

Introduction: Just Another Diet Book?

“If you ignore your health long enough, it will go away.”

- Anonymous

Dietary Lifestyle for Health and Human Performance

The profound effects of diet on the health and performance of the human body are the crux of this book. Despite the endless procession of diet and health books, we continue to lose ground in our struggle to remain healthy. In recent history our foods have increased in quantity and decreased in quality, ushering in a host of degenerative diseases, disorders, maladies, and of course obesity. Disease may lead us down the path of surgery and drugs, but ultimately only the body can heal itself. Every day your body is doing its level best to stay healthy and disease-free, but it must have the right dietary materials to do its job. This is the story of degenerative diseases, how they sap our health, how a misguided diet causes them, and most importantly, what dietary measures we can take to minimize our risk and maximize our health. And when we maximize our health, we maximize our human potential – physically, mentally, and emotionally.

You’re reading this now because:

- a) You’re smart.
- b) You’re inquisitive.
- c) You care about your health.
- d) All of the above

I’m betting d) is the correct answer.

The first edition of Hungry for Answers arose from a Baby Boomer considering mortality – my own as well as those of my family and friends. Degenerative diseases are no strangers to me. Multiple sclerosis (MS), for one, has multiple occurrences in my blood relatives. Other autoimmune diseases, as well as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease are prevalent elsewhere among my blood relatives. But unfortunately, my family’s health problems are not considered unusual at all. These diseases have become so common in middle to late life that we have come to accept them as normal, although they are anything but normal for the human body. Like most people, I never gave any of this a great deal of thought. But it all hit home years ago when my wife developed the autoimmune disease scleroderma, recognized by the medical community as having no cause or cure, and which would ultimately be fatal. The personal impact of this disease became the impetus for the original book, so this is a good time to tell the story of my wife’s disease and recovery.

Shortly after the birth of our fourth child, Laura began experiencing chronic pain in her joints, and then periodic cardiopulmonary issues, culminating in emergency room visits and ambulance rides owing to difficulty breathing and irregular heartbeat. We received no satisfactory medical explanation. Laura’s problems continued, and she soon found herself with cold sensitivity in her hands, a form of Reynaud’s Syndrome, and she took to wearing gloves in room temperature conditions. A general malaise and deteriorating health continued. Laura was ultimately diagnosed with scleroderma by her dermatologist, who first noticed some hollowing around her eyes and nose and then examined her entire body. Later an antibody panel blood test by a rheumatologist confirmed the autoimmune disease. This was a tough pill to swallow, as scleroderma is a particularly nasty autoimmune disease that attacks collagen, the most abundant protein in the body, found particularly in the connective tissues. While slowly and steadily destroying the body from the inside out, scleroderma typically disfigures the body, particularly the skin of the hands and face. Most of Laura’s symptoms were systemic rather than specific to the skin, so up to this point she was spared significant changes in her outward appearance. Nevertheless, scleroderma is a death sentence, as the disease is classified as idiopathic (no known cause, no known cure), and can only be managed (symptoms reduced somewhat) by prescription drugs. Without a new plan my wife would be gone within a few years, leaving behind four small children.

This dooming scenario, with no clear cause, no clear cure, and no path forward but symptom management was not acceptable to me. There had to be something more known or something that could be done, a way we could change the course of this tragic prognosis. I hit the books, immersing myself in the medical literature, searching for causal factors for this and other autoimmune diseases that cause the body to attack itself. I was surprised to find widely scattered nuggets of information, but no central synthesis of diet and nutrition and how they specifically relate to the seemingly incurable diseases of our time.

At this point I began my search for more information on the critical role diet plays in the health of the human body, a relationship often discounted by the medical community. My early findings in the late 1990's pointed to the smoking guns of gluten and casein sensitivity in the development of autoimmune disease. This was well in advance of the gluten-free dietary trend that is sometimes met with skepticism. After a drastic change in diet, Laura's disease steadily retreated and within a year she was back to her normal healthy self, partaking in strenuous hikes in the Rocky Mountains. From that point on she has remained strictly gluten-free. Now, fifteen or so years after her initial diagnosis, Laura remains disease-free and in excellent health. In other words, **we won**.

