



Autoimmunity Uncomplicated

A STEP BY STEP APPROACH TO
RECLAIMING YOUR LIFE FROM
AUTOIMMUNITY

Unapologetically AIP
by Erin Shearer

WELCOME

I'm Erin, I used to be a nurse, now I'm an Integrative Nutrition Health Coach. After finding deep healing through diet and lifestyle I decided to become part of the solution rather than continue to be part of the problem.

I got my first autoimmune diagnosis of Hashimotos Thyroiditis in 2009, but didn't fully learn the power I held over my health until 2018 when I got hit with another diagnosis after years of declining health and mysterious symptoms that puzzled multiple doctors.

I began working with a functional medicine doctor and took healing into my own hands. I dove back into the science and fed my deep love for digging into the biology and pathophysiology. It feels so good to rekindle that passion.

I found the Autoimmune Protocol and reclaimed my vitality. In September 2018 I started blogging to share my kitchen adventures and health updates. Then in March 2019 I started classes at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition-the rest is history.

I'm happy to have you on this journey with me!



You can eat all the kale,
drink all the alkaline
water, take all the
supplements, do all the
yoga...but if you don't
deal with the shit going
on in your heart and
your head, you're still
unhealthy

Too often I've seen individuals who will go all in on diet change and neglect the lifestyle factors. They are then left to wonder why they're stuck. Food is only one piece of the puzzle, and make no mistake, while nourishing our bodies with proper nutrition is super important, obsessing over perfection is deeply detrimental. Diet change will only get you so far and cannot heal leaky gut alone.

Undervaluing chronic stress reduction, adequate sleep/poor sleep hygiene and the need to address emotional triggers and traumas will ultimately prevent you from healing; it largely boils down to cortisol (*you there clutching the coffee in a near panic attack at the thought of abstaining; I see you. I hear you. I feel you--I used to be you.*) Cortisol is our friend at the right time and place (we'll get in to that later) but when you're under chronic stress your body is in a constant fight or flight state, your adrenal glands are churning out massive amounts of cortisol resulting in what is often referred to as "adrenal fatigue" or HPA dysfunction-your body can't keep up with the cortisol demand. It impacts your sleep, it impacts your food choices, it slows digestion, it increases intestinal permeability and even impacts the gut microbes. You may have heard of leaky gut, these are some of the mechanisms behind it. More importantly however, cortisol profoundly effects your immune systems ability to regulate killing off of corrupt cells (autoantibodies), it effects genetic expression, as well as areas of the brain responsible for mood and behavior.

It doesn't matter if you're new to the AIP or you've been on it for months/years and you're looking to get off or find deeper healing and expand your diet, you're in the right place.

The Paleo Autoimmune Protocol, or AIP, as it is often referred, is a modified version of the Paleo diet with additional temporary eliminations meant to help you heal your gut, calm your immune system and narrow down any food sensitivities. It's not meant to be long term, ideally you should be reintroducing many foods! You will learn not only how your body responds to certain foods, you'll master self care and stress management skills along the way too-its about more than just food as some would have you believe.

Autoimmunity is multifactorial and can be thought of as a bucket-your immune system can take many insults(food allergens, environmental toxins, stress hormones, pathogens and infections and even your own genes) before the bucket runs over and your immune system is overwhelmed, fails to recognize YOU and starts to attack your tissues. It's not usually until the damage is underway that you get the sense that something is amiss. Our bodies are great at maintaining homeostasis until they literally can't anymore, when nutrients are depleted and the immune system is on such high alert everything sets it off.

Traditional doctors will tell you theres nothing wrong because you don't yet meet the diagnostic criteria (or they didn't run the right tests to unearth those autoimmune flags), or theres nothing that they can do because you're not out of range yet, theres nothing YOU can do other than manage symptoms with pharmaceuticals.

That's where they're wrong we're going to prove it! Sometimes diet and lifestyle are enough to see remission, sometimes medications are necessary, but often it's a balance of both with quality of life being the ultimate goal. Every case is unique, it is crucial to avoid the comparison game. Needing medications does not mean you didn't diet hard enough!

