

Eat Right for Your Genes, Body Type, and Personal Health Needs

• Prevent and Reverse Disease • Lose Weight Effortlessly

• Look and Feel Better Than Ever

THE PALEO CURE

CHRIS
KRESSER

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

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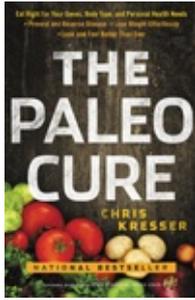
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and Personal Health Needs—Prevent
and Reverse Disease, Lose Weight Effortlessly,
and Look and Feel Better than Ever

CHRIS KRESSER



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*To all who struggle with chronic illness: may this book be a catalyst
for healing and self-discovery*

Foreword

We live in extraordinary times. Human ingenuity has given us flight, space travel, lasers, the Internet, and amazing medical technologies that can help the deaf hear and the blind see. Biohackers and tech folks talk of uploading the consciousness before death, allowing the mind a second (and presumably very lengthy) existence as a program. So much is possible. Yet the highly modern *Homo sapiens* is struggling with debilitating and chronic health conditions: obesity, depression, diabetes, autoimmune disease, and cancer, among others.

A number of doctors, laypeople, and scientists have come to accept the mismatch hypothesis to explain much of modern chronic disease. Our species, having had only a few hundred generations to adapt to agriculture—and only decades to adjust to the lightbulb and the digital age—is simply not equipped to handle industrial processed food, endless artificial light, and a sedentary modern life. As a psychiatrist, a medical doctor specializing in mental illness, I deal with the emotional and neurological consequences of this mismatch all the time in my clinical practice. We might call the low mood, crying spells, anxiety, and insomnia depressive disorder, but in truth, it is a breakdown of resiliency. Members of our hardy species can take only so much stress before we begin to experience anxiety, depression, and other consequences of our frenetic lives. To go forward into the future, we have to come to terms with our biology and its limitations. We must rebuild our resiliency to recover our health.

The prescription seems simple enough: Eat wholesome, real foods. Get plenty of sleep along with appropriate play and activity. But as a physician and working mother, I know far too well how difficult it can be to handle the pace of modern life, meet the needs of your family, and find the time and patience to keep yourself truly healthy and functioning at your best. In addition, despite the fact that we are all members of the same species, we each have very individual needs based on current health conditions and activity.

Chris Kresser struggled with serious, disabling health problems that modern medicine seemed to have no solution for. He used science, wisdom, and trial and error to heal himself, and due to that experience, he decided to pursue integrative medicine. He chose a master's program in California that combined Western and Chinese medicine, because he felt the holistic model it offered gave him a better way to understand and help the ill than the fragmented, specialty model of conventional medicine. His clinical experience, curiosity, and scientific savvy helped him to become enormously successful. His private practice has thrived, and his website and podcasts reach hundreds of thousands of eager readers and listeners around the world.

With *The Paleo Cure*, Chris sets out the basic prescription for health and resiliency and then offers techniques so you can tailor the program for *your* needs and make it work on a personal level. He calls this your Personal Paleo Cure. His three-step program steers you to diet and lifestyle changes that will have you feeling better than you have in years—perhaps better than you’ve ever felt. Chris gives you everything you need—not just recipes but a recipe for living—to achieve that improvement in health and functioning, but then he takes that a step further and addresses the complexities of your personal situation. Everything is spelled out in this book, and in addition, his website offers bonus chapters, more details on the science behind the Paleo movement, and copious online tools to ease your transition to good health.

By uncovering your own Personal Paleo Cure, you can benefit from Chris’s experience, clinical acumen, wisdom, and common sense to find that state of lasting health that can be so elusive in the modern world. Recover your natural human resiliency and thrive.

Emily Deans, MD

Board-Certified Psychiatrist

Clinical Instructor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

JOIN THE PERSONAL PALEO CURE COMMUNITY

My website is an important extension of this book, an additional resource to enrich your quest for optimal health. Throughout the book I'll refer you to the website for further information on a particular topic, program-enhancing tools, helpful resources, ongoing education, and, perhaps most important, support. Making significant dietary and lifestyle changes can be challenging, and I've found over the years that community is essential to success.

