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Wants a Team
Of Rivals

Justin Fox
On How to
Save GM

Should You
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TIME

Ahhh...

Ohhh...

Annual Checkup

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Despite advances in medicine, Americans are less healthy than we used to be, and the next generation may be even worse off. How to reverse the trend—before it's too late

PLUS: The Year in Medicine A-Z

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SCIENCE

The Year in Medicine: From A to Z

THE FINANCIAL WORLD BLEW ITSELF UP, THE POLITICAL WORLD TURNED upside down, but in 2008 the world of medicine just kept chugging. In good times and bad, science doesn't sleep, and every year brings breakthroughs, setbacks, reasons for worry and reasons for joy. TIME's annual alphabetical roundup of a sampling of those stories gives you an overview of the year behind and a hint of what might be in the one ahead. >>>

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Gardasil: Vaccine Battle?

It's the first vaccine for the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus, which causes genital warts and cervical cancer. But girls vaccinated with Gardasil since 2006 have experienced some serious side effects, including seizures and fainting, and 27 teens died after receiving the shot. An ongoing study is investigating whether these events were caused by the vaccine; health officials say the shot is safe.

**Global Warming: A Hot Earth Could Worsen Allergies and Kidney Stones**

It may not rank with rising sea levels and crippling drought, but hay fever is one more thing global warming is likely to make worse. A study in the September *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* found that increasingly early pollination of olive trees in Spain led to higher pollen counts overall. Similar outcomes can be expected in temperate areas elsewhere as the earth warms. That's bad news for everyone—particularly the 300 million asthmatics around the world. Research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* also links rising temperatures to an increase in kidney stones—a condition related to dehydration. In 2000 some 40% of Americans already lived in warm parts of the country considered kidney-stone risk areas. That number is expected to reach 70% by 2095. There has also been an increase in the number of children with kidney stones over the past year. But don't blame global warming: the real cause may be too many salty snacks.

Genetically Modified Foods: China Has the World Worried

China is charging into the 21st century—but its food-inspection system is mired in the 19th. Last year saw a series of tainted food scandals. But consumers are just as concerned about genetically modified (GM) crops. The country is



Candies made in China being sold in Spain

pumping funds into genetic research in the hope that better crops will help the land of 1.3 billion people feed itself. Given the gaps in China's food-safety net—and the potential for GM food to get out of control—that possibility is worrisome.

Gymnastics: Graceful, Exciting—And Disturbingly Dangerous

Gymnastics can be the most nail-biting event of any Olympics—but the worry isn't always over who'll win the gold. The first national study of gymnastics injuries, conducted by Nationwide Children's Hospital in Ohio, shows that gymnastics is among the most perilous sports for girls. Analyzing records of patients ages 6 to 17 who were treated in emergency rooms from 1990 to 2005, the study found that an average of 5 out of every 1,000 young gymnasts each year—about 27,000—required medical attention for injuries ranging from sprains to nerve damage. Safer equipment and better training methods, however, may be making a difference. Injuries fell 25% over the 16-year period.