A big part of my practice is the mental health piece. It is so frequently overlooked and I would venture to say one of the bigger needle movers. Addressing the sense of safety is HUGE. Why is change so hard? Why is it so difficult to adopt new habits that will ultimately benefit our health? It all boils down to the unknown being perceived as dangerous, while the known is subconsciously where we feel safe. Predictability IS safety. Understanding how even our most detrimental behaviors serve our sense of safety allows us to explore how to cultivate safety in change and create lasting habits.

A lot of managing autoimmunity is done by changing our story. For years many of us have repeated a story of chronic illness, to the point that it has become part of who we are. In order to heal we have to believe that we are capable of healing and given the necessary inputs, that is just what we will do. We have to retell our story to one of hope, healing and change. Our words matter just as much as our thoughts and can create tension in our bodies triggering a stress response. Looking at how we think and speak about ourselves we are able to craft new stories.

Shifting our mindset around foods can also bring great healing. While caffeine causes us to pump adrenaline, otherwise benign foods can create the same cortisol stress response as a tiger if we're fearful of it causing a

reaction. It's easy for this food fear to develop in to full fledged disordered eating as is assigning a moral value to foods--real whole foods aren't inherently good or bad, they are simply information inputs that speak to our own unique physiology.

Being able to identify our diet on a spectrum can be helpful in some cases, but

ABOUT THE AIP

LIFESTYLE

PRIORITIZING SLEEP

Poor sleep will find a way to erode many aspects of your life. Getting restful sleep is key to balancing your hormones and reducing inflammation. While it is impractical for most of us in our modern age to rise when the sun does and retire when the sun sets, it is of utmost importance to develop healthy habits around sleep and optimizing our circadian rhythm

REDUCING STRESS

Whether it is workplace stress or the stress that we put on ourselves, finding ways to reduce and mitigate the toxic effects of stress is crucial to our overall health. So many of us with Autoimmunity are chronic overachievers, people pleasers, and often highly sensitive types. We are the helpers, the ones who will give until there is nothing left. It is time to start saying no, setting clear boundaries and taking care of ourselves for a change.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

It is not uncommon for those with autoimmunity to experience varying degrees of exercise intolerance. Most benefit is achieved through low to moderate intensity workouts. Exercise is stressful on the body, the right amount is beneficial to physical condition, however too much or too strenuous is likely to backfire causing a significant symptom flare; the line between is thin and different for everyone.

ABOUT THE AIP

LIFESTYLE



TIME IN NATURE

Studies have shown that spending time in nature has numerous beneficial effects on humans. Japanese culture is known to participate in forest bathing, its benefits range from boosting the immune system to lowering blood pressure and stress hormones among others. It doesn't even have to be a forest to find benefit though, spending time in a green or wooded area such as a park or greenbelt still has the same effects and is more easily accessible to city dwellers.

FINDING COMMUNITY

Autoimmunity can be a very lonely place, lives as we once knew them are no longer. Chronic illness is often invisible, our outward suffering is subtle to onlookers. Family and friends struggle to understand; spouses and partners may struggle to cope. Finding others who are on the same journey and can empathetically share in struggles and triumphs sets the stage for success.



SUPPORTING DETOX

Lowering your toxic burden and supporting your bodies natural detoxification pathways will help decrease the overall burden on your immune system. Consider your exposure to toxic chemicals through household cleaners which we are subjected to breathing and touching, products we use on our bodies and even our food and water. Its not about perfection, small changes add up quickly.

ABOUT THE AIP

DIET



NUTRIENT DENSITY

Rather than focusing on what we're removing we focus on re-feeding our bodies with nutrient dense foods to replenish vitamins, minerals and beneficial phytochemicals. Practice eating diversely and trying new foods. Eating a large variety of colorful foods is key. Think of it as crowding out anything that may be less than optimal for healing. Your body can't thrive on chicken and broccoli!

HEALING THE GUT

By eliminating foods like beans, grains, dairy, eggs, seeds and nightshades we limit compounds that can irritate the gut lining. By eating restorative, nutrient-rich foods, we are promoting tissue repair, therefore decreasing intestinal permeability and the immune system overstimulation caused by food allergens. Our bodies have an innate ability to heal when properly nourished!



REINTRODUCTIONS

The ultimate goal for the AIP is to heal the gut, restore the body and begin mindfully reintroducing foods. It allows us to create a diet that is custom tailored to our bodies unique needs and sensitivities. Knowing how what you eat impacts how you feel is the ultimate food freedom!

