

7 Simple Steps to Better Digestion

Specializing in digestive wellness, I have to encourage people to eat the highest quality food they can afford. Yes, I'm aware that grass fed animal products and organic produce cost more. Yes, they are worth it. However, we can only purchase what we can afford. Do the best you can.

My 7 Simple Steps, however, do not cost extra and they can be the difference between getting the most from our food/drink and not taking in the vital nutrients we need to thrive. I could site sources and scientific evidence for each step, but for this article I've chosen to stay simple. Trust me, these are activities that have been proven to be beneficial.

Ask yourself, do I...?

1. Say grace/bless my food/express appreciation for the food I am about to welcome into my body.
2. Eat at a table. Not in the car. Not walking around. Not at my desk.
3. Breathe while I eat. Try to enjoy the flavor of each bite.
4. Chew my food and don't rush my meal. (This mechanical portion of the digestive process sets the stage for the rest of your food to be broken down effectively.)
5. Don't drink a cold liquid with the meal...it puts out the digestive "fire". It's fine to have cold drinks between meals.
6. If I am going to drink with a meal, limit the liquid to about 4 ounces, otherwise I dilute the acid in my stomach which is needed to break down food. (Lemon and water enhances digestion, by the way.)

7. Leave about 5-6 hours between meals if I can. (Snacking stresses the pancreas among other things.)

How many do you do?

Until next week...wishing you **real** food (eaten at a table) for **real** health (that is savored) so you can be **real** happy (and grateful).

My hometown is waking up...to the microbiome

This post is dedicated to the new fermenters along the lakeshore of beautiful West Michigan. Great job to the students from my [White Lake Area Community Education](#) classes, [Nourishing the Lakeshore](#), [Fermenting the Lakeshore](#) held at [Unity of Muskegon](#) and health conscious shoppers at [Sweetwater Local Organic Foods Market](#).



What is the [microbiome](#)? Very simply, it refers to the fact that 99% of the DNA in our bodies is not our own; it belongs to micro-organisms. And if you're eating nutrient dense foods, little to no sugar and fermented foods everyday, you'll have "good" microbes that will treat you, their host, to health and wellness. Fast foods, lots of sugar and processed carbs feed pathogenic "bad" microbes and WILL lead to illness as well as

extra pounds.

A little history...In the 1990's, [the Human Genome Project](#), the biggest project ever undertaken in biology, focused on decoding human genetic information ([Holt, 2008](#)). There was hope to find the genetic cause and cure for every disease that affects humanity. What was discovered by 2003 was that every animal species shares the majority of genes, but that the expression of the genes can come in a multitude of ways depending on something called the epigenome. The epigenome is influenced by what we are exposed to in our lifestyle. While the genome can be likened to the hardware in a computer, the [epigenome](#) is similar to the software, which tells the hardware what to do. But there turned out to be another missing link.

Ultimately, by 2008, the Human [Microbiome](#) Project began where we realized that part of the reason a stalk of corn has more genes (32,000) than a human (25-30,000) is the fact that we are hosts to an estimated 100 trillion bacteria. These bacteria work in concert with our genes to run our bodies.

NPR has an animated yet thorough introduction to this new knowledge. It is about 5 minutes long and I strongly encourage you watch it:

This research is in its very early stages. Yet if we look at the research of civilizations that did not live like we do, [traditional peoples](#) (like those found by [Dr. Weston A Price](#)), we see EVERY one of these healthy groups ate fermented foods. And they ate no processed foods whatsoever. When we learn to ferment and return to traditional eating, we, too, can experience the radiant health that is our birthright.

Today, our microbiomes are compromised all sorts of ways. Besides the losses during infancy addressed in the video above, our balance of good to "pathogenic" bacteria shifts with antibiotic use, toxins in our air, water and food, long term use of prescriptions and birth control pills as well as

radiation. Without these beneficial “little critters” as I like to call them, we can’t digest and absorb nutrients to build healthy cells and this leads to nutritional deficiencies.

