

4-WEEK PALEO RESET

WEEK 4 READING



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BY IRENA MACRI

1. WEEK 4 OVERVIEW

Welcome to Week 4! The focus this week is simple: **getting to the finish line.**

It's easy to lose enthusiasm and to get distracted by whatever life throws in your way, so I want you to stay super focused and motivated. It's time to check your initial goals and come up with strategies to tackle any upcoming obstacles.

This week you will also learn a **little bit about gut health** and how to **reduce environmental toxins.** As usual, all reading is recommended so pick and choose what you're interested in.

Finally, I'm turning up the heat in the fitness department. This is your last week, so let's make it count. This week's fitness challenge includes walking, planks, squats and push-ups. You should be feeling stronger and fitter than ever!

YOUR GOALS THIS WEEK

- ☑ Stick to eating guidelines (no alcohol)
- ☑ Revisit your WHYs and goals
- ☑ Walk for 30 minutes every day
- ☑ Plank, squats & push-up challenge
- ☑ 8 glasses of water or herbal tea
- ☑ Audit your home for toxic products
- ☑ Include some fermented foods

RECOMMENDED READING

- ☑ Expert Q&A: Gut Health
- ☑ Expert Q&A: Fitness With Scott Gooding
- ☑ Guide To Superfoods & How To Use Them
- ☑ Expert Q&A: A Life Less Toxic
- ☑ Detoxify Your Life: Baby Steps to Make Big Changes

Become A Toxin Detective

We're looking at environmental toxins, things that hide in your household products, and your beauty cabinet. Get ready to do yet another clean sweep. Learn from my expert Q&A about some of the worst offenders and do an audit of your home, kitchen, and bathroom.



Natural Swaps

Make a list of things that you would like to swap for a more natural product or a DIY version. Start to slowly swap out your everyday products.

Continue to practice meditation and do at least one weekly relaxation activity. If possible, try another new physical activity.

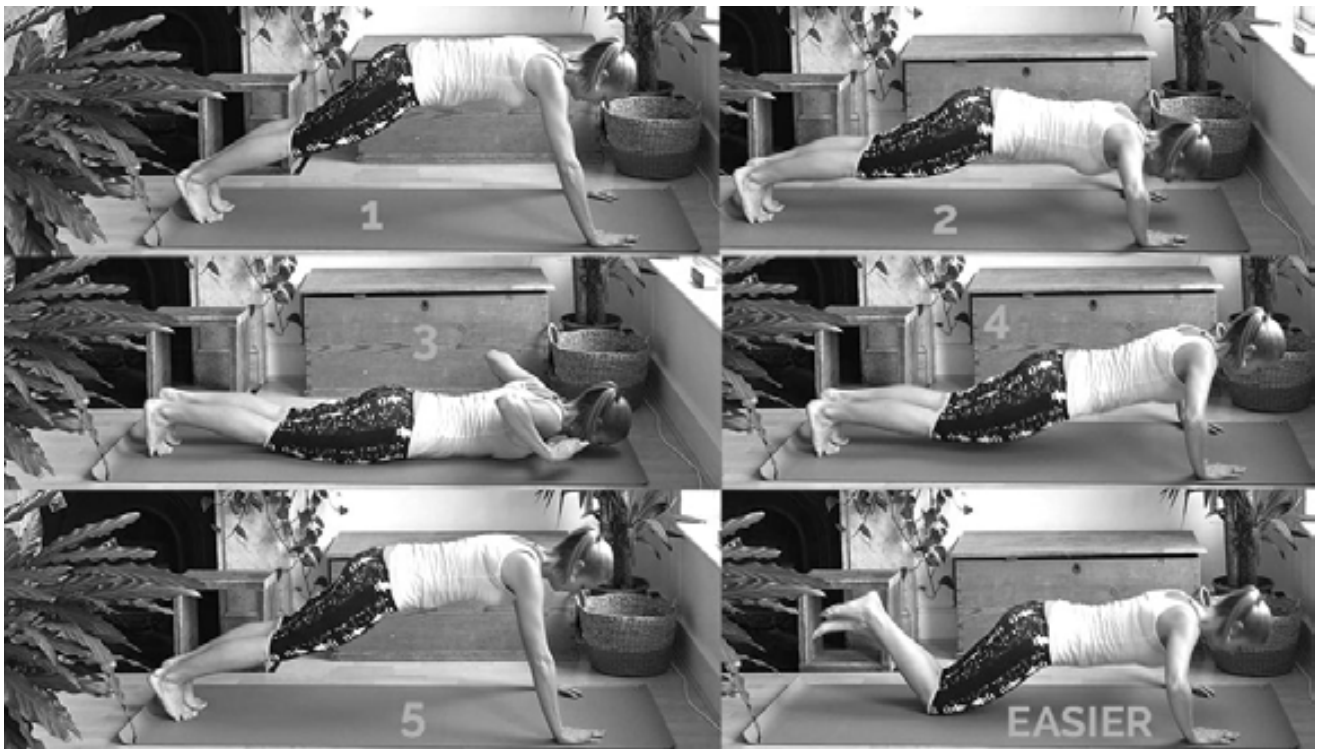


YOUR FITNESS CHALLENGE

This is our last week together, so let's get that heart pumping and those muscles burning.

Your fitness challenge for this week:

- 30 minutes of walking every day
- 1-minute plank every day (feel free to break the plank into 2 sets)
- 20 squats every day
- Take our push-up challenge: start with 5 push-ups on Monday and add 2 additional push-ups every day after that. You should be aiming for 17 push-ups on Sunday.



PUSH-UPS (hands off, 3 secs down, 1 sec up)

- Assume a high plank position resting on your palms, with hands under your shoulders. Ensure you have created a rigid line running between your shoulders and toes. Ensure hips are square and in line with your shoulders.
- Engage your mid-section and breathe normally. Bend your elbows and lower your chest towards the ground.
- Once your chest is on the ground, lift your hands off the ground momentarily.
- Replace your hands on the ground and push up, returning to the start position.

