress, and vegetable juices can add to overall nutrition—but these changes only help if he is adopting a healthy lifestyle overall."

Healthy Perspective

When that lifestyle includes the insane pace of doing live TV in the most driven, frenetic place on the planet—Manhattan—how does Fallon unwind? "The city has never burned me out," says the Brooklyn native, who also spent time with his family in upstate New York as a child. "It charges me up. I love the energy, the people, the cars, the architecture, which is so old-fashioned in the greatest way. And I love how you can get anything you want—Eye of newt? No problem!—within five minutes of wanting it."

But Fallon is not like some New Yorkers who think the world dead-ends at the last subway stop. "I need a balance of both—the city and the beach, or maybe upstate New York." Fallon also cites hanging out in Central Park, playing his beloved video games, and reading books on his Kindle as big de-stressors. Of course, since working up a sweat can raise endorphin levels and combat stress, there's always that untouched treadmill just waiting for its famous owner to hit the "on" switch and go for a trot.

Whether he's working out or working the crowds, staying positive is Fallon's mantra. "I want to create a safe place for my guests so they can feel relaxed and be loose with me," he says. "And I never forget that folks are tuning in at 12:30 and are falling asleep with me," he adds. "So I'll do all the heavy lifting. I don't want you to have to think; I want you to laugh. I want to be the candy on your pillow." ■



Travel Bug Why type A's like Fallon tend to get sick on vacation

A familiar scenario: You work like a dog, putting in extra hours at the office even as the responsibilities of home life, from recitals to renovations, demand ample attention, too. Then, you plan a much-needed vacation. And what happens every time? *Ahhh-chooo!* Your body breaks down the moment the bags are packed.

Urban legend, or does the body's immune system intuitively understand how to sabotage your best-laid plans?

"It seems like we've all experienced it," says Phyllis Kozarsky, MD, travel health expert for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Especially the type A personality, the real go-go-go kind of person who works very hard and takes very few vacations."

"From my 30 years of practice and observing my patients, I think it's less about a mind-body connection—although I do believe there is one—and more about how stress plays a role in making us sick," Kozarsky adds. "By the time we are on our so-called 'break,' we're utterly drained and susceptible to catching whatever bug is floating by."

Take care. Kozarsky advises her business-traveler patients to schedule a full 24 hours after landing in their new clime to unwind, sleep, and take care of themselves, "but rarely do they listen to me. Most get off the plane at 8 a.m. after flying all night into some other country, only to rush to a meeting at 9 a.m., without any real sleep." It's this nonstop mentality "that wears down our immune systems and lowers our resistance to staving off infectious diseases," she adds.

Take flight. On a positive note, Kozarsky tells travelers that today's airplanes may actually provide *better* air quality than our office conference rooms or even local movie theaters. "It's true that spending time in confined spaces can expose us to infection," she says. "But modern aircraft use excellent filters: 50% of the air is fresh, and the other 50% has almost all of the infectious particles filtered out. So while it might be bad news to sit right next to someone who is obviously sick, most of us will do just fine on the plane itself."—LPK



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: RODD/KEVIN/REINA DIGITAL; NBC PHOTOS/VIRGINIA SHERWOOD; JACOBS STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

Learn why laughter is the best medicine at www.WebMD.com.