When we have an abundance of bad bacteria from eating processed food and drinking sodas, the “food” we eat gets broken down into toxic compounds which get absorbed into the bloodstream. From there they go to wherever we have a vulnerable area like our joints (i.e. arthritis), brain (i.e. fog, ADHD), skin (i.e. eczema, rash, acne) and our vital organs like our heart. These same bad little guys can damage the lining of our intestine and cause it to become inflamed and permeable (leaky gut), which leads to food intolerances and allergies. When this happens, we no longer are getting nutrients to build us up but instead get toxins that make us sick. And because 85% of our immune system is in our gut microbiome, if we don’t have good gut flora, our immune system goes haywire. No wonder so many people are unwell and overweight.

When people return to traditional ways, including fermenting, eating organic produce, consuming grass fed and wild animals and cutting out processed “foods”, their microbiomes can heal and do the work necessary to help return to wellness. For many, supplementing with probiotics is a sensible choice while they transition to more traditional ways. If this is something you choose to do, please make sure the product you use has integrity.

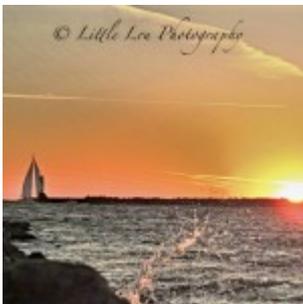


Lexi Larabee

Photography

Wishing you *real* food for *real* health so you can be *real* happy.

My hometown is waking up...are You?



Regaining Our Health part 1

This journey helping others regain wellness is an exciting one. From the “Natural Mommy”s building their childrens’ innate immune systems, to the monthly [Nourishing the Lakeshore \(Century Club\)](#) and Let’s Talk Wellness meetings ([Unity of Muskegon](#)) to the clients eager to reduce their medications due to side effects, to those who just want to eat better shopping at [Sweetwater](#), we are waking up. People in and around Muskegon are learning that what they put in their mouth and on their body affects how they feel. And then there are the fermenting classes and Fermenting the Lakeshore group, but we’ll talk about that next time.

New people approach me every week asking what they can do. Everyone knows someone, often themselves, with aches and pains or a diagnosis of an auto immune disorder. So many have GERD or other digestive problems, achy joints (aka digestive problems), hair loss, mood issues and weight gain (especially around the middle). How about you?

The imperative here is self-EDUCATION.

The answer to these issues is complicated and yet very simple. Healing boils down to reducing our toxic exposure and increasing our intake of nutrients to build strong bodies/immune systems. However, with so much profit driven mis-information out there, figuring out what to do is confusing.

Let's look at our food. Our supply has gone toxic – from [GMO seeds](#) (i.e. corn, soy, sugar beets, canola, zucchini) to [pesticides](#) used on those seeds, to the harmful [processing of our milk](#) and [animal products](#), to the [over-hybridized wheat](#) which is making everyone gluten sensitive. And don't even get me started on [excitotoxins](#) like [MSG](#), [aspartame](#), and [splenda](#) that give people the impression diet sodas help them lose weight (when the reverse is true).

[Personal care products](#) are filled with carcinogens and toxins. We can't quantify yet how much they contribute to [obesity](#) and illness. Then add [chemical cleaning products](#) and [air fresheners](#) and our personal toxic load goes over the edge into illness.



What's the answer? Clean up – your personal care regimen, [your cleaning supply closet](#) (vinegar is great), and any other product you use at home, work or in your car.

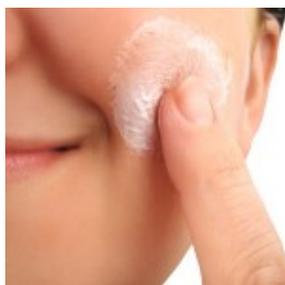
Another step, of course, is getting safe, clean, nutrient dense foods to build your body. Yes, you are what you eat, and this is serious. Your [source for dietary information](#) must be objective and without a motive for profit (the USDA has a goal

to sell agricultural goods – remember this). I have [helpful articles](#) and [recipes](#) on my site that I use to educate people back to the radiant health that is their birthright. If you haven't already, I encourage you to work your way through the articles on my [START HERE](#) page with links to other researched pages I trust.