What I learned in my search for information on reversing my wife's autoimmune disease, led to more and more research on diet and disease. As I gathered and digested more information, I began assembling the interlocking pieces of one great puzzle. This experience opened a whole new world for me. I previously had no concept of the direct and profound relationship between diet and disease.

What arose in the aftermath of a traumatic episode in our life ultimately culminated in a great victory. What started as a personal quest became something of a mission, as I soon realized that the information I was gathering could benefit everyone. In the end I felt a moral imperative to share the material I uncovered and conclusions which I arrived. I was compelled to compile it all in one place, as a guidebook if you will, to avoid or and/or reverse diet-driven disease

The original Hungry for Answers was published in 2003. There were some who were skeptical. I do not have a degree in medicine or in diet and nutrition. How could I be a credible source? I was educated as a scientist and I researched, published, and taught early in my career. I have since been a long time NASA project manager and researcher, and I am presently a full-time consultant to America's aerospace industry. I have degrees in science and economics, and these two disciplines have driven the changes to our foods that have translated into degenerative disease. My education and work experience have taught me to delve further into causes and effects, and to not accept 'We don't know why...' as an answer. I have spent my career gathering technical information, analyzing it, scrutinizing it, and putting the pieces together to arrive at an informed solution and a prudent course of action. This skillset combined with determination to change the course of my wife's future compelled my research, synthesis, and sharing of this important information on the role diet plays in the causation of autoimmune diseases that previously have been attributed to "unknown causes". I have amassed a great deal of knowledge on the subject of diet and disease. I created my own course of study and learned far more than if I had chosen the traditional, yet ultimately limiting, healthcare fields of study. After reading this book, you can decide for yourself if the information I am sharing is credible and if you want to choose to follow the path to a strong and healthy body that I have outlined in this new guidebook called Hungry for Answers II.

Fast Forward to Your World

I have now spent additional years processing the information and endeavoring to present it in a coherent fashion that you can apply to your daily lifestyle in order to maximize your health and minimize your chances of developing disease. Obesity and degenerative diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and the autoimmune diseases, are rampant in the western industrialized world. For most of us it is not a question of if we will get a degenerative disease, it is merely a question of which disease and when our number will be called. Will it be a heart attack or cancer or something else? Will it be in our 30's, 40's, or 50's, or will we be lucky and not succumb until our more advanced years?



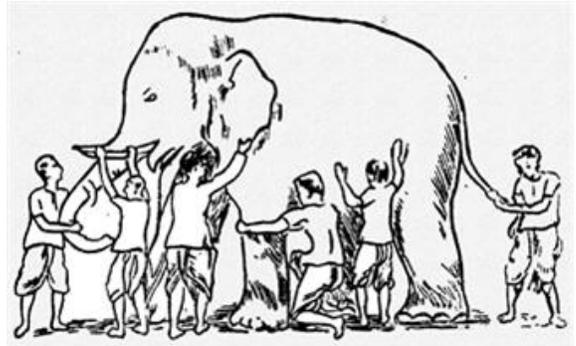
from chomplife.wordpress.com

Once confronted with these diseases, we trust physicians to “fix” us, despite the fact that our health care industry has failed to prevent or cure the degenerative diseases that now cause the vast majority of deaths in modern society. The record shows that we’re still eating the wrong stuff and haven’t grasped the big picture. The advice to eat right, exercise, and get regular checkups has not prevented us from getting sicker, fatter, and more dependent on medical care. Death often arrives after months or years of coping with not just one but several ailments. The medical industry has become adept at prolonging our years of diminished quality of life rather than reversing disease and enabling healthy, productive years. There is a world of difference between the two. More and more, we are surviving into our later years, but not thriving in our later years. Don’t just survive, thrive!

We seem to instinctively know that dietary errors are contributing to health problems, but we have had difficulty identifying exactly where the troubles lie. You may be familiar with The Parable of the Blind Men and the Elephant by John Godfrey Saxe. This old story tells of several blind men brought together to describe an elephant. One felt the side and said an elephant was like a wall, while another felt the tusk and insisted that an elephant was like a spear. Depending on where one stood, the elephant was variously described as a rope, snake, fan, or tree trunk. Our standard approach to diet and disease brings to mind the final stanza:

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong.
Though each was partly in the right,
They all were in the wrong!

