

# Paleo Diet STARTER GUIDE

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
THE PALEO DIET TO GET STARTED



WRITTEN BY

MICHELE SPRING

# Hey there, I'm Michele



**I'M A CERTIFIED HEALTH AND LIFE COACH, NLP PRACTITIONER, QI GONG AND YOGA TEACHER, AND OWN THRIVING AUTOIMMUNE. I'M ALSO A WIFE, MOM OF 2 BOYS, AND I LIVE WITH TWO AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES - HASHIMOTO'S THYROIDITIS AND CELIAC DISEASE.**

For years I was told I had "hypothyroidism", that my symptoms were in my head, and that there was absolutely nothing that could be done beyond the medication that I was given for my thyroid.

Yet it wasn't until my quality of life suffered so greatly that I turned to diet and lifestyle as ways to feel better. It was then that I learned I could stop all of the symptoms I was experiencing, my body would no longer keep harming itself, and I could live a life feeling fantastic. In fact, I feel better in my 40's than I did in my 20's!

Now I lead an active lifestyle where my family and I go hiking, skiing, camping, etc, and I feel constant, great energy all day long. I no longer suffer from the brain fog, inability to articulate, cold hands and feet, achiness, heart palpitations, bloating, gas, and debilitating exhaustion that used to be a normal part of my day.

Unfortunately, these negative symptoms and more are all too common in our society today. Most likely you suffer from some if you're reading this. Yet the idea of changing your diet and lifestyle can be daunting! This guide aims to help you understand what autoimmune disease is, why medications don't always help, and the differences between some dietary approaches so that you can make a well-informed decision on how to proceed.

Thousands of people have finally found relief from their symptoms using these approaches, so if you're sick of being tossed around from doc to doc and told that your symptoms are in your head, you've come to the right place.

*Michele Spring*

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# What is Paleo?



A dietary style based off of what our Paleolithic ancestors ate 10,000 years ago, before agriculture came about.

Removes the nutrient-poor, highly processed foods that have become so common in our society and replaces it with nutrient-dense, healthful foods.



It's NOT a one-to-one representation of what our ancestors ate, more a guideline. Cavemen didn't eat cupcakes, but people on the Paleo diet do.



Used by many people to feel better from chronic disease, reverse Type 2 diabetes, clear acne, lose weight, decrease anxiety, and hundreds of other things.



Becoming a lot more commonly accepted by doctors, researchers, and health experts as a very effective diet for the above ailments.



Not necessarily a low-carb diet and meat-centric. Some people have made it that way, but it can be moderate carb and ideally full of a wide variety of vegetables.



A long-term dietary style that many people either choose to do from the start or end up at after doing something like a Whole30 or the Autoimmune Paleo Protocol (AIP diet).



# Why it's so effective

01



Most processed foods are made to be overly salty or sweet so that you'll crave and eat more. These are bad for our health and waistline. Paleo takes us back to real food, the way it's supposed to taste. You therefore eat less and a wider variety of nutrients.

02



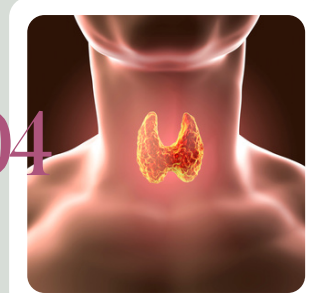
The Paleo diet supports a healthy gut with lots of beneficial flora through its emphasis on probiotic and prebiotic foods and through the avoidance of foods that contribute to gut dysbiosis (causing things like bloating, gas, brain fog)

03



Inflammatory foods are removed, therefore helping the body reduce inflammation and have a normally functioning immune system. This reduces cholesterol, blood pressure, autoimmune disease symptoms, and the chances of getting a chronic disease. It also helps us lose weight.

04



Regulates hormones by focusing on the nutrients we need for hormone balancing, which helps us lose weight, have normal menstrual cycles, better fertility, sleep soundly, and have constant energy.

05



Micronutrient deficiency (Vitamin D, Iron, Zinc, Calcium, etc) is increasingly showing up as a major factor in chronic disease. The Paleo diet stresses nutrient dense foods that replace these deficiencies.





