

Heavy Hitters

A look through the knowledge gate

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It has been an exciting journey so far stepping through the gate into the Primal world. Truly, it was a difficult shift in long held beliefs only possible through education and personal experimentation. I have joined a very fortunate group of people who have made the dietary, exercise and lifestyle changes to improve ones personal health and well being.

The educational aspect of what can drive committed change cannot be understated. Those you choose to be your mentors and teachers have the critical role of providing the information that will guide you through that phase of your life.

I wouldn't consider myself an easy sell. However, when the information I am given is well researched, backed by science and delivered with passion, it gets my attention. As is what happened once I became exposed to Primal and Ancestral concepts and practices.

This blog post involves some of the most influential people in the Primal, Paleo and Ancestral health world. I am truly grateful to them all for the influence they have had on my personal health journey.

The following is excerpts from the Board of Directors of the Primal Health Coach Institute interviews.

Mark Sisson



Mark Sisson is founder of Primal Nutrition; Primal Kitchen; Primal Blueprint Publishing; and the co-founder and head faculty member of Primal Health Coach Institute. He's the author of numerous books, including *The Primal Blueprint*, which was credited with turbocharging the growth of the primal/paleo movement back in 2009. In 2017, he officially became a New York Times bestselling author with *The Keto Reset Diet*. Mark has written several other books, including popular Primal-themed cookbooks and lifestyle books. He is the publisher of MarksDailyApple.com, the #1-ranked blog for over a decade in its health and fitness category.

Body Composition

Is body composition more about health or about aesthetics?

It's both. You can't decouple health from aesthetics, because good aesthetics are an evolutionary signal of good health. That doesn't mean you have to have six pack abs or zero pinchable body fat to be healthy—if anything, those characteristics taken to the extreme can be markers of ill health—but being fit, lean, strong, and capable are all marks of good health.

What are your top two or three “hacks” for shedding belly fat ASAP?

- 8 hours of sleep with a consistent bedtime
- Hill sprints
- Fasted hikes (or walking)

How important is muscle for health?

Hugely.

Muscle enables physical interactions with the world, but it's also a buffer. The more lean mass you have going into old age, for example, the longer you'll live. The better you'll survive illnesses and injuries and bedrest. The more organ reserve you'll have for maintaining proper physiological function.

Is it healthy to maintain sub-10% BF for men and sub-15/16% for women?

Probably not for most people. I sit at around 10% or below (depending on how you measure), and I'm very healthy. But it's not a struggle for me. It comes naturally.

If you have to do 2 hours of cardio a day, eat under 1500 calories, and take fat-burning supplements just to maintain your body fat percentage, it's probably unhealthy. I'm skeptical of anything that you have to struggle mightily and continuously to maintain.

Detractors of the insulin hypothesis will suggest that thermodynamics are still #1 where weight loss is concerned: you still need to create an energy deficit. Do you agree or disagree with this?

I agree. The question is: What's the best way to create an energy deficit? I'd argue that the top-down approach—deciding on a set number of calories to eat each day and then assiduously monitoring your caloric intake—doesn't work. The literature agrees with

me. A much better way to create an energy deficit is to eat in such a way that you control hunger, stay satiated, and inadvertently reduce calories.

Eating is the #1 most effective way to influence body composition, with about 80% share. The other 20% of the pie is comprised of exercise and lifestyle factors like sleep and stress. Which of those other factors would you emphasize as the second most important?

Toss-up between sleep and exercise. Without good sleep, your insulin sensitivity suffers and you crave junk food. Yet exercise, especially sprints, low-level aerobic activity, and strength training, is great at building/maintaining lean mass and reducing fat mass.

Brad Kerns



Brad is the President of Primal Blueprint Publishing and co-author, with Mark Sisson, of *Primal Endurance* and *The Keto Reset Diet*. A longtime speaker, author and coach in the health and fitness world, Brad is the director of course development for the Primal Health Coach program. He hosts the over 25-hours of audio presentations within the PHCI coursework, covering the entire content of the first 13 course modules.

Fuel Partitioning

What was life like when you were a carb-dependent human? How did burning sugar as your fuel NOT work for you as an endurance athlete?