We will talk soon about the gut microbiome – part 2 of Regaining Our Health

Wishing you **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy**.

Chemical Calories for Your Skin??



What's in your
face cream?

Did I get your attention? Good – because what you put on your body deserves as much attention as what you put in your mouth. The Food and Drug Administration monitors what we ingest through our mouth, but they haven't yet accepted the fact that our skin soaks in chemicals and toxins, too.

While we don't know for sure, many have suggested that through our skin, the body's largest organ, we soak in calories from

the products we use on our face and body. A recent study by researchers from the Children's Environmental Health Center at [New York's Mount Sinai Medical Center](#) identified an association between exposure to phthalates (found in personal care products, among other things) and obesity in young children – including increased body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference.

It is impossible to totally avoid the synthetic chemicals we breathe and those we come in contact with in public. But we can minimize our toxic load by paying close attention when selecting products for our faces, hair and bodies, as well as our homes and yards.

Most people want to trust that [if a product is on the market it must be safe](#). Along the same line of thinking is the idea that our skin is a barrier that can protect us from harmful substances. Neither of these assumptions is correct. Unsafe compounds are being used and they are soaking in. And the efficacy of a product does not have to be proven so advertising can claim just about anything with regard to how it will make your skin and hair feel and look.

The regulatory authority's stance in this country is that chemicals are safe until proven harmful. [Eighty-nine percent of all ingredients in cosmetics have not been evaluated for safety by any publicly accountable institution](#). Sounds like we've been relegated to guinea pig status to me. By themselves, many of the compounds in personal care products have been identified as irritants, toxins, mutagens (damage DNA), teratogens (birth defects) and potential carcinogens (I think you know what that means) . We may be told the amounts are so small there's no way they can harm us, but how many products are we using? What is the effect of mixtures of different compounds in the same products – or mixed with ingredients from other products? No one knows.

We have all the environmental toxins we're dealing with, then

we use small amounts of several personal care products, with unknown long-term effects and unknown synergistic effects. Scary.

What can we do? [Read labels on everything that touches your skin and hair.](#) Buy only products that are natural (vs. synthetic) and organic. Every dollar is a vote in a sense. Can you pronounce every ingredient? Is it a chemical name (dimethicone, sodium laureth sulfate, PEG-50 Almond Glyceride) or is it something you understand (like organic aloe vera and organic shea butter)? Is the word "fragrance" on the label? What exactly is in that?

Does the product have colorings? Are you aware of how many food colorings were once listed as safe but then removed from that list after they were found to cause cancer, behavior problems and other issues? At least 18. This is after we were eating them for years.

Parabens have for decades been used as an acceptable and safe preservative. Why then are many products coming out touting the fact they are "paraben-free"? Did you know methyl paraben is a xenoestrogen and has been found in 90% of breast cancer tumors tested?

There are products with integrity out there. The coconut oil I encourage people to consume everyday is a wonderful, pure, low cost moisturizer for skin and hair. Yes, it's a bit greasy and can get on your clothes. During the summer, though, it's great for bare legs and arms. I don't recommend it for your face at all if you're prone to oily skin. I choose to use Brittanie's Thyme for my face, which is made in lovely Cedar Springs, Michigan. Their products are certified to food standards, so they can be eaten (and are safe).

Other organic brands are coming onto the market all the time (some wonderful, some deceptive). You can find recipes online to make your own. Do your homework, get used to reading

labels, maybe switch one product a month. Please be aware. We've got to watch out for ourselves – and each other.

Until next time...wishing you Real Food (even for your skin) for Real Health so you can be Real Happy.

Alzheimers and a Must See Video

After speaking with [Dr. Bruce Fife](#) two weeks ago, author of *The Coconut Oil Miracle*, I was reminded of what a miracle the medium chain fatty acids in coconut oil can be to those with memory loss. I dedicate this article to two special women in my life who I think could be helped by its use.

I met the doctor in this video a few years ago at a national Weston A Price Foundation conference. Since that time, her husband continues to increase his functioning – not decline, like we're told the course of Alzheimer's generally goes. Yet, the information is not out there on mainstream media. Why? Well, who can profit? Not the pharmaceutical companies.