# THE DIET

*"A healthy outside starts from the inside"*

*- Robert Urich*

Allowed Foods  
&  
Not Allowed Foods



# ALLOWED FOODS

*Yes*

- Meats and poultry
- Seafood
- Vegetables
- Fermented foods (like sauerkraut, kombucha, kvass)
- Fats (like avocado, lard, coconut oil, tallow, bacon fat, olive oil)
- Fruits and berries
- Butter and ghee (clarified butter)
- Potatoes
- Coconut products
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Eggs
- Flours (like cassava, tapioca, arrowroot, coconut, and almond)
- Apple cider vinegar
- Occasional natural sweeteners like honey, maple syrup, coconut sugar, molasses)
- Unrefined Nut Oils (like macadamia nut oil)
- Unrefined Seed Oils (like sesame oil)
- Olives
- Fish Sauce
- Chocolate
- Balsamic Vinegar
- Coconut Aminos
- Red Wine Vinegar
- White Wine Vinegar
- Sea Salt
- Herbs & Spices
- Coffee & tea
- Occasional gluten-free alcohol (like tequila)
- Beans with edible pods (like green beans and snap peas)



# NOT ALLOWED FOODS

No

- Grains (including wheat, corn, brown rice, oats, millet, barley, sorghum, etc)
- Dairy (other than butter and ghee)
- Beans
- Legumes (like peanuts and peanut oil)
- Refined sugars (like white and brown, agave nectar)
- Refined vegetable oils (like canola oil)
- Food chemicals (like guar gum, carrageenan, MSG, xanthan gum)
- White Rice is a grey area - some people do ok with it, some don't. Good source of carbs for athletes and kids
- Pseudo-grains like Buckwheat and Quinoa also a grey area, best to remove these for a few months and then reintroduce to see if they cause you any negative symptoms



Emphasis is placed on getting nutrient dense foods like meats, seafood, vegetables, fruits, fermented foods, and fats. These foods are needed for the body to work optimally.



# HOW TO EAT

Think of your daily nutrition like filling a bucket.

You want to fill your bucket with the most nutritionally-dense foods first. Get all of your vitamins, minerals, protein, etc in and then once your bucket is full you can indulge in treats (things that might not be as healthy).

## A Typical Plate



4-8 oz of lean protein



Eat plenty of good fats like olive oil, coconut oil, avocado oil, macadamia nut oil, butter, ghee, bacon fat, lard, tallow, or a handful of nuts



Lots and lots of veggies - raw , steamed, roasted,, sauted



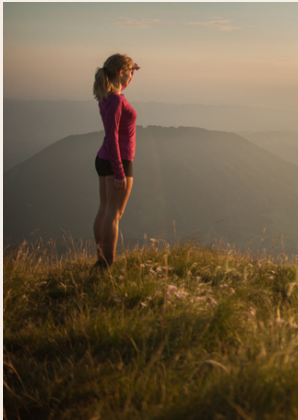


# THE LIFESTYLE

*"The number one root of all illness is,  
as we know, stress"  
- Marianne Williamson*

Sleep,  
Exercise,  
&  
Stress Management

# WHY LIFESTYLE IS IMPORTANT



The Paleo diet is not just about food. Primal humans spent most of their days foraging for food in a largely stress-free environment. A random tiger might chase them and cause momentary STRESS!!!, but once the person survived they would most likely go back to their stress-free life.



However, in today's day and age we have the proverbial tiger chasing us several times a day, if not more. You get up and rush to get ready for work so you aren't late. A car swerves out and almost hits you on your commute to work. You are running up against a deadline at work and your boss throws another task on your plate. So on and so forth. It never ends!

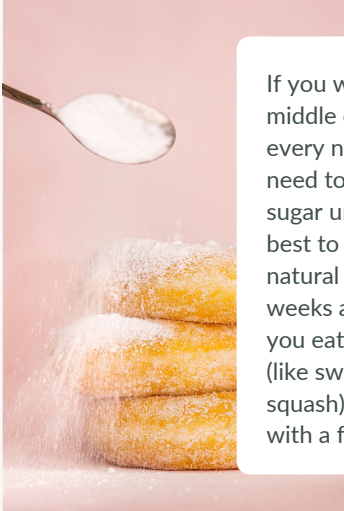


This leads not only to us feeling frazzled all the time but also leads to huge and chronic health issues due to hormone imbalances. And sleep is our mechanism to repair from the day, to detox from all the things that threaten us in our environment, and to refresh. When we skimp on that it just leads to a cascade of health issues as well. Relaxation and sleep are extremely important.