Foods to Include

Fresh Items

Fruits

Apple
Apricot/Nectarine/Peach
Avocado
Banana
Blackberry/Raspberry
Blueberry/Huckleberry/Marionberry
Cantaloupe/Honeydew
Cherry
Citrus
 Orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit,
 clementine, tangerine, etc
Coconut
Date
Fig
Grape
Guava/Papaya/Mango
Kiwi
Pear
Persimmon
Plum
Pineapple
Pomegranate
Strawberry
Watermelon

Meats

Beef
Bison
Buffalo
Lamb
Fish
Shellfish
Chicken
Turkey
Duck
Pork
Rabbit
Venison
Offal
 Bone Broth, Kidney, Heart, Liver

Vegetables & Roots

Artichoke
Arugula/Spinach
Asparagus
Beet
Bok Choi/Pak Choi
Broccoli/Cauliflower
Brussels Sprouts
Carrot
Celery/Celeriac
Chard
Collard Greens
Cucumber
Fennel Bulb/Frond
Green Bean
Horseradish
Jicama
Kale
Leek
Lettuce
Mushrooms
Onion
Raddish
Rhubarb (stalk only)
Rutabaga
Snap Pea
Squash (summer & winter)
Sweet Potato
Turnip
Watercress
Yam

Fermented

Sauerkraut
Fermented Vegetables
Kombucha/ Jun
Kvass (beet)
Water Kefir
Coconut Kefir

Foods to Include

Pantry Items

Flours

Cassava Flour
Tapioca Starch
Arrowroot Starch
Coconut Flour
Tigernut Flour
Carob Powder

Condiments

Coconut Aminos
Coconut Vinegar
Ume Plum Vinegar
Apple Cider Vinegar
Red Wine Vinegar
Balsamic Vinegar
Fish Sauce (anchovy+salt)
Olives
Pickles (no sugar added)
Wasabi

Fats

Beef Tallow
Bacon Fat/ Lard
Coconut Oil
Duck Fat
Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Palm Shortening/Red Palm Oil

Sweeteners

Blackstrap Molasses
Coconut Sugar
Date Sugar
Maple Syrup
Maple Sugar
Tamarind Paste
Dried Fruit (no sugar added)
Sucanat

Herbs & Spices

Basil (Thai and Italian)
Bay
Chives
Cilantro
Cinnamon
Cloves
Dill (frond only)
Fennel (frond only)
Garlic
Ginger
Lemongrass
Mace
Marjoram
Mint (spearmint, peppermint)
Parsley
Rosemary
Sage
Saffron
Sea Salt (Celtic, Himalayan)
Seaweed (nori, kombu)
Shallot
Thyme
Tarragon
Turmeric

Snacks

Beet Chips
Banana Chips
Cassava/Yuca Chips
Plantain Chips
Tigernuts

Canned Meats

Anchovies
Salmon
Sardines
Tuna
Oysters

Foods to Avoid

*Avoid all Eggs, Dairy and Alcohol

Grains

Amaranth
Barley
Buckwheat
Bulgur
Corn
Farro
Millet
Oats
Quinoa
Rice
Rye
Sorghum
Spelt
Teff
Wheat/Kamut

Legumes

Beans- All types
Black eyed peas
Chickpea
Fava Beans
Lentils
Peanuts
Soybeans

Spices

Allspice
Anise
Caraway
Cardamom
Celery Seed
Coriander
Cumin
Fennel Seed
Mustard
Nutmeg
Peppercorn
Poppy

Nightshades

Peppers- Sweet and Spicy
Eggplant
Gogi
Ground Cherry/Tomatillo
Paprika
Potato
Tobacco
Tomato
Wolf berries

Nuts & Seeds

Almond
Brazil
Cashew
Chestnut
Chia
Chocolate/Cocoa
Coffee
Corn
Flax
Hazelnut
Hemp
Macadamia
Pecan
Pine nut
Pistachio
Pumpkin
Sesame
Sunflower
Walnut

Fats

All Nut and Seed oils
Canola Oil
Corn Oil
Palm Olein
Safflower Oil
Sunflower Oil
Vegetable Oil