In my past posts on [coconut oil](#) and its [uses](#) I highlight additional benefits of this wonderful natural substance as well as a myriad of ways to include it in our daily lives.

If you or someone you know suffers from memory loss, Alzheimer's, Parkinsons, or any neurological dysfunction- **Please** share this post with them. I continue to hear stories, almost daily, of health issues that are improved with the use of coconut oil. That's exciting to me.

As always, wishing you **REAL** food for **REAL** health so you can be **REAL** happy.

Here is an [additional link](#) for further information on Dr. Westport's work with her husband using coconut oil.

Why Organic?



In my last article I touched on how what we put on our skin affects our health. Hard for some people to believe. Today we'll look at the more accepted premise – we are what we eat. Think about it. We consume “stuff” and it becomes our bodies. Shouldn't we be aware of what is in that “stuff”? What we put in our mouth is the #1 contributor to our wellness (or lack thereof). The way we eat changes our immune system, our muscles and joints, our brain and moods. With the degradation of the food supply, our wellness is running into major trouble.

So let's take a look at pesticides. [Organophosphate](#) pesticide poisons were developed during [Hitler's reign as chemical warfare](#). And we're using them on our crops?? There are over 180 identified pesticides used in this country that are [endocrine disruptors](#). That means they mess with our hormones (like insulin) which oversee the functioning of all the necessary activities in the body. The average American consumer is exposed to between 5 and 10 pesticides per day on the **Standard American Diet (SAD)** . Even with a well

functioning liver, those toxins are going to build up. Proponents of the chemical industry say the trace amounts in our food are too small to negatively effect health (100 parts per billion). Did you know that the [NuvaRing](#), the birth control vaginal ring, contains .019 parts per billion and it prevents reproduction?! [Albuterol](#), the asthma inhaler, works at 2.1 parts per billion, quite effectively for those in distress. We're kidding ourselves if we think the pesticide residues in and on our food are inert.

Why aren't physicians advising everyone to eat organic? Because they are not being educated about the damaging, even life threatening effects of pesticides on living cells/tissues/bodies. They're treating diseases AFTER they occur. The [information is out there](#), but it has not been considered a priority in med school. Who is going to advocate for including it in the curriculum?

Consider this. Back in the 80's when I was raising my family, kids just didn't have the health problems they're having today. It was rare to see a child or adolescent with high blood sugar or blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol or triglycerides, or a waist size above 40 inches. Now, 2/3 of high school students have at least one of these markers (Dr. Alan Greene, lecture to organic farmers, 2009). During the last 30 years our food supply has experienced MAJOR compromises (pesticides, GMO's, high fructose corn syrup, additives, preservatives, colorings, and more). The way we are feeding our children is setting them up for a lifetime (often abbreviated) of illness.

So let's talk about diabetes for a minute. Studies have confirmed a link between [diabetes prevalence](#) (and [auto-immune diseases](#)) and pesticides. Adult onset diabetes is now called [type II diabetes](#) because so many young people are getting it. A diagnosis of diabetes for a child is likely to reduce their lifespan [10-20 years](#). The cost of caring for them over their lifetime is estimated somewhere between \$300,000 and \$3

million – per child! Why then, do we continue sourcing our school lunches from conventionally grown and processed foods? Because it's cheap, "inexpensive" if you will. We can feed a lot of children for very little money. The long term price tag however, is astronomical. And the pain and sadness are priceless. Imagine what we could do if we spent more for organic food and prevented diabetes in thousands (and thousands) of young people.