Visit ChrisKresser.com/PPC to find:

- Bonus chapters with more than a hundred and fifty pages of additional information about customizing your diet and lifestyle to address common health conditions. I'll refer to these bonus chapters throughout the book.
- A user forum with people from around the world following the Personal Paleo Cure approach, moderated by my approved Paleo Ambassadors
- An additional three weeks of delicious meal plans and recipes, including snacks and side dishes
- Handy shopping lists
- A supplement guide with specific recommendations mentioned throughout the book, updated regularly so you can order the ones that meet my strictest guidelines for safety and efficacy
- Links to online sources of pasture-raised meats, wild-caught fish, Paleo-friendly snacks, and other essentials
- A guide to finding and working with a Paleo-oriented clinician
- And much more...

You'll also find links to over seven hundred original studies I cite in the book, as well as detailed chapter notes and references.

So head over to **ChrisKresser.com/PPC** now to connect with others who are creating their own Personal Paleo Cures and taking charge of their own health and well-being. I hope you'll love becoming part of this supportive community.

INTRODUCTION

[This Book Can Save Your Life](#)

You may have picked up this book for several reasons.

You may want to lose weight, boost your energy, or improve your overall health. You may be looking for ways to naturally treat a particular health problem, such as irritable bowel syndrome, hypothyroidism, or high blood pressure. You may feel well already but want to optimize your athletic performance, feel sharper at work, or increase your longevity.

What if you could create your own personalized approach to nutrition, one that is designed exactly for your body? An approach that respects the wisdom of your genetic template but also acknowledges your own unique circumstances and needs? This is exactly what I'm going to teach you how to do in this book. I call it your Personal Paleo Cure—your unique prescription for optimal health.

WHAT'S A PERSONAL PALEO CURE?

Perhaps you've heard of the Paleo movement. Millions of people around the planet are joining this health revolution based on the latest cutting-edge science, seeking to eat and live in closer harmony with human genetics and biology. This development has come just in time. Throughout the industrialized world, humans are in a health crisis, getting sicker and fatter every year, dying from chronic diseases our ancestors never faced. We thrive when we eat and live a certain way, and our profound sickness stems directly from contemporary choices far different from that ideal way of living. We were never meant to eat the sugar, refined flour, and industrial seed oils that are the mainstay of the standard American diet (and what an apt acronym that makes!). We were never meant to work around the clock under the glare of artificial lights. Or spend half our lives sitting and staring at computer screens. Or live in relative isolation, with Facebook and Twitter standing in for genuine human contact.

Both the fossil record and studies of contemporary hunter-gatherer cultures suggest that our Paleolithic forebears enjoyed excellent health: they were lean, fit, and apparently free of chronic disease. The benefits of copying their lifestyle are undeniable. Those who walk the Paleo road report near-effortless weight loss, newfound vitality, and, often, miraculous resolution of the most dire health issues. However, even the most dedicated Paleo purists hit a wall. Weight loss stalls. Symptoms persist. Energy flags. People tire of restricted eating.

As a licensed clinician who practices functional medicine (different than conventional medicine; see [here](#)), I specialize in helping seriously ill patients figure out natural solutions to their health challenges. Through in-depth research, personal experience, and clinical investigation, I developed a three-step process to help them. The first step is the Thirty-Day Reset Diet, which follows the typical Paleo approach

very closely. The results from Step 1 are amazing. “I’m medication-free after just thirty days,” one patient told me. “I feel like a new man!” Another said, “I’ve never felt or looked better in my life.” “Energy levels more even, tennis elbow inflammation disappeared, asthma improved, waistline shrunk,” reported another. The testimonials speak for themselves. Paleo works.

However, as I tracked the experiences of people, including some of my patients, who adhered to the typical Paleo approach, I began to notice certain drawbacks. Sometimes the benefits don’t go far enough—or they’re not sustainable.

I don’t stop after Step 1 with my patients for exactly this reason. I’ve discovered that Paleo functions best as a general template, not a rigid prescription. Think of it as a starting point, not a destination. Even though we all share much of the same DNA, we each have unique circumstances and needs. We need a program that addresses our specific health issues. A more flexible, dynamic approach that recognizes the joys of eating yet goes far beyond food and takes into account how each of us likes to move, live, love. My goal is to help people, individual by individual, discover what works for them and keep them from adhering to a dogmatic regimen just because it sounds authentic.

We don’t live in the Paleolithic era anymore. We’re not cavemen, so why should we follow a strict caveman diet? Why should we cut out foods we love and might thrive on simply because our ancestors didn’t eat them? We’ve evolved, and we need a plan that’s evolved to meet our individual needs and preferences. (Some of my patients are even vegetarians—anathema to hard-core meat-eating Paleo purists.) Why not combine the best of ancient wisdom and the best of modern nutrition?