2. EXPERT Q&A: GUT HEALTH 101

Gut health is gaining a lot of attention but for many of us it's still shrouded in mystery. I had a great opportunity to talk to **Erica Sonnenburg**, PHD, who is a microbiota scientist at **The Sonnenburg Lab** at Stanford University, and the co-writer of *The Good Gut* book, about all things GUT HEALTH.



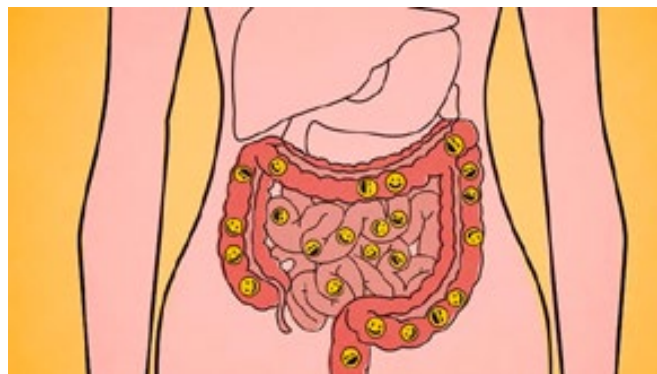
Most people have heard of gut health but the whole topic is still somewhat foreign to most. What do we actually mean when we refer to someone's gut health? Is it the balance of good and bad bacteria in our gut? Is it about the integrity of our gut lining and how we absorb the nutrients from our food? Is it about bloating or other digestive distresses? Or, is it all of the above?

In brief, it is all of the above. But to expand: we like to think of gut health as maintaining a **healthy, symbiotic ecosystem within the gut**, one that promotes health of the human host. I think a lot of people don't realize that humans are a superorganism: a walking rainforest of sorts, composed of human cells and bacterial cells. If we do some accounting, we are actually 90% bacteria and only 10% human by overall cell number, and 99% bacteria and 1% human by gene count. We house **trillions of bacteria** within our gut and these bacteria are wired into virtually all aspects of our biology; from our metabolism, to our immune system and even our brain. We view maintaining gut health as **paramount to maintaining overall health** and conveying that message was one of our main reasons for writing the book.



Which part of the gut are we talking about?

Mainly we are talking about the large intestine or colon. While our entire digestive tract is colonized by microbes, the vast majority of them live within our large intestine.



Why is gut health so important for our wellbeing? What are some of the things that it affects or is linked to?

There has been a lot of research recently showing that the bacteria in our gut are in many ways **controlling the dial on our immune system**; determining the strength and pace of our immune response to infection, but also impacting our immune system's overall inflammatory state.

I think the big surprise in the scientific community has been that the human immune system appears to be very gut-centric. Many Western diseases such as obesity, diabetes, allergies, asthma, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, and heart disease (this list is not exhaustive) are characterized by an **overly pro-inflammatory state**. There is mounting evidence that the "Western" microbiota may be responsible for creating and/or contributing to this pro-inflammatory state that fuels many of these diseases.

What are some of the symptoms of poor gut health? Is there a way people can get tested for this?

Because the gut is wired into virtually all aspects of our biology, poor gut health has the potential to **manifest as a number of ailments** ranging from allergies, weight gain, and perhaps even mood disorders. I think many people feel that if they don't have digestive problems then their gut health must be good; but our gut microbes contribute to so many other aspects of our overall health, well beyond our gut.

Unfortunately, because each person's microbiota is unique, at this point, there is no definitive test to determine whether the community of microbes in your gut is "healthy". Although, research in this area is rapidly growing so I think microbiota testing for diagnostic and prognostic purposes is something we will see more of in the future.

How does what we eat affect the health of our gut?

We know that diet is one of the biggest levers we have to control the bacteria in our gut. Our gut bacteria need to be fed and the food **they thrive on is dietary fibre**, like the types found in vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, grains, and legumes.

Sadly, the Western diet is extremely low in dietary fibre. The recommended amount of dietary fibre is 25-38 grams per day and the average Westerner barely consumes 15 grams. This means that we are in essence **starving our microbial-selves**. When we don't eat enough dietary fibre, our gut bacteria turn to the only other food source they have left ... us! They eat the mucous lining that coats our intestine and serves as an important barrier between our intestinal wall and our gut bacteria, which has the potential to set off alarm bells within our immune system.

What about our lifestyle? Any other things we should know?

Antibiotics, C-sections, formula feeding of babies, and the overuse of antibacterial soaps and cleaners can all influence the community of bacteria in our gut. Antibiotics are amazing, life-saving drugs, but they need to be reserved for occasions when they are necessary. There is evidence that with each round of antibiotics, we are affecting our gut microbiota in ways **that may not be reversible**.

How C-sections and formula feeding affects a child's growing community of bacteria is an active field of scientific research. What we know now is that the method of birth and feeding has a huge impact on the types of bacteria that first colonize the baby's gut. How these differences manifest in the health of the child is still up for debate. But one thing I think most people don't realize is that breast milk is filled with a type of carbohydrate that appears to be for the sole purpose of feeding the growing baby's gut bacteria. This fact is a powerful statement on just how important gut bacteria must be for our health if even breast milk has microbiota "food" in it!

Some people might have heard of prebiotics and probiotics. What are they and what is the difference between them?

Prebiotics are the "food" (mostly complex carbohydrates) that promotes the growth of the healthy bacteria in our gut.



Probiotics are actually living microorganisms that provide a beneficial health effect. These probiotic bacteria don't live in our gut permanently, but they appear to do good things as they transit through our digestive tract.



What are some of the best sources of prebiotics and probiotics, in your opinion?

You don't need to shop in the supplement shelves to have a diet rich in pre- and probiotics. In our opinion, the best source of prebiotics is plant-based foods that are rich in dietary fibre, and the best source of probiotics is from fermented foods such as yoghurt, kefir, kimchee, sauerkraut, etc.