OK, so pesticides are dangerous. What about the hormones they use to fatten up livestock, make more milk and get those huge chicken breasts we think are good for us? Well, there is NO evidence anywhere to show the safety of the hormones used on animals. There are studies however, that show increased cancer in people who consume conventionally raised meat. That was why [in 1989, Europe banned the import of meat raised in this country.](#)

The great thing is, there are farmers with integrity out there that understand the connection between sustainable farming and sustaining human life. Animals raised on smaller farms are roaming the grass in the sunshine and taking in life sustaining nutrients that are passed on to us when we eat them. Organic vegetable and fruit farmers do not use toxic, cancer causing pesticides, AND they add needed minerals back into the soil so plants and trees can bear produce that builds healthy human bodies. [Research](#) shows that [organically grown foods](#) contain significantly more nutrients and antioxidants AND those nutrients are more bioavailable to your cells. Anyone who consumes organically raised food on a regular basis also knows it tastes great! I encourage you to find local sources for organically raised food. There are more and more every day as we spread the word of true healthy living.

Until next time...Wishing you **real food** for **real health** so you can be **REAL HAPPY**.

Additional recommended reading:

[Mounting Evidence Links Pesticides to Parkinson's Disease](#)
[Serum organochlorine pesticide residues and risk of gallstone disease: A case-control study in Xiamen.](#)
[Childhood brain tumors, residential insecticide exposure, and pesticide metabolism genes.](#)
[New study confirms atrazine's effects across a range of species \(including us\)](#)
[Organic Foods Contain More Nutrients!](#)
[Study links Honey Bee Deaths to Corn Insecticides](#)

The First Step to Better Health – Bacon Fat*

*from grass fed pigs...and organic evco

This post is dedicated to the incredible activist film maker Chris Bedford who introduced me to the sad and insidious world of food politics. He guided me – and thousands of others – to the possibilities for making our world sustainable. Today's blog is controversial...Chris always loved controversy.



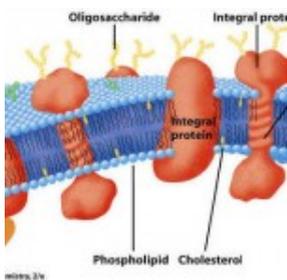
My family's favorite fat

Fats? Seriously? We're supposed to avoid them, right? They

clog our arteries and make us unhealthy. Especially animal fats. NOT!

Many people ask me what the first step toward better health is – I say switch out your fat. In my studies and travels I've met a growing number of very healthy people who understand the dire importance of good fats in the diet. But I've found the majority of people who live in my beautiful corner of the world, the Lakeshore of West Michigan, don't have a clue. So I write this for them. The rest of you, nod your head and say "yup".

Our bodies need fats. And saturated fats, those dreaded rascals that the American Heart Association and American Cancer Society have been warning us against for decades, are in EVERY cell in your body. Our heart, nerves, hormones and brain need them everyday. Has the advice we've been getting all these years shown a dramatic decline in cancer and heart disease? Let's be honest...No.



Lipids and
cholesterol =
healthy cell
membranes

That's because our cells are starving. Look at any anatomy book and you'll find that saturated fats and cholesterol form a key part of the outer edge (membrane) of all the cells that make up YOU.

So we have been encouraged to swap out animal fat with [vegetable oils](#) that aren't healthy at the cellular level. Our poor cell membranes don't get what they need to stay pliable

and do their jobs in relation to the cells around them (cell signalling). After years of consumption of these liquid vegetable oils we end up with problems all over the body – immune system disruption, heart disease, memory issues, cancer and more. Yes, other lifestyle factors contribute to these concerns also, but why increase your risk? Dr. Mary Enig, the world renowned expert on the biochemical structure and effect of fats in the body discusses the issue at length in this interview, if you want to know more (and you REALLY should). No, you won't see this on television or in the mass media because there's no money in it. At least not for big business. But the truth is coming out, thanks to organizations like the [Price Pottenger Foundation](#) and the [Weston A Price Foundation](#) and the Internet (as long as we remain uncensored).

Well done Dr. Enig!! How sad that so many young people's eyes were damaged because the advice we were given was flat out wrong. How long is it going to take to get this truth into the mainstream?

We must be aware of the QUALITY of the fats we eat. The fats from a grassfed cow are going to be healthy and the fats from a feed-lot cow eating GMO grains grown with pesticides and then filled with antibiotics and hormones are going to be VERY different. The [organic extra virgin coconut oil](#) that our cells thrive on and that can be safely heated to high temperatures is miles ahead of the rancid refined vegetable oil on the grocery store shelves that gets further damaged when we cook with it.