That’s why I created the three-step Personal Paleo Cure: an approach custom-made for your individual genetic blueprint, one that enables you to enjoy lifelong health and vitality.

ONE SIZE DOESN’T FIT ALL

If you’re like most of my patients, you’ve tried a lot of diets over the years. Some did nothing at all, some made you worse, and some worked—for a little while. Or maybe they solved some problems (like being overweight), but caused others (you were exhausted all the time, your hair fell out, and your hands and feet felt like ice cubes).

Perhaps you’ve already tried a Paleo-style diet, eating the same kinds of natural foods our ancestors enjoyed. At first, you were ecstatic. You lost weight and felt so much better. But after a while, you noticed some of your old problems creeping back in. Or maybe you hit a plateau and just couldn’t lose those last ten pounds no matter what you did. Or maybe you just got tired of special diets in general and wanted to find a better approach to nutrition that would be more sustainable over the long term.

So you set out to find some help. You search some of the popular health websites, post a few messages in discussion forums, and e-mail your friends who are trying the same thing.

Everyone is happy to help—you get a ton of advice. The problem is, it’s all different!

A new study just proclaimed the Mediterranean diet as the best. “Very low-carb is

the way to go,” you hear on that morning talk show; didn’t another expert on that same show say the exact same thing about vegan diets last week? “No, you’ve got to eliminate nightshades and eggs,” a friend says. “Dr. Google” says that if you’ve got a thyroid problem, you need to eat a lot more starchy vegetables and fruit. One website says yogurt helps with digestion; another says you should avoid dairy entirely.

It’s enough to make you crazy.

You want to feel better, lose weight, and fix your health problems—but how do you know you’re making the right choices? And how do you ensure that the next diet you try doesn’t end up being yet another failed experiment?

Here’s the truth: There is no single formula to follow that will guarantee you perfect health in three weeks—or seven days, or any other arbitrary number you find on the bestseller list. As seductive as that sounds, it just doesn’t work that way. The only formula I want to give you is the formula for figuring out how not to follow a formula! If my clinical experience treating patients has taught me one thing, it’s this: there’s no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to diet and lifestyle. After all, the fossil record indicates that not all Paleolithic people ate the same way. So why should we expect a single program to be the perfect fit for everybody?

Personalization is the missing ingredient. I’ve found that even two people who come to my office with the exact same health condition might need different solutions. For example, I recently saw two patients with ulcerative colitis. Eating even a small amount of dairy sent one running to the bathroom in three seconds flat. For the other, fermented dairy (e.g., yogurt or kefir) was a crucial component of the healing process. This is why so many typical diets—even very good ones, like the Paleo diet—often fail in the long run, and it’s why I teach all my clients how to discover their own unique Personal Paleo Cure. Because no two patients are alike, no two walk out of my office with the same plan.

For example, when Tina, age fifty-four, visited my office, she was almost forty-five pounds overweight and had high blood pressure and early-stage type 2 diabetes. She was fed up with feeling so sluggish and hated the way her clothes fit. “I tried every low-fat diet out there, but nothing works,” she told me. I put her on a lower-carbohydrate version of my Step 1 Reset Diet, with a few additional tweaks because of her blood-sugar problems. She began to lose weight immediately while enjoying foods her doctors had forbidden, like red meat and butter. “I can’t get over it,” she said. “I’m never hungry, and I don’t feel deprived!” After three months, Tina had lost thirty-five pounds; her skin glowed, her digestive system ran smoothly, and there was no sign of diabetes. “I’ve never felt better,” she told me, “and my doctor is amazed by my test results.”

When Mark, age thirty-three, came to see me, he was virtually crippled by Crohn’s disease, spending much of his day in the bathroom. He was on a cocktail of medications, including steroids and mesalamine. “I’m scared,” he told me. “My gastroenterologist wants to remove part of my colon.” Mark was desperate to avoid surgery. I decided that his Personal Paleo Cure would include an intensive gut-healing diet, along with some stress-reducing measures. Mark felt dramatically better in just a week. Within a month, he felt like a new person. Six months later, Mark was in complete clinical remission, no surgery necessary!