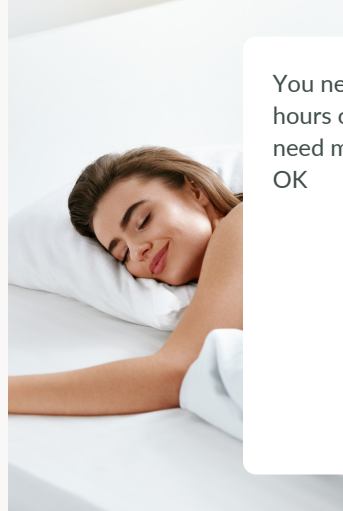


# SLEEP

Sleep is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health



If you wake in the middle of the night every night you might need to get your blood sugar under control - best to remove all natural sugars for a few weeks and make sure if you eat fruit or starches (like sweet potatoes or squash) that you do so with a fat and/or protein



You need at least 7-8 hours of sleep, but if you need more at first that's OK



Avoid electronics in the evening if possible. If you must use them, install a program like F.lux or Night Shift on your computer or wear amber-tinted blue-blocking glasses



Limit caffeine to before noon and remove it completely if possible



NO light in your room at night. Even if you can't see it your skin can absorb it and this affects your hormones



Your room should be between 62-68 degrees F



# EXERCISE

Go get your butt in gear! No need to go run a marathon (in fact, don't because TOO much exercise is bad for us too), but if you don't at least go for a nice brisk walk each day you need to start putting an emphasis on this.

Being sedentary can harm you just as much as eating bad food, so get that heart pumping and muscles working. (Without it you won't have proper detoxification, immune function, resistance to stress, and circadian rhythms.)

For those of you who like to get moving, running, sprinting, CrossFit, biking, hiking, swimming, and weightlifting are all great activities. Gentle activities like Yoga, Pilates, and walking are better for folks who shy away from the idea of doing any sort of cardio workout or for those who suffer from an active autoimmune disease.

And I wasn't joking about the marathon stuff. Make sure if you DO do endurance-type sports or high-intensity workouts that you have PLENTY of recovery time in between each workout. Or else, like me, you might find yourself with several autoimmune diseases. Too much exercise can cause dysregulated hormones, susceptibility to colds & viruses, leaky gut, inflammation, and immune suppression. I am 100% convinced that doing Ironman Triathlons triggered my autoimmune diseases. Email me if you want more info on this.



# 10 Ideas for Relaxation:

1. Crafting
2. Meditative Drawing (check out Zentangle)
3. Meditation (check out Headspace.com or download the app)
4. Yoga (google Yoga with Adriene for free YouTube workouts)
5. Gardening
6. Smile (even a fake one can reduce stress hormones)
7. Get out in nature
8. Practice gratitude
9. Visualize yourself (complete with sounds and smells) in a peaceful place
10. Write down EVERYTHING that you have to do, that's on your mind, that's causing you stress. Getting it out of your head is one of the biggest stress relievers.



## STRESS MANAGEMENT

Chronic stress can cause leaky gut, activate the immune system, keep your body from doing normal restorative processes, cause sleep problems, and alter your hormones. In other words, stress can be just as detrimental as eating harmful foods. Aim to get some sort of stress relief into your day EVERY day.



# Implementing



*Start as you mean to go on*

How to start,  
Tips,  
&  
Easy Swaps



# How to Start

There are two good ways to start:

## Cold Turkey

This method is great for those who are usually pretty good at making and keeping commitments to themselves. You pick a date to start, figure out everything you need to know, buy the items you need, clean out your pantry/fridge and start!

Advantages: quicker results and healing, less thinking about it

Disadvantages: Can be harder to implement, easy to push the date to start off, less time to get used to the idea of it

## Slow and Steady

This method is great for someone brand new to a restrictive diet and involves slowly removing foods each week over a period of time. For example, in week 1 you'd remove gluten. Then in week 2, you'd remove grains. Then in week 3, you'd remove dairy. You'd remove groups of food like this until you get to full Paleo.

Advantages: Better for busy people and newbies, easier to get used to restrictions, less of a shock

Disadvantages: Longer to heal and feel results, which can be frustrating, easier to get sidetracked and fall off the wagon

# Tips

If you don't know what meals to make, you might wind up making the same boring, unappetizing thing over and over again and give up. Looking at delectable Paleo recipes gives you a sense of what can be and inspires you with all sorts of ideas. Paleo does not mean boring. Look through cookbooks and search the internet for several recipes that look good to you before starting.