Unfortunately, in the United States the supplement market is largely unregulated meaning that no one is really ensuring that the labels on prebiotic and probiotic supplements are accurate. There have been studies showing that some probiotic supplements do not actually contain the types of bacteria they specify on the label, or that the bacteria aren't even still alive.

What are your thoughts on removing grains and legumes from someone's diet to improve the integrity of the gut, say temporarily? What about gluten and gut health?

There is no requirement for humans to consume grains or legumes. Our past history as a species and the diverse types of diets that people have consumed in different parts of the world is proof that there is no one specific human diet.

It is generally accepted that most people living in the industrialized world are not eating enough dietary fibre. It is possible to reach the recommended amount of dietary fibre without eating legumes and whole grains, by consuming a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. But keep in mind that the domestication of many of our crops has resulted in lower fibre amounts than the wild plants that hunter-gatherers consumes. The advantage of whole grains and legumes is that they tend to be very fibre-rich and can compensate for what's been lost in other domesticated plants.

The increase in non-celiac gluten sensitivity in the Western world is both concerning and also puzzling. I think a possible explanation for the rising rates of gluten sensitivity is that the Western microbiota is not functioning optimally and is resulting in an adverse reaction to gluten.

The problem with focusing on eliminating gluten is that this may not be getting at the root of the problem (a malfunctioning immune system) and is potentially just treating the symptom (an adverse reaction to gluten). Again, humans do not need to consume gluten, but if you are just replacing bad food choices with gluten-free bad food choices, you may be setting yourself up for more problems down the line.

We've seen a lot of discussions on resistant starch and gut health. Can you tell us more about it?

Resistant starch, insoluble fibre, and soluble fibre are definitions that are chemical in nature, which doesn't necessarily tell us what happens to them inside our body. We prefer the term **microbiota-accessible carbohydrates or MACs**. MACs are complex carbohydrates that our gut bacteria can ferment. Regardless of the term used, the important point is that **complex carbohydrates from plants** provide food for the microbiota. In addition to maintaining a healthy and diverse microbial community, feeding the microbiota results in their production of chemicals that have a variety of beneficial effects on our health.

What should people be aware of when trying to introduce more prebiotics and probiotics/fermented foods into their diet?

If your diet is presently low in MACs, it is important to gradually increase the quantity you consume to minimize the discomfort that can be associated with the increased fermentation in the gut that fibre produces.

What are your top take-away tips for people who want to improve the health of their gut?

Fiber is key. Our gut bacteria thrive on dietary fibre and it is clear that we are not consuming enough of it. If you go to the Mayo Clinic, Harvard School of Public Health, or Center for Disease Control websites, they all say the same thing, "eat more fibre". A diet rich in a variety of plants is one of the best ways to ensure that you not only get enough fibre, but that you are also eating a variety of types of fibre. Plus, a plant-rich diet has the added bonus of all the healthful vitamins, minerals, and other compounds found in plants.

If you look at the human populations with the greatest health and longevity, these people are consuming a diet that is conducive to a healthy gut – high in fibre and fermented foods. The Mediterranean and traditional Japanese diets have been shown in many studies to promote health. I think it is highly unlikely that these diets are also very gut bacteria-friendly by chance.

Check out Erica's book **The Good Gut: Taking Control of Your Weight, Your Mood, and Your Long-Term Health**. Available in the US, Canada, UK, and many European countries and will soon be available in Asia.

3. EXPERT Q&A: TIPS FOR HEALTHIER GUT

In this article, my second gut health expert **Lee Holmes** will share some tips and insights on how to heal your gut. Lee is a holistic nutritionist, health and wellness coach, wholefoods chef and the author of the Supercharged Food – Eat Yourself Beautiful, Heal Your Gut book and Heal Your Gut online program, just to name a few; so I was just *a little bit* excited to pick her brains for the reset plan.



I spoke about the importance of gut health with our microbiota expert Erica Sonnenburg, PHD, but what would you add for those who still need convincing?

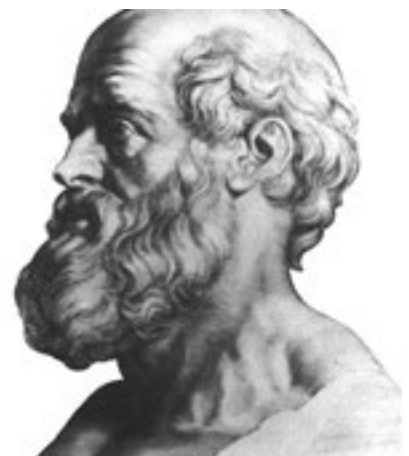
Your gut is the gateway to your health. 2000 years ago, Hippocrates, an ancient Greek physician said, “All disease begins in the gut”. His message has been overlooked for centuries.

Fortunately, in the last few years, current research is beginning to rediscover that many of our health issues stem from the gut – so it is time for us to listen to Hippocrates’ wise advice and show our tummies some love!

A healthy gut can boost the absorption of nutrients, speed up weight loss and prevent food cravings. If you think of your gut as a garden, you’ll notice that whatever you put into it is ultimately going to affect your overall health and wellbeing and determine how much energy you have.

**“All disease
begins in the gut”**

-Hippocrates



You run a Heal Your Gut online program. Can you share with us some of your top lifestyle tips to improve gut health?

When overhauling your gut, one place to start to look at is your diet; so in my four-week program I include really simple-to-make recipes that are all easily digestible and gluten, wheat, dairy, yeast and sugar-free. There are options for vegetarians, too.

There are also simple, useful practices based on Ayurvedic medicine that you can incorporate to help heal your gut. These are oil-pulling practices, massage, and meditation and yoga poses specifically for the gut.

Detoxification processes can also help to cleanse the gut to prepare it for the restoration phase, which involves repopulating the gut with healthy flora through food and other activities.

One of the most interesting ways to take care of your gut health involves detoxing your life, resolving any outstanding emotional issues, and most importantly learning tools to enable you to love and nurture yourself. The gut and the brain are connected via the vagus nerve and stress can have a huge impact on the gut.



