

WHY I BELIEVE PALEO IS IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN

THE PRO'S AND CON'S

For some time I had been seeing Paleo information popping up everywhere, on Facebook, in emails, in conversation. I became interested because of my health and decided to investigate. I found out there is a huge controversy about it.

PRO'S

The pro argument goes like this: In Paleolithic times, 2 ½ million years ago, our ancestors were hunters and gatherers. They ate vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and lots of lean meat. They had no processed foods, beans or dairy products, and ate no grains. Our bodies have changed very little since Paleolithic times. Therefore, we should eat as they did for optimum bodily health. All the processed and “junk” foods people eat now are causing obesity, heart disease and diabetes, among other ailments.

CON'S

And here are the cons: The Paleo diet is a “diet”. It is extreme and unsustainable, as well as unrealistic to believe we can go without birthday cake, ice cream and pasta forever. Some people's bodies have benefited from evolution to the extent that they can tolerate and even thrive on the modern diet. Not everyone's body is the same. For the 1-2% of people who have celiac disease, are lactose intolerant, etc, it may be necessary, but for the rest of us, moderation works just fine.

OUR PERSONAL HEALTH DROVE US TO PALEO

My husband and I are both in our early 80s. We had been eating moderately well, but when he was diagnosed with lung cancer five years ago, we began researching diet and supplements in earnest. We both believe in natural healing, to the greatest extent possible. What we found was not surprising. Organic vegetables, especially cruciferous, were high on the list of foods that fight and prevent cancer. Processed sugar was high on the list of “foods” that feed cancer.

Our naturopath helped us select supplements which were right for my husband's body, and advised us to start juicing green leafy vegetables.



We bought organic of course, and at first they were somewhat hard to find. Organic has finally caught on, and we have plenty of greens now. To start with, we juiced 3 times a day; now it's once a day.

After 5 years of a much better diet, the cancer is still there, growing *very* slowly. We wish it would go the other way—completely go away, that is—but it hasn't. Still, he's quite healthy otherwise.

But this report is mostly about me and what I have discovered about foods for myself. I mistakenly thought I was the healthy one, until we moved last summer. After the move, I experienced pains in my hips and thighs. I was limping around for a week or two, and finally decided to go to the chiropractor.

"NO GRAINS"

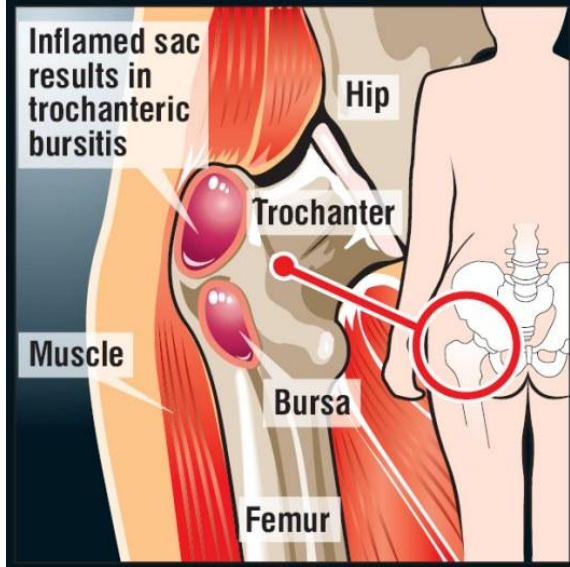
To my bewilderment, she suggested I stop eating grains. "Grains contribute to inflammation." And inflammation causes pain. I believed her instantly and intuitively. She has been right about so many other things. I stopped on a dime. It was a little difficult at first because I craved bread especially. After a week or so, though, that craving went away, and I have rarely touched bread since. Oh, and I lost 10 pounds in about a month.

However, the no grains treatment wasn't getting rid of the pain fast enough for me. She had said it would take months. So off I went to my medical doctor, who recommended a course of prednisone. I had heard bad things about prednisone, but decided the risk was worth it if it worked, which it did.

BURSITIS

I was almost free of pain for another few weeks. The pain started coming back, so I went the physical therapy route next, with mixed results. All the practitioners agreed on one thing. I had Greater Trochanteric Bursitis (GTB), which is an inflammation of the bursa of the greater

The inflammation that causes all the agony



trochanter. Now I don't know about you, but I had never heard of this ailment. Here's what the hip joint looks like. You can see the trochanter and the two bursas cushioning it.

The bursas (those little pink sacs) have some nifty fluid in them, kind of like motor oil for a car, and they help to reduce friction between the bones. When they are overused (as in moving from one residence to another, with a lot of heavy lifting and trudging up and down stairs), they become inflamed and therefore painful.

IT'S A WOMAN'S DISORDER

According to Dr. Barbara Bergin, an orthopedic surgeon in Austin Texas, GTB is much more likely to happen to women than men, because of our

larger, more curvy hips. She does have one great piece of advice. SLAM – Sit Like A Man. Think about this. We have been taught since childhood to keep our legs together, and so we cross our legs and squeeze our knees together. It would be unladylike to spread our legs, but that is precisely what Dr. Bergin prescribes. And no more stairs. It all makes sense.

So, my bursas were inflamed. I tried over the counter pain medicine, prescription pain medicine, massage, icing my hips, drinking diluted hydrogen peroxide, Epsom salt baths, capsaicin (red hot peppers) infused oil, as well as all the previously mentioned remedies. AND – **BIG RED FLAG HERE** – I'm not recommending any of these, especially the hydrogen peroxide, without extensive research. There are many do's and don'ts.

MORE INFLAMMATION

On Labor Day, I went to the ER with very sharp chest pains. Turns out I had pleurisy, an inflammation of the membrane surrounding the lungs. Wow, another inflammation! Again, more prednisone was prescribed, and voila, no more pleurisy.

My next inflammation ordeal began around the middle of September. It began as a common cold and quickly developed into bronchitis. I was very short of breath, coughed a lot, and felt weak. I began to think my whole body was inflamed. Everything wrong with me ended in –itis.

I still had the hip pain, so this time I went to the doctor for a shot of cortisone in both hips. This was extremely painful, but short in duration. The doctor explained that the pain would probably come back if I didn't do something different. Exactly what I was supposed to do differently was not explained.

“NO SUGAR”

I went back to the chiropractor, and was told I'd have to cut out sugar in addition to the grains. And again, I knew she was right. Sugar proved to be more difficult to eliminate than grains, however. I had been using Stevia, a natural sweetener for some time, so that helped a great deal.

This is 9 months after the first attack, and although it's better, I still have GTB. Remember, that's Greater Trochanteric Bursitis. I have another word for the G, but I won't mention it here. This condition took a long time to develop—years perhaps—so I'm giving my body time to realize its paleo perfection before ditching the whole idea. I've only been sitting like a man for about a month, and eating largely paleo for several months now.

HOW STRICT DO I HAVE TO BE?

Strict paleo? No, not for me. I believe I can have a few treats now and then without blowing the whole deal. I've learned that the protein part of paleo is what gets results in rebuilding muscle and helping the hips heal.

I hope this report has helped you understand some reasons to try a paleo diet, especially if you have present health concerns. If you don't have a health issue now, think about prevention.

Ingredients can be a little expensive, though it doesn't have to be if you do careful research. We prefer to eat simply, using lean meats and fish, with side dishes of fresh vegetables, often steamed to preserve the nutrients.

Perhaps like me, you have been peeking at paleo, without really diving in. I urge you to give it a try. It's helping me on my way to better health.

Yours in good faith,

Pat Balvanz