Using those recipes you found as inspiration, and the list above of allowed foods, purchase food that will send you on the way to wellness. Try to get grass-fed or wild caught proteins, but if your budget doesn't allow it or your store doesn't carry it, don't sweat it. For vegetables, organic is best, but again if your budget doesn't allow it, try to at least stay away from the Dirty Dozen (find this on EWG.org). You will get the best prices for in-season produce. Get a rainbow of colors.

If you want to lose weight, try not to eat more than 1-2 servings of fruit per day. Fruits like berries, citrus, apples, and pears are better than things like bananas, but they all still contain natural sugars and can thwart any weight loss efforts. This especially goes for dried fruit. That's the closest to nature's candy as it gets, so don't overindulge.

You'll also want to get some healthy fats to help make your veggies taste better and keep you satiated. Coconut oil, avocado oil, olive oil, butter, ghee, and bacon fat all are excellent choices.

Paleo-friendly (meaning it doesn't contain added sugars, gluten, preservatives, grains) condiments, herbs, and spices are also important additions to your shopping list. These will help keep your meals from edging into that "boring" category and you'll be amazed at how great things taste with some seasoning.

# More Tips

Limit Paleo treats (things like cookies, cakes, most baked goods, etc, as well as dried fruit and anything made with a natural sweetener) to only a few times per week. Eating more than this will not only thwart any weight loss efforts but will also cause your blood sugar to spike (hello grumpy, hangry person who won't get any better!)

If you cheat, don't worry! Just get back on track the next day. If you got in a car accident one day you wouldn't say "I want to do that again tomorrow", would you? The same principle applies here.

Some people like to do Paleo 80% of the time and then eat whatever they want 20% of the time. (Or 90/10) This is good for busy, social people, but I caution you to try to leave gluten out 100% of the time for several months to see if it affects you (especially if you have an autoimmune disease). I made the mistake for years of eating gluten while on Paleo and didn't see nearly the same positive effects as I did when I completely removed it.

You'll also want to get some healthy fats to help make your veggies taste better and keep you satiated. Coconut oil, avocado oil, olive oil, butter, ghee, and bacon fat all are excellent choices.

When eating out, don't assume things that "look Paleo" are gluten-, corn-, sugar- or dairy-free. You might be surprised about how many sauces contain these items. Even if you cheat and have french fries, know that many places coat their fries in a wheat flour to make them crispy (even sweet potato fries). If you are trying to get healthy and figure out if you might have issues with any of those items, always ask to make sure the items are safe. Good Paleo options in restaurants usually are steak, fish, or chicken with a salad or steamed veggies.

# Easy Swaps



## WHY



**COCONUT  
AMINOS**

Soy is a legume and full of anti-nutrients that strip minerals from our bodies.

**SOY SAUCE**

**ALMOND  
BUTTER  
or  
SUNFLOWER  
SEED BUTTER**

Peanuts are also a legume and potentially full of mold as well. Almond or sunbutter are great alternatives.

**PEANUT  
BUTTER**

**COCONUT  
MILK**

Dairy is full of proteins that many people can't digest, as well as hormones to make you grow.

**COW'S MILK**

**VEGGIE  
NOODLES**

Gluten is harmful for over 55% of the population, especially for anyone with autoimmune disease. Veggies noodles have much more nutrition too.

**WHEAT  
PASTA**

**AVOCADO OIL**

Canola oil is full of Omega-6 fatty acids which are very inflammatory for the body (not good when you have disease) and it goes rancid easily

**CANOLA OIL**



# RECIPES

*"One cannot think well, love well, sleep well,  
if one has not dined well"*

*- Virginia Woolf*



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PIZZA EGG MUFFINS

KALE SALAD WITH CRANBERRIES

BROILED COD WITH PARSLEY

PESTO

PORK LETTUCE WRAPS

CHOCOLATE SUNBUTTER BALLS

# PIZZA EGG MUFFINS



SERVINGS: 12 MUFFINS

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 F. If using a standard muffin tin, line the tin with paper liners. I recommend using a silicone muffin tin for egg muffins though since they just slide right out and cleanup is minimal.
- 3 In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, coconut milk, salt, oregano, and pepper. Add in the tomatoes, pepperoni, and olives and mix. Pour the mixture into the muffin cups evenly.
- 4 Bake for 30 minutes or until the muffins are set.