What are some of the foods that people should avoid to keep their gut in tiptop shape?

Foods and other products that contain gluten and wheat are best avoided.

These include: confectionery (almost all forms), packaged foods and breakfast cereals, beer, salami and cured meats, muesli bars and muesli, vinegar and soy sauce, instant meals, frozen foods, most breads, baby food, salad dressings, sausages, packaged chips and crackers, lipstick and cosmetic products.

Several additives and sweeteners, such as glucose syrup, are gluten- and wheat-derived. It's best to avoid all additives if you aim to heal and restore your gut. Stick to gluten-free whole foods that are free from artificial preservatives and additives.

Too much research points to the **damage sugar is causing our health**. Bad bacteria adore an abundance of sugar to feast on, and this includes an overindulgence of fruit. Avoid all refined white sugar, as this is the worst kind.

Why are prebiotic and probiotic foods so important, and what are some of your favourite ways to include them in an eating plan?

Probiotics are live microorganisms that are similar to the 'good bacteria' found in a healthy human gut. Probiotics are available through foods or dietary supplements such as tablets and powders. In addition to probiotics, prebiotics are beneficial for gut healing. Prebiotics are indigestible carbohydrates that create balance in gut flora by promoting the growth and multiplication of beneficial microorganisms and preventing the growth of harmful bacteria.

Fermentation increases the **beneficial bacteria, enzymes and vitamins in food**, and makes their nutrients more bioavailable. This is no new trend. Almost all traditional cultures have included fermented foods in their diet.

Fermented foods can either be bought or made at home, and include yoghurt (made using goat's milk, sheep's milk, coconut milk or coconut water), sauerkraut, kimchi, milk kefir, water kefir, kombucha and beet kvass.

There are hundreds of resources and recipes online to help you in sourcing cultures and learning to make these foods at home. In my *Heal Your Gut* book I have a simple Coconut Kefir and coconut Kefir Yoghurt and a bunch of lovely recipes for Cultured Vegetables, Sauerkraut, Kimchi and delicious Fermented Salsa.

Consuming fermented foods and beverages like these alongside other foods will also help your body digest everything more effectively. Combining both **prebiotic-rich foods and probiotics** in your daily diet will provide you with the best chance of creating a healthy community of gut flora.

How and when should people start with fermented foods?

Once your gut lining is healed and only when you're ready, you can start to incorporate some cultured foods such as cultured vegetables, sauerkraut, kimchi, coconut kefir or kombucha to colonise your gut with healthy flora and boost your inner ecosystem.

When starting out with fermented foods, only have a quarter of the recommended amount per serving, or start with **1 teaspoon and work your way up**. Eating a range of different fermented foods will contribute a variety of bacterial strains, which will bring the diversity needed for a healthy microbiota.

Some say that the phrase 'You are what you eat' should actually be 'You are what your bacteria eat'. Did you know that your good bacteria need certain foods to survive? As mentioned earlier, these foods are classified as prebiotics.

They're the specific foods that feed your good bacteria. More precisely, these are foods containing **non-digestible but fermentable oligosaccharides** that change the structure and activity of your gut flora – with the prospect of promoting the health of their host (that being you!).

Instead of taking questionable prebiotic supplements, it's highly important to eat a wide diversity of **fibre-rich vegetables** to provide your body with prebiotics. Garlic, for example, is a wonderful prebiotic food, as it's not only a killer of bad bacteria, but also contains dietary fructans – prebiotics that feed specific strains of bacteria that are important for your health.

Foods high in soluble fibre are broken down in the large intestine into a gelatinous, viscous by-product that produces acids and gases promoting the growth of good bacteria. Foods high in soluble fibre are wonderful prebiotics and include sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, turnips, mangoes, avocados, strawberries and apricots.



What about probiotic supplements? How effective are they versus eating more fermented foods?

Part of the problem with using cheap, over-the-counter probiotics is that they only consist of a few strains, and are expensive. Look for brands that are non-synthetic and offer the full spectrum of probiotics, and speak to your naturopath about identifying which strains will be beneficial for you and your own particular condition and symptoms.

When you're looking for a probiotic, check if it has added **fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS) and/or inulin**. These are prebiotic substances touted as aiding the proliferation of good bacteria, but a lot of FOS is manufactured via chemical synthesis and can cause abdominal distress, especially in people with an overabundance of bad bacteria. For this reason, it's important to find the best probiotic that works for you and to look for natural prebiotics from your food. It depends on the person as to how effective probiotics are over fermented foods. Some people with histamine intolerance for example cannot eat fermented foods, so a probiotic would be better in that circumstance.

What is your favourite probiotic brand and why?

I use the Symbiotics brand as it works for me, but it's good to switch up your probiotics regularly.

There has been a lot of talk about the importance of fibre and resistant starch for gut health. What can you tell us about it?

Resistant starches are starches that 'resist' digestion. They therefore make their way all the way down to the large intestine, where they undergo the same process as soluble and insoluble fibres. Foods containing resistant starch include potatoes (especially cooked and cooled), sweet potatoes, green bananas, white cooled rice, lentils, nuts and seeds. Remember to reintroduce these foods to your diet at a snail's pace and see how your belly reacts.



Bone broth and gelatine – are they good for our gut, and why?