At thirty-eight, Sam couldn’t control his blood pressure. His doctor wanted him to

go on medication to lower it. During my intake examination, I asked Sam about his diet. “It’s funny,” he told me, “but I went on one of those very low-carb diets to lose weight, and my blood pressure shot up.” I suspected that Sam might be potassium deficient, which can worsen high blood pressure. His Personal Paleo Cure included potassium-rich foods like potatoes, plantains, and cold-water fish, along with two cups a day of hibiscus tea, which has been shown to decrease blood pressure. Three months later, Sam’s blood pressure was normal—without medication.

In all these cases, and hundreds of others like them, I worked closely with these people to determine each one’s unique formula for vibrant good health. Now I’m going to teach you how to do it for yourself. First, though, I’d like to give you some background on why I’m such an ardent believer in this lifestyle. My personal experience is what motivates me to share my knowledge with others, because finding my own Personal Paleo Cure changed—even saved—my life.

My Story: Cracking the Code for Health

My own journey into the Personal Paleo Cure lifestyle began with a devastating illness—one that dogged me for more than a decade.

In 1998, not long after I graduated from college, I quit my job, sold off my possessions, and took off to see the world. Thailand was the first stop on my trip. I studied traditional Thai massage, Kriya yoga, and Vipassana meditation, deepening the practice I’d begun as an eighteen-year-old.

The next stop on my trip was Indonesia. I’m a lifelong surfer, so I was drawn to this mecca for its perfect waves and warm water. Then one day I woke up delirious, with a high temperature, chills, vomiting, and severe diarrhea. (I later found out that I, along with several other surfers, had been sickened when some locals dug a trench that allowed stagnant water polluted with cow feces to drain into the surf break.) An Australian friend gradually nursed me back to health with some antibiotics in his medical kit.

After recuperating, I tried to continue my world tour, but my recurring illness forced me to head back to the States. The first doctor I saw, suspecting parasites, gave me powerful antibiotics that initially worked, but eventually I felt worse again: exhausted, listless, with nearly continuous digestive distress. Unfortunately, my illness lingered, and over the next few years I saw at least fifteen doctors; nobody could tell me what was wrong, and nothing they told me to do worked.

I decided to attend graduate school to study traditional Chinese medicine. Perhaps herbal medicine and dietary changes might help where conventional doctors and antibiotics had failed. I tried vegetarian and macrobiotic vegan diets and I consulted with several different professors at my school who had expertise in treating digestive problems. Nothing helped. After two years, determined to find a cure, I dropped out of school and moved to the Esalen Institute, a residential community and retreat center in Big Sur, California, that offers holistic educational and personal development programs. I’d begun to wonder whether there might be an emotional, a psychological, or even a spiritual element to my illness.

My time at Esalen was transformative, mind- and heart-opening, and healing at the deepest levels. My experiences there helped me to accept my illness and find peace in

the midst of the intense struggles I was going through. But unfortunately, they didn't heal my body. I was still suffering from severe digestive distress and fatigue and developing new symptoms like muscle and joint pain, difficulty concentrating and memory issues, and insomnia.

The next few years were the most challenging of my life. With my savings exhausted, I moved back to Los Angeles and found myself working long hours in a stressful position at a start-up company. Within two years, I had a complete breakdown; I was utterly exhausted and demoralized after years of illness, pain, and unsuccessful searches for answers. I had seen world-renowned doctors, specialists in every field of alternative medicine, shamans, energy workers, psychotherapists, and spiritual teachers. I'd taken multiple courses of antibiotics, steroids, and anti-inflammatories. I'd tried every special diet under the sun; my "supplement graveyard" had more than a hundred bottles of herbs, potions, and pills I'd taken over the years. I was beginning to lose hope.

Then one day I walked into a bookstore and saw a book called *Nourishing Traditions* on display. It advocated a real-food, nutrient-dense approach to illness based on traditional diets. Something about this resonated deeply with me. Hey, I'd tried every other diet; why not give this one a shot? I started eating the foods the book recommended: bone-broth soups, sauerkraut, fermented dairy products, slow-cooked meats, eggs, and cold-water, fatty fish. I felt better almost immediately. However, even though I used the extensive preparation methods suggested in the book (including soaking and fermentation), the whole grains and legumes recommended irritated my gut—so I eliminated them, along with industrial seed oils (corn, soybean, cotton, sunflower, and safflower), sugar, and all processed and refined foods. I didn't know it at the time, but I was on a Paleo diet.