We didn't know any better back then, since everyone was trapped in the carbohydrate paradigm bubble. We knew that if you didn't bring enough food on a long ride, you would be in big trouble. We knew that if you raided the mini-mart at mile 80 of a 120-mile ride and washed down Skittles and Hostess Pie with root beer, you would get a performance boost. We didn't know that inhaling large quantities of carbs before,

during, and after workouts was increasing oxidative stress in the body, promoting systemic inflammation, and making us more carb dependent and less fat adapted during workouts. It's like asking what was life like before the Internet and email? It was like writing letters on a typewriter and licking stamps.

Who is ketosis good for? Who is ketosis not good for?

Keto is most likely the default human factory setting over the course of human evolution. Most of our ancestors probably spent a good chunk of their lives in a ketone-burning state, due to the fluctuating food supply and lack of abundant carbohydrate sources. As detailed in *The Keto Reset Diet*, preparing methodically for and engaging in a defined period of nutritional ketosis should be a bucket list item for everyone. Robb Wolf speculates that keto could have a reset effect at the genetic level to help you recover from metabolic damage caused by yo-yo dieting, environmental toxins, antibiotic use, and other detriments. We have the science proving that fasting and ketone burning deliver a potent anti-inflammatory effect and stimulate both autophagy (natural cellular detoxification process) and apoptosis (programmed death of dysfunctional/pre-cancerous cells). Keto cleans house for everyone!

How do different types of exercise change how we partition fuel?

Chronic exercise can keep you locked in carbohydrate dependency. A sensible exercise routine that blends increased daily movement, regular aerobic workouts, and brief, intense strength and sprint sessions helps you become fat-adapted and metabolically flexible—provided you eat primally. High carbohydrate eating patterns can negate some of the benefits of a devoted exercise program. This reality is revealed when you look at the high rates of excess body fat among high calorie burning athletes. Dr. Tim Noakes cites a stat revealing that 30% of the participants in the Cape Town, South Africa marathon were classified as overweight or obese. That's the same percentage as the world population as a whole, according to WHO. This suggests that the participants in the Cape Town marathon are indistinguishable from the spectators. Something wrong with that picture!

Are there any downsides to excessive protein consumption?

There are an assortment of downsides. Excess protein is toxic to the body so the liver and kidneys are stressed when converting it into waste products and excreting it. Excess protein consumption, like excess carb consumption, overstimulates the cellular growth factors of IGF-1 (insulin-like growth factor) and mTOR (mammalian target of rapamycin). This promotes accelerated cell division, which in turn accelerates the aging process and increases the risk of cancer. Also, if you go on a long-popular high-protein diet for weight loss, you will end up converting excess protein into glucose via the process of gluconeogenesis.

A great longevity goal is to consume the bare minimum level of protein necessary to preserve lean muscle mass and support routine metabolic functions and general homeostasis. For many people, this could be less protein than they typically consume. After consultation with many leading experts, the official Primal Blueprint recommendation is to consume an average of 0.7 grams of protein per pound (1.54 grams per kilo) of lean mass per day.

Dr. Cate Shanahan



Dr. Cate Shanahan is one of the leading MDs in the ancestral health community, and co-author of two extremely popular books, *Deep Nutrition* and *Food Rules*. Dr. Cate is also the Director of Nutrition for the Los Angeles Lakers's PRO (Performance, Recovery, Orthogenesis) Nutrition program, and consults one-on-one with some of the most exceptional athletes in the world, including NBA legend Kobe Bryant, to help optimize metabolic function.

SAD Foods

What is the first thing a person could eliminate from their diet that would move improve their health?

Vegetable oils. If you are not making your own food you are being fed these oils.

What about the subsequent steps - the second, and third, and so on - if we were to make an ideal timeline of "lifestyle change baby steps?"

This will vary from client to client. I often start with cutting snacks, or changing breakfast or cutting soda or eating more natural fat or teaching people what to eat on the road. It's highly variable and that's the reason we need coaches because if it could all be programmatized then it would have been done long ago.

Nutrition protocols often seem to emphasize what we're removing from the diet. What essential nutrient-dense items would you suggest clients include in their diet, and why?