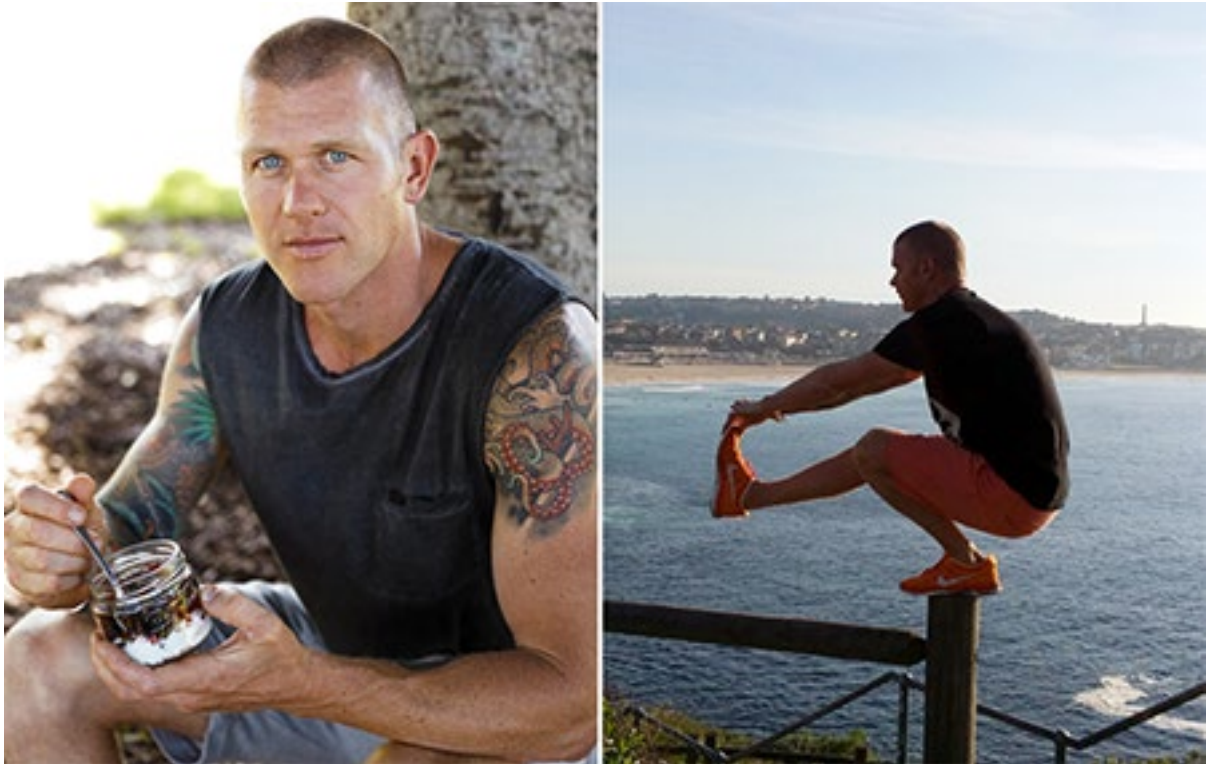
Soothing, immune-boosting, anti-inflammatory and nutrient-dense broths support digestion by healing and sealing the digestive tract. They contain gelatine, which attracts and holds liquids to fully support digestion, and boasts a rich array of easily absorbable minerals such as calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, silicon, sulphur and trace minerals. They even contain material that's beneficial for arthritis and joint pain.

Beef bones produce a mineral-rich wobbly stock, thanks to their abundance of gelatine. While you're on a healing gut program, a good bone broth will act as a 'protein sparer', helping you make the most of any proteins you consume.



4. FITNESS FAQ WITH SCOTT GOODING

Want to learn a little bit more about how you ought to be moving? You've come to the right place. I asked my mate and fitness expert Scott Gooding to weigh in with his opinions on some burning questions about movement, how it should be done, and why. Find out more about Scott at scottgoodingproject.com.



Okay, this is one of the most common questions: what is the best form of exercise for weight loss?

Without question, the most efficient means to burn calories is short, high-intensity workouts. A classic example is sprints – sprinting hard for 20-30 seconds and having a 2 minute recovery, or until your heart rate has returned to normal. Then repeat.

My participants are encouraged daily physical activity, including a 30-minute walk and some strengthening exercises - this is to improve their overall wellness and fitness. For someone trying to lose a lot of weight, should they do more than that? Should it be more cardio or strengthening based?

Many of us are time-poor these days, with family, work and relationship commitments, so I'm a huge advocate of shorter style workouts. I reckon we can all squeeze 20 minutes into our schedule and work up a sweat. For someone wanting to lose a lot of weight, it's imperative to secure a solid strength program to form the foundation and avoid injuries. It will also help to increase resting metabolic rate.

It's good to use a balance of strength and cardio, but each case is different and it's important to establish the entry level and pre-existing factors; but generally a balance of the two works well.

We all know that exercise is good for maintaining a healthy weight and heart, but what are some of the other less obvious benefits of regular physical activity?

The psychological benefits are often overlooked. Exercise triggers neurotransmitters that help us to feel relaxed and happy. This 'feel-good' sensation will help to support other facets of your life like food choices and social interactions. Having better food choices will help with energy levels and avoiding sluggishness.

Generally speaking, which is more important in your opinion: cardio or strength training?

Strength is more important than cardio. Strength has many benefits. Strength training can simultaneously stimulate an aerobic response, therefore killing two birds with one stone.

Walking vs. running? What's more effective?

Well, this depends on the speed at which you walk or run. It's claimed that a fast walk is more efficient at expending energy than a slow jog.

What are your top 5 body strengthening exercises?

Deadlift, front squat, leg press, shoulder press, and clean & jerk.

HIIT, Crossfit, plyometrics – please explain?

HIIT is high-intensity interval training, and is arguably the most effective way to improve fitness.

Crossfit is a worldwide training style that incorporates Olympic lifting, gymnastics and intervals. It proves to be extremely efficient in improving every facet of fitness, strength, power and endurance.

Plyometrics is an advanced form of training and is characterised by a lengthening of the muscles followed by a rapid contraction. Reps are typically maximal in output; broad jumps are a good example of plyometrics.

What is the best time to exercise during the day?

Different for most people – some people are larks and others owls – but generally, training in the evening is when your body is less catabolic and when body temperature suits training versus training in the morning.

Is it okay to exercise on an empty stomach?

There are certainly some benefits to training fasted such as elevated insulin sensitivity and HGH (human growth hormone) levels.

What are some of the best pre- and post-workout foods?