## INGREDIENTS

10 Eggs  
1/4 cup Coconut Milk (or other non-dairy milk)  
1/4 tsp Sea Salt  
1/4 tsp dried Oregano  
1/8 tsp Black Pepper  
1 cup Tomatoes, diced (about 1 large or 2 small)  
4 oz Pepperoni (Applegate makes a good one), chopped  
1/4 cup Black Olives, pitted and chopped

# KALE SALAD WITH CRANBERRIES



SERVINGS: 4

## INGREDIENTS

1 bunch Kale  
1/4 cup Dried Cranberries  
1/4 cup Sliced Almonds  
1 tbs Sesame Oil  
1/4 cup Macadamia Nut or  
Avocado Oil  
Juice of 1 Lime (about 1 tbs)  
Salt and Pepper to taste

## NOTES

*This salad is one of those that you can make ahead of time and it doesn't get all soggy. By nature, it is already sort of a soggy salad, but the kale holds up and doesn't disintegrate.*

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Cut the kale into small pieces, removing the particularly thick stems. Massage the kale for several minutes (this helps soften the kale and makes it easier to eat).
- 2 Add the rest of the ingredients and toss.



# BROILED COD WITH PARSLEY ALMOND PESTO



SERVINGS: 4

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat the broiler (on high if you have a multi-temp broiler). Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and place the cod on it.
- 2 Put the parsley, garlic, almonds, lemon juice and zest, paprika, and sea salt in a food processor. Process until everything is approximately the same size. With the machine running, gradually add the olive oil and keep going until the pesto is just slightly chunky.
- 3 Using a spatula or your hands, apply the pesto to both sides of the fish and place back on baking sheet.
- 4 Broil the fish for 5-10 minutes (depending on the thickness of your fish) or until opaque and the fish flakes when cut with fork. Enjoy!

## INGREDIENTS

1 bunch fresh parsley  
2 cloves garlic  
1 cup slivered almonds  
Juice and zest of 1 lemon  
1 tsp paprika  
1 tsp Sea Salt  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1.5 lbs cod (fresh or thawed, if  
using frozen fish)

# PORK LETTUCE WRAPS



SERVINGS: 4

## INGREDIENTS

1 tbs Coconut Oil  
1 lb Ground Pork  
1/4 tsp Sea Salt  
1 clove Garlic, minced  
1 tsp Ginger, grated  
1 Lime, juiced and zested  
1/4 cup Sunbutter or Almond  
Butter  
3 tbs Coconut Milk 1 tsp Fish  
Sauce  
1 head Butter or Iceberg  
Lettuce (or similar leafy green)  
1 Carrot, cut into matchsticks 1  
Bell Pepper, thinly sliced  
2 Green Onions (white and  
green parts), sliced  
Cashews, chopped



## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Separate the individual leaves of the lettuce, rinse and dry well. Set aside. Cut the carrots into matchsticks, slice the bell pepper, slice the green onions, and chop the cashews. Set aside.
- 2 In a medium bowl, stir together the juice and zest of the lime, the sunbutter, the coconut milk, and the fish sauce. Thin with more coconut milk as needed until desired thickness. Set aside.
- 3 Heat the pan over medium heat and then add the cooking oil. Add the garlic and ginger to the pan and saute for a minute until fragrant. Add the pork to the pan, season it with the salt and cook, stirring often, until cooked through.
- 4 Serve by scooping some pork into each lettuce leaf, adding a dollop of sauce, and then adding the toppings of carrots, green onions, bell pepper, and cashews.

# CHOCOLATE SUNBUTTER SNACK BALLS



SERVINGS: 6-8 BALLS

## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Process the dates in a food processor until they come into a ball. Add the cocoa powder, Sunbutter, and shredded coconut and then process again until it comes into a ball.
- 2 Pulse in the mini chocolate chips to incorporate them.
- 3 Form the mixture into walnut-sized balls and serve or refrigerate until needed.

## INGREDIENTS

1 cup Dates, pitted (approx 8 dates)  
2 tbs Cocoa Powder  
1/2 cup Sunflower Seed Butter  
(or Almond Butter)  
1/2 cup Shredded,  
Unsweetened Coconut  
2 tbs Mini Chocolate Chips  
(Enjoy Life brand is dairy- and soy-free)



# Want more?



I also have tons of recipes and lifestyle articles on my website, **Thriving Autoimmune**

Ready to really take action? Join **The Autoimmune Collective!** It's a monthly membership where you get expert coaching, guidance, and tools on implementing an autoimmune-friendly diet, movement, mental health, habit change, healthy lifestyle, and more so you can stop the autoimmune damage and live without regular symptom flare-ups.