Why, the 4 pillars of course! Go out of your way to get uncooked animal product (like sushi or raw milk) for digestibility and antioxidants. Get fermented foods and foods made with sprouted seeds/beans etc. for gut health. Bone stocks, for collagen health; and organ meats, like liver for filling in gaps in your nutritional profile.

What supplements can best support a client through their transition away from a SAD diet?

I recommend everyone use a simple multivitamin; magnesium oxide; zinc piccolinate at roughly 100 % of the RDA; and Vitamin D at 2-4000 iu.

What are the two or three foods that most Primal/paleo folks are eating but shouldn't?

Foods with vegetable oils. When you eat out, you're going to get 30% of your calories from these oils unless you are directing the server and the chef on what to substitute. This is true in fancy restaurants as well as McDonald's. The difference is at fancy restaurants you can direct your server what to substitute: can you cook anything in butter or olive oil.

Snacks. There's really no such thing as a healthy snack.

Fish oil. We get plenty of omega-3. It's just that when we also get too much vegetable oil, the omega 3 gets destroyed (studies by Ramsden, Chris at the NIH on migraine headache sufferers show levels of omega 3 go up by cutting canola and soy oil and the like...). Plus the fish oil supplements start to degrade after 30 days so you're getting toxic breakdown products unless you buy them super frequently and they come from a company that makes them super carefully.

Elle Russ



Writer and Primal Health Coach Elle Russ is a popular host of The Primal Blueprint Podcast and author of *The Paleo Thyroid Solution*.

Food Quality

Many health coaching clients are nervous to make a lot of big changes all at once. If a coach were to “baby-step” their client through a pantry purge, what SAD foods are, in your opinion, the ones to get rid of first and foremost, and why?

If the pantry has to be baby-stepped, and one is unwilling to get rid of all SAD foods at once, then I would immediately throw out all of the unhealthy, inflammatory cooking oils and fats and replace them with healthy ones. It's the easiest and least noticeable to one's life and so....it's the simplest action. Chuck the canola oils and margarine and start using healthy fats and oils like olive oil, grass fed butter, coconut oil, etc.

Do you have a sweet tooth? What foods do you select—if any(!)— to meet that sweet craving?

Occasionally I do have a sweet tooth. To satisfy that, I will sometimes buy a raw dessert from a health food market. Mostly though, I will get some clean-flavored, full-

fat yogurt and eat every spoonful with some fresh whipped cream. Or just eat fruit and whipped cream. You can also refrigerate a can of coconut milk overnight, and then the next day open the can, pour off as much liquid as possible, and then whip that coconut milk like you would regular heavy whipping cream. Whipped coconut milk cream with lemon zest and/or lime zest with some fruit is DELICIOUS! And it requires zero sugar because coconut is naturally sweet.

What supplements do you recommend, if any?

Depends on the situation, but the ones I recommend most often are: Selenium (the best form is Se-Methyl L-Selenocysteine), Vitamin D3, Vitamin C, Methyl B-12 w/folate, probiotics, milk thistle, fish oil, magnesium.

Do you always buy local, pastured, free-range, organic, seasonal food?

I do my best. It's tougher to find pastured chicken than it is to find pastured pork or beef, so sometimes I will eat free-range chicken which is fed grains; so not a "paleo-perfect" choice. If I am traveling, the meat options might not be pastured, so I make do.

Do you gravitate toward any herbs/spices for their purported health benefits? Which ones and why?

Oregano oil and oregano, for its incredible anti-fungal, anti antiviral, antibacterial, antiparasitic effects, and more!

How important is food variety for health?

It is a great health intention to try and eat a wide array of foods for a vast nutritional outlook, however, some people and some health conditions might require a level of simplicity or restriction with food that could limit "variety."

How do you balance food quality (nutrients, macronutrients) with food enjoyment? Are both necessary for truly healthy eating?

Food "enjoyment" is not necessary at all for healthy eating, but is certainly desired for a happy life, and is easy to achieve.

Can a client hope to eventually reach a place where intuitive eating results in nutrient-dense eating, or are they forever destined to read every ingredients label?