This largely depends on your training goals and training duration. Post workout food should be high protein as the body can replenish glycogen stores via gluconeogenesis or if you do choose carbs keep to around 50 grams. Pre-workout...everyone is different – I am quite fat-adapted and tend to train fairly fasted – but if I was to eat, I would tend to go high protein and some amount of low GI carbs.

What role does protein play in fitness? How much should we be having for optimal body performance or for building more muscle mass? What are your favourite sources and what's the best time of the day to consume them?

A good rule of thumb for **muscle growth** is consuming 2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. Protein is pivotal in muscle growth in addition to replenishing glycogen stores. Try to consume some protein within the first couple of hours post working out for the best recovery. My favourite sources of protein are mackerel, spirulina, tuna, and pea protein.

What are your thoughts on a lower carbohydrate diet for athletic performance? Should those who are very active consume a few more carbohydrates from healthy sources?

For those who have a high volume of training and train HIIT style, it's advisable for performance to consume 'safe starchy veggies'. As for non-starchy carbs, it's fine to go nuts – the more leafy greens, the better.

For someone looking to try a new type of physical activity, what top 10 forms of exercises or sports would you recommend?

Surfing, rock climbing, sand running, crossfit, swimming, callisthenics, underwater rock running, boxing, plyometrics, olympic lifting.

Should I stretch before or after a workout?

It's important to warm-up prior to training with large rhythmic movements and ballistic stretching (dynamic), and stretching post-workout. Foam rollers work wonders post-workout to allow muscles to return to resting length.

What is your advice for someone who is completely new to exercising?

Take it easy! Start off with short/low-intensity sessions that won't incur too much muscle soreness and potential for injury.

What are the best ways to stay motivated to exercise regularly?

Tune in – be aware of how you FEEL after exercise and don't simply focus on the scales. Look out for an increase in confidence, energy, alertness and virility.

4. EXPERT Q&A – A LIFE LESS TOXIC WITH ALEX STUART

Alex Stuart is a blogger, activist, author and advocate for all things she calls the 'low tox life.' She is a certified health coach and author of three best-selling e-courses she runs through her website. In today's expert Q&A, we're going to find a few tips and tricks as well as the reasons **why we should live a life less toxic.**



Thanks for taking the time out to take part in my Q&A series. You're well known for advocating a low tox life, what does that mean?

When I was starting my site about 6 years ago now, I was searching for a word or a notion that wouldn't have a 'perfection' connotation. Creating perfection is impossible; and "No tox" and a chemical-free life are crazy and unrealistic to me because they're simply not possible in 2016. I wanted to guide people towards making better choices with little steps by **doing the best they can.** It's also not possible to use ALL natural, 'chemical free' products – almost everything has some kind of chemical. It's about knowing which are harmful and which are not. That's where the idea for 'low tox' came from and it covers food, personal care, cleaning, environmental, mental attitude... It really means **a better, simpler, more conscious life** at a pace that suits you to make whatever changes you fancy making.



Where do the toxic substances come from in our everyday life? Or perhaps, what shape or form do they take?

Simply put: **they're everywhere.** I've realised that the more you learn, the more there is to learn. From your personal care to your food, to the couch you buy and the sheets you sleep on and the gym pants – there is **ALWAYS a better choice to be made.** These toxins are hormone disruptors, lung irritants, poisons, pollutants – it really depends on which toxic things we're talking about.

What do they do to our bodies?

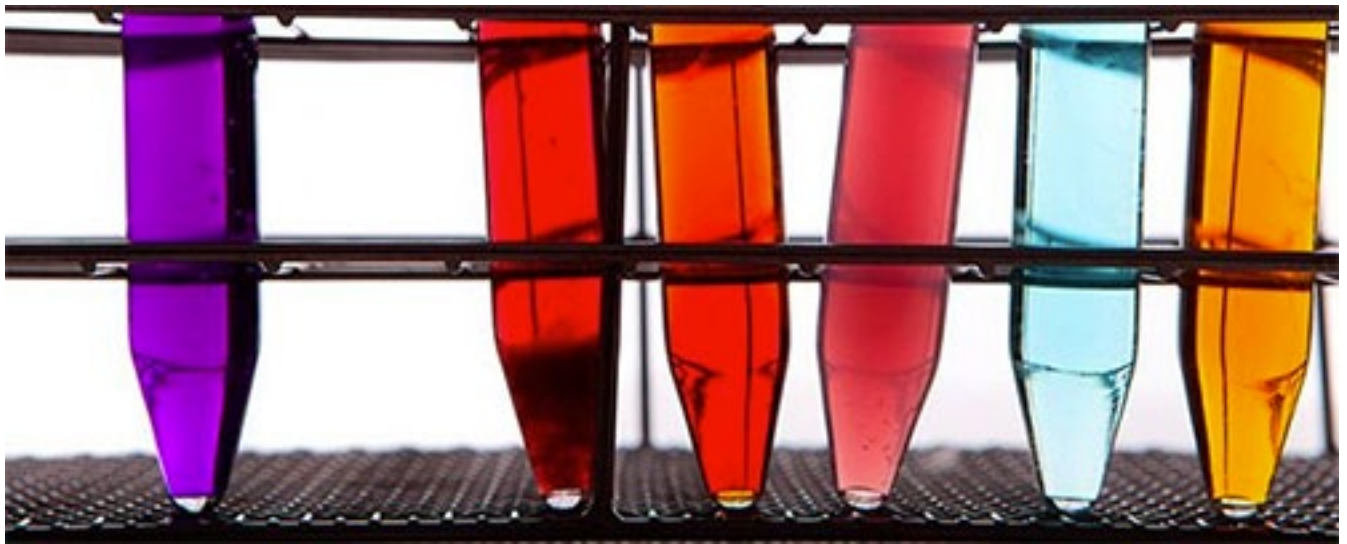
They can harm our endocrine health, they can make us fat, they can give us breathing problems or give us skin issues like hives, dermatitis, eczema or psoriasis to name a few.