We've been sick long enough. It's time for a change. The very first step I recommend is get rid of those truly dangerous fats and start adding in the coconut oil and fats that come from critters raised outside naturally. By the way, grass fed bacon grease is one of THE most tasty ways to add flavor to your casseroles and stir-frys.

We'll talk about the superfood cod liver oil some other day.

Until next time, wishing you Real Food for Real Health so you can be Real Happy

No More Rat Killer

Today marks my one year anniversary of being off rat killer. Yes, you read it right, I consumed the same substance that is used to exterminate little varmints, for four months (after the [mishap](#)). If I knew then what I know now, I would have found alternative natural substances to thin my blood. The more we educate on the REAL truth, the more we can challenge the misinformation that is harming us when we have the best of intentions to do the right thing.



Back to the rat killer or warfarin as it's called when given to human beings. Its active ingredient has an interesting history. In 1921, cows were bleeding to death after eating rotting clover. The substance responsible was isolated and in 1948 warfarin was put on the market as a rodenticide. Three years later a young Army recruit tried to kill himself taking rat killer, was treated with Vitamin K and didn't die, so the pharmaceutical companies realized they could market this substance and probably not kill people.

However, the side effects can make you wish you were dead. It made me ache so bad I couldn't move when I woke up, gave me bizarre wave like feelings in my head and body, made it difficult to perform some cognitive functions and broke down my teeth. These are the issues I am aware of.

That's why I'm excited it has been a year since I took my last dose because this med did a number on my body. The longer I get away from it, the better I feel. I've spoken to biochemists and naturopaths on the dangers of this prescribed substance, which is the standard of care in allopathic medicine, and all they can do is apologize that I was given warfarin and had to suffer the consequences. The doctors that prescribed it had the very best of intentions and I thank them for that. However, if I ever again have an identified need to thin my blood, I will do it in a manner that doesn't break down other parts of my body.

I have since found out blood thinning can be done through diet, cod liver oil consumption and the use of herbs. I didn't know what I didn't know. That's why I want people to do their own investigating. Be open to new information. Remember that a lot of substances – drugs, food additives, pesticides – were once considered safe and then were taken off the market after they did a whole lot of damage.

Be careful.

YOU are your body's expert.

Until next time, wishing you Real Food for Real Health so you can be Real Happy

Rethinking the Food Pyramid...



Did you know that after the USDA released the Food Pyramid in 1992 the rate of obesity skyrocketed? That's what happens when you encourage people to consume 6-11 servings a day of grain products without mention of product quality. And yes, there was a major link to the grain lobby. At the same time, the tip of the pyramid made the recommendation to use fats sparingly...no regard for the difference between good and bad fats. No mention of the fact that all our hormones are made from cholesterol.

The pyramid evolved and we were encouraged to eat less grains, make them whole, consume more fruits and veggies, but still eat "lowfat" milk and protein sources. We now have a "plate" as a guide – it's better but does not address the need for high quality fat consumption (so necessary DAILY for cell and brain health) or the processing of grains/nuts/seeds in a manner so our body can better use their nutrients. The issues of pesticide residues, dangers of genetically modified organisms, concern about antibiotics and hormones in our animal products are not mentioned. These issues are real and are negatively effecting our health with every bite.

With so much **mis**-information out there, are you feeling overwhelmed? Feeling misled? Please don't despair. The movement to get back to REAL nutrient dense food is growing exponentially. We will get there one step at a time. Pick a place to start this month. How about finding a local market in your area where you can meet the REAL farmer who grows your food. Or pick one vegetable or fruit in your diet and promise yourself you will only buy it if it's grown organically.

One positive effort by the USDA is the program [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food](#). This is a step in the right direction to deal with the issues mentioned above. Here in Muskegon County, we are fortunate to have a source for local and organic food called [Sweetwater Local Foods Market](#).

Take that first step.

Just start...

Until next time, wishing you **real food** for **real health** so you can be **real happy**.

Update January 2014 – Denise Minger has now published an amazing book I highly recommend [Death By Food Pyramid](#).