Just like the elephant, there is a lot more to the operation of the human body than can be accurately described by groping in the dark. The answer lies in examining the entire elephant, rather than a piece of it, and understanding how all the parts work together.



picture from Jainworld.com

The more we come to view man as a totality, as an organism which functions as a whole and not as a collection of separate elements, the more do all the special branches of medicine become fused with the general concept which forms the basis of this discussion, namely, the relation of the human organism as a whole to those various reactions of maladjustment with environment which we call disease.”

- Dr. Weston Price, circa 1939

Each of us has been granted ownership of an exquisitely designed, exceedingly complex machine called the human body. This machine operates on chemicals from the foods we eat, and like any machine we can either maintain it or abuse it. Proper diet is absolutely essential to our health and well-being. Most diet plans inspire temporarily, only to frustrate permanently because they work against the body’s natural processes rather than with them. By contrast, the diet plan offered herein is designed to work with your body for your direct benefit. Best of all, if you adopt the recommendations herein, almost everything is already available at any standard grocery store - only a beneficial modification of your shopping and eating habits is required. There is no gimmick or magic in this book, just a stunning realization of what humans were designed to eat and what can happen when we change the menu. It’s time to open our eyes and adjust our habits. We have been missing something basic and obvious. The answers for which we are hungry have been staring us in the face all along.

The dietary recommendations in this book are essentially based on a combination of avoiding certain foods while embracing others, and using supplements intelligently to compensate for nutrient deficiencies. It’s really that simple. So why does it take nearly 400 pages to explain that? Because if you don’t understand and buy into the causes and effects of diet-driven disease, you’re ultimately not going to avoid and embrace appropriate foods and supplements, and you won’t receive the critical, long-term benefits.

“Always listen to experts. They’ll tell you what can’t be done, and why. Then do it.”
 — Robert A. Heinlein, Time Enough for Love

Taking Control for Positive Change

The Space Shuttle was arguably the most complex machine man has ever built, requiring a near perfect harmony of all systems working together, and can serve as an analogy to the human body. Among my duties I have been responsible for making the call from mission control, “The Orbiter is GO for launch”, so it’s something to which I’ve paid particular attention. In the aftermath of the Challenger and Columbia accidents, an abundance of information on behavior and consequences arose. Of particular interest to me was the concept of “normalization of deviance” in which slow, subtle, negative incremental changes become business as usual, ultimately resulting in a very dangerous, unforeseen situation. A similar example you may have heard of is the “slow boiling frog” who despite the ability to safely jump out of his slowly warming pot of water, meets his demise because he doesn’t understand what is happening to him until it is too late. That, in a nutshell, is the relationship between decades of poor diet and the manifestation of degenerative disease. To make matters worse, we then find ourselves at the mercy of the healthcare industry, insurance industry, and now more than ever, the government bureaucracy. Your best defense against the erosion of your health and falling into the Helpless Zone is knowledge regarding diet and the determination to implement changes in your life – now, not later. My bottom line message is that a proper diet is important, it directly affects your health and well-being, and you can make the necessary changes yourself. Please allow me to provide you a consolidated guidebook.

“The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.”
 - Samuel Johnson

Personal Health and Performance

At the time of the first edition of Hungry for Answers everything I was doing diet-wise appeared to be working, but I didn’t have a long track record of results. The long term results are now in. Well over a decade later I believe my family serves as healthy, disease-free examples of the importance of diet. The entire family began transitioning from a typical, but ultimately highly flawed, American diet to a far healthier diet in the late 1990’s. My wife has been healthy and remained symptom free for well over a decade, and all four of our children are lean, healthy, and fit. In stark contrast to my childhood, our kids missed very few days of school due to sickness - sometimes years without missing a day. Beyond regular checkups and immunizations, the need for medical care was rare. The kids also excel academically, musically, and athletically. Later in the book I provide more information on how we reversed Laura’s scleroderma, and specifically how each of our children has fared with the dietary changes.