What are the top offenders in your opinion?

I preface this by saying: Don't get upset about what you don't or didn't know! These will sound a little scary, but they are the first steps if you're new to all this and you want to start making better choices. It's definitely not worth freaking out about what you didn't know in the past. Just get excited about what's going to change!

- **BPA** – These can still be found in many plastic options, and it's up to a company to say it's BPA-free or for you to research if it's not mentioned and you've considering buying it. It is very often found in tinned food lining – so know your brands and try to avoid tinned tomatoes given they are an acidic food and leaching is higher, whether it's BPA or plain aluminium and unlined. Get tomato passata and diced tomatoes in a jar instead.
- **Phthalates** – Basically, most fragranced products that aren't certified organic or biodynamic or phthalate free will have these. Phthalates stick to a fragrance to make it last longer and are a hormone disruptive chemical. Slowly, day by day as things run out, start opting for naturally fragranced things from your candles, shampoos, soaps and so on.
- **Quaternary compounds** – “Quats,” found in fabric softeners, are really damaging to our respiratory systems. I guarantee you when you remove it from your home and smell it somewhere else a couple of weeks later, you will not be able to breathe and wonder how you ever used fabric softener. Instead, add 20 drops essential oil to a 1/2 cup bicarb (baking) soda to soften your wash.
- **Formaldehyde** – Found in some cleaning products, some floor polishes, and nail polishes still today, this is Bad News Betty saying, “Get it outta there!” It's a recognised carcinogen, a trigger for Asthma and respiratory issues, and a possible immune suppressant. Nasty stuff!
- **Aluminium starch octenylsuccinate** – Found in some cheaper powders, foundations, and lipsticks. It's a mineral and it can affect our neurological health, specifically our nervous system.
- **Butoxyethanol** – This one makes me laugh because it's a skin / eye irritant, yet where do we find it? Facial moisturiser. It's petroleum derived. I have to laugh or I'd cry when remembering how my eyes watered constantly when I was in cosmetics – and I wasn't working for a cheap brand. In fact, it was the most expensive French brand.
- **Coal tar** – Mascara, antidandruff, some liquid eyeliners, some soaps... It's a recognised carcinogen and there are way too many awesome natural solutions these days to rely on it as an ingredient anymore!
- **Parabens** – A group of hormone disrupting chemicals that are found in loads of mainstream personal care items, but slowly being phased out.



When it comes to food, what are some of the worst toxins we should be watching out for?

Basically, watch for anything **artificial and 'flavoured'**. Even natural flavour on a label can be a hidden term for MSG and an extract from the bottom of a beaver – I kid you not! Artificial flavours and sugars (sucralose / aspartame) are all derived from dubious origins – either petroleum or bacteria strains, and there's no way they resemble anything close to nature that our bodies would recognise.

I would watch for genetically modified ingredients and look for the **NON GMO PROJECT VERIFIED** label for reassurance when there is corn, sugar / sugar beet, soy or derivatives of them like maltodextrin or soy protein isolate, on a label. GM agriculture attracts the strongest pesticide use of all, and even if you're not going organic, removing GMO foods from your mix is a great step forward.

A simple idea I like to share is have a look at the "products" in your fridge / pantry and then your "produce." Over time, aim to **reduce your products and increase your produce**. This will automatically mean that you remove more and more additives from your diet. If you don't understand what's on a label, your body doesn't stand a chance to understand at all!

What are your top tips to detoxify our kitchens?

From today forward, just mix up a spray bottle of half water, half vinegar, and 20 drops of essential oils of your choice. There you have a non-toxic multi-purpose spray for cleaning.

I would also swap out your non stick PFOA / PTFE pans for stainless or chef's black steel or cast iron pans instead.





What are your top tips for making our homes cleaner and safer?

- Keep your windows open for plenty of circulating air
- Over time, swap your personal care products to natural brands. There are a lot of 'green wash' brands pretending to be natural so that's tricky, but we cover this in depth in my Low Tox e-course if you want to go deeper.
- Make that multi-purpose non-toxic spray I mentioned above.
- Ditch the fabric softener.
- Remove cheap foam play mats and furniture like those cheap mini kid's sofas from your home.
- Switch from scented candles to essential oil diffusers.

Technology – how toxic is it?

Judging by how my hands feel after a full day of being on the computer? Quite toxic. The thing with tech is that it's not going away – we all love it for what it can do for us in this day and age. BUT we can be smart. The science might be inconclusive, but something that IS conclusive is that male sperm significantly decreases in health in the man who carries his phone in his front pocket. I have a bunch of tips ON THE BLOG for participants who want some implementation tips.

Can you share with us your 'must try' DIY cleaning or other home product that works?

Yes – I have a bunch of recipes for cleaning here: <http://bit.ly/2dS8ZE9>

Can you share with us your must try DIY beauty product that works?

My number one recipe is my coffee body scrub – so cheap, so fast to make and SO high performance. Find it here: <http://bit.ly/2dQ33H5>

You're also a big food waste warrior. Can you give use a few tips for wasting less food?

Absolutely! **My top 3 are:**

- **Put a waste list on your fridge** and for a month, write out everything you're wasting. This is your first step to getting conscious about your buying levels vs. your usage.
- Curries and blended soups are the best way to **hide a lot of sad looking veg**. Fry off some onions, curry powder, add your sorry looking veggies, roughly chopped and then add a little tomato passata and coconut milk – 20 minutes later you have a delicious meal instead of wasting food and having to buy MORE! My Fridge Ends Soup (search on my blog) is a great template for old veggies.
- **Keep all your tips** of carrots, onions and celery bunches in a container in the freezer and add to it until it's full. Then next time you go to make stock, you use all of those instead of 'new' veggies you had to pay for all over again for – less wastage. Less money. Win win!