100% people do not have to be forever destined to read labels! Eventually those days end, and intuition kicks in, and at that point, one has already developed a pretty good idea of where ingredients stand from prior label-reading. That being said, if you are not sure what is in something...then yes, read the label.

Lindsay Taylor Ph.D.



Lindsay Taylor is the Senior Writer and Researcher at Primal Blueprint Publishing. She's co-author of *The Keto Reset Diet*, *The Keto Reset Instant Pot Cookbook*, plus several other books and cookbooks in the works; and heads up the *Keto Reset Diet* Facebook group, a massive gathering of Sisson/Keto devotees. An ultrarunner, Ironman triathlete, and social psychologist, she regularly appears on the Primal Endurance Podcast to discuss mental and emotional aspects of endurance training.

Exercise Commentary

“Do I have to exercise?” How would you answer this?

I'm always assuming that what a client wants is not simply to lose weight but to increase health and their ability to enjoy their lives today and for many, many years to come. In that case, you have to move, and not just the movement of walking around the grocery store or walking from your car to your office. If you want to be healthy, you have to make a concerted effort to move your body in varied ways, at different speeds, through different types of movements, and against resistance. Whether you want to call it “exercise” or not is up to you. If you don't want to “exercise” but do want to dance, swim, hike, play soccer, etc., you'll be on the right path.

Exercise is ineffective for weight management, but in your own words: what IS exercise effective for?

Health isn't just about maintaining a healthy weight, it's about maintaining (and growing) muscular strength, mobility and flexibility (joints, fascia, connective tissue), and balance. Exercise helps regulate hormones and elevate mood. If you exercise with other people, it can be an important source of social connectedness. There is even some evidence that it can increase the health of your gut microbiome, which itself is central to physical and emotional health. In short, exercise contributes in countless ways to both physical and mental wellbeing. It's also incredibly important if you want to extend your "healthspan," the number of years in which you enjoy health and vitality.

Why is the "calories burned" paradigm wrong or misleading?

It is important to consume fewer calories than you burn if you want to lose weight, BUT, there are two important things to consider: (1) We know that the body will compensate for "calories burned" by downregulating activity elsewhere throughout the day. So, even if you burn a couple hundred calories at the gym, the brain will slow you down subtly in other ways to reduce that deficit. (2) Regardless of exercise, weight loss still has a hormonal component that needs to be addressed via diet. That's part of what we mean when we say, "You can't outrun a bad diet." Eating healthy foods in the appropriate amount is much more important for weight loss than how you exercise.

What are some of the most overlooked components of fitness that you witness in your endurance clients? (e.g., power, mobility, reaction time, speed, etc...)

Most of my professional interactions are with endurance athletes, and by far the two issues that endurance athletes neglect are mobility and RECOVERY. By nature, endurance athletes are willing to put in lots and lots of hours training at their sports, but that makes it hard to find time for the complementary practices like foam rolling and stretching that help maintain mobility and flexibility, and which prevent injury. And

they simply don't give themselves permission to rest and recover adequately, probably in part due to the social pressure to log as many miles/hours as possible.

What soundbites or educational messages do you use to implore people to separate exercise from weight management?

As I said earlier, "You can't outrun a bad diet."

Can you comment on situations or biochemical instances where exercise HAS proven beneficial for affecting body composition?

I do think exercise is very important for body composition, especially resistance training. Building lean muscle helps increase metabolism, maintain mobility, and, let's face it, looking good naked. The goal isn't to be "skinny fat," it's to be fit, and having an appropriate amount of lean muscle is central to fitness.

What are your thoughts on exercising on an empty stomach to boost fat loss? Nonsense?

Fasted workouts are incredibly popular now. They show a lot of promise for increasing insulin sensitivity, promoting adaptive hormone responses, increasing mitochondrial enzymatic activity, and boosting fat burning. I'm a fan.

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Thank you for taking the time read this post. If you find any of the information valuable and would like to find out more information regarding the benefits a health coach can provide, or if you are interested in setting up a consultation. Contact Vern Gorman at livingalignedhc@gmail.com or through the website www.livingalignedhealthcoach.wordpress.com