Growing up, I had a generally poor diet (in retrospect) for an average suburban kid in the 1960’s and 70’s as a member of the processed food generation. I was not breastfed, as breastfeeding was not in fashion in those days due to widespread physician ignorance – indeed, my mother’s obstetrician told her to not even attempt breastfeeding. I was often sickly as a child, with lots of stomachaches. I was also prone to severe bronchitis. I especially remember sitting out a lot of physical education classes due to various maladies.

Fast forward to today. I can’t remember the last time I had a cold or the flu. When a nasty bug is making the rounds, I at most succumb to a very minor version that lasts about a day. I’ve never spent the night in a hospital bed. Despite a temporary setback from spinal surgery, I play sports against folks half my age, and periodically compete in track at both the state and national levels. As of this writing I am by far the oldest competitive quidditch player (look it up – it’s very real, and real intense), on average over 30 years older than everyone else. My health stands in stark contrast to what my relatives have experienced in middle age. Of note, I have no recollection of ever seeing my father with the ability to run. I attribute my good fortune in



large part to the dietary changes I made years ago, as I'm not blessed with particularly robust genes. The key is to maximize the cards dealt to us. If I were not in perfect health and could not perform athletically at a high level, I would not consider myself to have enough credibility to dispense dietary advice. I suggest you apply such scrutiny to anyone telling you what to eat. Superior nutrition has kept me in the game.

You can achieve similar results.

Every day you choose to either build for your future or jeopardize it. There is a great deal of conventional wisdom regarding diet and disease. I shake up a lot of conventional wisdom in this book, just as I did in the previous edition. Your body wants to be healthy and disease-free, but we often prevent it from doing so. If you have your health, you pretty much have everything. Eating right is an investment in your body. Just like a retirement fund, each day you delay means diminished rewards in the end. What could be better than an investment in health education, which is exactly what this book is all about?

Hungry for Answers II is not a quick weight loss book, and it is not a fitness book. There are already hundreds of these on the market that get the buyer initially excited, only to disappoint in the long run. Most of these publications quietly disappear after some initial fanfare, only to be replaced with more rubbish in a perpetual cycle of futility. Hungry for Answers II is a health book, with two important components – disease prevention and human performance. Disease prevention is a straightforward concept, and something everyone wants. By human performance I mean enabling the ability to perform from a position of health - the ability to understand and control your weight, and the ability to feel healthy enough to exercise and meet your fitness goals. Advancing age plus a lifetime of improper foods means fitness is harder to achieve, along with a decreased ability to control weight. With regained health, fitness becomes easier to attain because you feel like engaging in beneficial exercise, and weight control follows right along. I mentioned advancing age, which naturally works against our health, but I've spent a lot of time with young adults in recent years, and it's clear they are already on the same unhealthy road traveled by the previous generation. The earlier we get on the right path, the better – at any age.

Reading This Book and Breaking the Cycle

Writing for a wide audience is always a tricky proposition, and those books that address diet and health have the widest audience of all. The language of medicine is foreign to most of us, but it is sometimes the only language that can be used to properly address this subject. I have tried to make this book as readable as possible without sacrificing technical rigor. On the one hand this book is a story with a beginning and an end, building toward a finish, so I strongly encourage you to read the chapters in the order presented. On the other hand, most of the chapters do a reasonable job of standing on their own and can be treated as individual essays. However you decide to proceed, sooner or later the pieces should start falling into place and come together with a realistic plan for diet, health, and performance.

If you read the original version of Hungry for Answers, some chapters may look familiar, as the information contained still holds true. Back in 2003 I addressed gluten to a great extent. Most people had no idea what gluten was, and one would have been hard pressed to find anything in a supermarket with a “gluten-free” or “no gluten” label. Now these labels are everywhere, as the world has come to the realization that gluten sensitivity is a significant health concern for many people, as it is associated with a host of maladies and diseases. The chapters include updates as a result of new research, as well as specific additions of new material – material you are unlikely to find captured in any other book on diet and disease. My somewhat eclectic background can cause me to pull in a lot of diverse information, and this may seem like I'm going off on irrelevant tangents. Bear with me and I trust it will all make sense in the end. The final section pulls it all together to provide specific dietary recommendations for disease prevention and weight control, and ideally, a longer and more fruitful life.

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*