You run a 30-day Low Tox Life program. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

Yes. It's my heart project. I just love helping people feel calm, empowered and excited about ditching weird crap from their lives and swapping out to DIY or natural product alternatives. It's your fast track way to a low tox life. We cover absolutely everything in deep detail with product options for Australia, the UK and America and the support group is an incredible place for support and transformation all the way through the course. We have expert interviews throughout, daily topics such as make up, skin care, cosmetics, suncare, haircare, kids, personal hygiene, cookware... I could go on! I say to people, "Give me 5 weeks and I'll give you a whole new outlook on life and a peace you haven't felt since you were a child." And it's true. Over 1,000 people through the course now and our alumni group will testify to it being a delicious game changer.

5. DETOXIFY YOUR LIFE: BABY STEPS TO BIG CHANGES

Living a life less toxic may seem daunting once you realize just how many factors in our life are indeed toxic. I talked to Alexx Stuart who shed some light on some little changes to make for big results. Her main takeaway? **Don't try to do it all at once.** Learning the ropes is overwhelming enough! When we face the facts, toxins are everywhere. I've got plenty of recipes, tools, tips, and tricks to help you to work your way through this maze as easily as possible. As soon as you implement just a few of these simple swaps, you'll be on the road to living more consciously for good.



FOLLOW THESE RULES FIRST

Let's talk about a few ways in which you can eliminate toxicity in your everyday life with little steps. These are rules of thumb that you can become your daily habit in order to lessen the blow.

- **Follow the road less travelled.** We spend loads of time in the car during our commute, which means we are exposed to polluted air. Consider taking back roads more often, driving during a less congested time, or taking the bus to reduce your impact.
- **Pack your lunch in stainless steel.** Upgrading your Tupperware reduces harmful substances from plastic, like BPA. You can also choose glass containers.
- **Tune out at night.** By turning off your Wi-Fi router at night and placing your phone on airplane mode, you can reduce the effects of toxic technology.
- **Let in some fresh air.** Keeping your windows open (weather permitting) can help keep the air circulating in the house which overall reduces toxins in the air.
- **Use the microwave less.** Using cooking techniques that don't use radiation is an easy way to make your food less toxic. Ditch the microwave for good!
- **Buy reusable.** In the same realm as packing your lunches differently, it's good to invest in low-tox reusable cups, especially if you're hitting the coffee shop every morning. Reducing waste is easy and makes a huge impact.
- **Start body brushing.** Using a dry brush can help your body's largest organ – the skin – detox and flush out toxins naturally.

- **Throw out products with microbe-ads.** These little beads are often made of plastic, which means that they often contain BPA. Not what you want to moisturize with!
- **Get dirty.** Digging your bare feet into the ground can actually help the body drive away free radicals. Get your tree-hugger on.



PRODUCT SWAPS THAT YOU SHOULD MAKE

Beyond habits, you should check the pantry again. This time, we want to eliminate more than just food. Cleaning products, scented candles and air-fresheners, and self-care products are some of the biggest offenders out there.

- **Switch out scented products with essential oils.** Using a diffuser in place of toxic, artificial scents found in commercial candles and air freshening sprays will reduce toxins without sacrificing the lovely aroma that fills your home.
- **Swap multi-purpose cleaners for a homemade version.** We'll be linking to recipes below, but a vinegar and water mixture scented with essential oils is all you need.
- **Switch leather or wood cleaner with olive oil.** All you need is a dab of it on a towel. Shiny, good as new, no damage done!
- **Swap moisturizer for coconut oil.** You can use coconut oil for just about anything. Of course, you can use the recipe below, but alone or mixed with essential oils, it can offer your skin hydration without the aid of chemicals or irritants.
- **Swap carpet freshener for simple bicarb.** The scents in those powders are far too strong to be natural.
- **Swap bath products for Epsom salts.** The magnesium boost will make you feel good.
- **Switch deodorant for an aluminium-free option.** There's no reason to expose yourself to aluminium – so find an effective deodorant without it.
- **Swap jewellery cleaner for a bicarb solution.** You'll be wearing that sparkling ring, so eliminate the chemical skin reactions.
- **Switch out the dental floss.** The stuff you typically find in the stores is no good, and you're putting that stuff in your mouth!

DIY RECIPES TO DETOX YOUR HOME

From your medicine cabinet to whatever's hiding beneath your sink, I have some easy, do-it-yourself recipes that will rid your home of toxins one step at a time while saving you big bucks.



Toiletries:

- Natural, aluminium-free deodorant from Wellness Mama because sweating it out is GOOD for detox and your pits deserve to breathe. <http://bit.ly/2dKBjX6>
- Two-ingredient all natural powder foundation from Thank Your Body for a glowing complexion. <http://www.thankyourbody.com/homemade-foundation/>
- 40 second homemade body scrub from Alexx at Low Tox Life. It couldn't be easier to ditch those "exfoliating" washes that do more damage than good. <http://bit.ly/2d-Q33H5>
- DIY homemade toothpaste from Thriving on Paleo for pearly whites without toxic fluoride. See next page.
- Homemade shampoo from Shalom Mama made with skin-friendly castile soap, coconut products, and essential oils. <http://shalommama.com/homemade-shampoo>

Cleaning products:

- Here's Alexx's roundup of 7 easy, DIY cleaning recipes. We've also got a few top choices for you. <http://bit.ly/2dS8ZE9>
- DIY all-purpose cleaner from The Radiant Life which will make you never want to buy anything from the store again. <http://bit.ly/2dAaNy3>
- Disinfecting toilet bowl cleaner from Growing Up Herbal without that strong chemical smell or blue colour. <http://bit.ly/2dB14bi>
- Homemade liquid dish soap from MommyPotamus sure to cut through any food debris without the aid of toxic ingredients. <http://bit.ly/2dQ8J47>
- DIY no-streak glass cleaner from Whole New Mom without that weird blue tint and strong fragrance. <http://bit.ly/2dymj00>
- Homemade laundry detergent from DIY Natural so you don't walk around in unsuspecting "toxic" clothes all the time. <http://bit.ly/2dkfbj6>