I couldn't get over the dramatic change in my energy level and gut health. I felt like a different person: vibrant, excited about my future, and ready for a fresh start. I continued my meditation practice and added techniques for stress management to reduce the physical and psychological symptoms associated with chronic pain and illness, and eventually I formulated a supplement regime that further improved my health. I didn't have the name for it yet, but I'd discovered my own Personal Paleo Cure, the individual prescription for my optimal health.

I felt a strong calling to use all of the knowledge and experience I had acquired in my own healing journey to help others with theirs, so I applied to the Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine College in Berkeley, California, to finish the degree in traditional Chinese medicine that I had started years before.

While there, I started a blog called *The Healthy Skeptic* (now it's at ChrisKresser.com), mainly as a journal to keep track of my research and study. My grandfather had died following complications after bypass surgery; I suspected he hadn't gotten the best treatment. The more I delved into the research about diet and cardiovascular disease, the more fascinated I became—why were Bapa's doctors following a medical model that was half a century old? What other research was being overlooked?

I became deeply interested in the scientific evidence for various medical approaches to illness and began to blog about my findings. I was quite surprised the first time someone left a comment on one of my posts. I hadn't told anyone about the

blog, and to this day, I still don't know how people found it. Within a relatively short time, though, I had thousands of readers from all over the world. By the time I graduated and became licensed, I was fortunate to have a full and thriving private practice. Shortly thereafter, I was introduced to some members of the vibrant Paleo community. Now I had a name for the lifestyle I'd stumbled upon independently. I realized that I had found my tribe—a group of revolutionary individuals committed to helping people obtain optimal health.

Today, I'm blessed with excellent health, a loving family, and a flourishing practice. It's incredibly rewarding to help patients discover their own Personal Paleo Cure and recapture their health and vitality.

Beyond Diet: 360-Degree Wellness

The Personal Paleo Cure is a way of life, a process for helping you discover your own ideal way of eating and living. The food we eat is perhaps the single most important influence on health. But the ways we sleep, exercise, spend time outdoors, have fun, manage our stress, and connect with others really matter; I'd argue that they separate a life merely lived from a life worth living. Just as I'll help you customize the diet that works optimally for you, I'll help you find the unique Personal Paleo Cure that embraces every other part of your life so you can live healthfully and joyfully. Diet and lifestyle, taken together, form 360-degree wellness.

Everyone's path to health is unique. I can tell you from working with hundreds of patients in my practice and guiding thousands of others through my blog that it will take about thirty days of following the Reset Diet for you to experience dramatic relief from aggravating symptoms, lose your cravings for the foods that aren't good for you, see a pleasing weight loss, and probably feel better than you ever have! After that, you'll be powerfully motivated to follow the rest of my three-step plan to arrive at a recipe for living that works best for you. For some readers, it'll be a few more weeks. For others, I refuse to make an empty promise about what that timetable should be; that's for you to discover, with my guidance. That's what makes this program work—you!

You'll find some significant differences between the cure you develop and traditional Paleo/primal diets, because my plan will be customized to your needs. What's forbidden on those other diets may be a welcome addition to your table. Based on time-tested ancestral wisdom combined with the best of modern science, your Personal Paleo Cure is firmly grounded in your personal experience, which means you'll find it easy to follow, its benefits will be sustainable, and you'll thoroughly enjoy it.

WARNING: CONVENTIONAL WISDOM MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH

I'm going to challenge a lot of conventional wisdom in this book—not because I'm a contrarian or want to generate attention, but

because I've spent years poring over original research and major studies. I don't believe a health claim simply because I've seen it repeated multiple times. I look at the evidence—the size of the original study samples, the length of the studies, the quality of the research design, and other factors. I look for the difference between causation and correlation. If conventional wisdom holds that taking a certain medication will help people live longer or prevent a certain illness, I want to see the research that proves that. So that's what I do; I carefully investigate the evidence behind health claims.

And what I've found, based solely on the scientific evidence, is often very different from popular health claims. For example, I've found that saturated fat is not the evil nutrient we've been led to believe it is and that whole grains aren't nearly as healthy as we've been told they are. These ideas—and many similar ones—are so deeply ingrained in our collective psyche that few of us stop to question them. But the fact that a belief is widely accepted doesn't make it true.

When research, even gold-standard research, produces new information, there's often a significant amount of time before that information is accepted by the wider medical community, and sometimes even longer before the information is communicated to the public. I'm no conspiracy theorist; I dislike those screaming headlines that shout "Doctors Are Withholding Secrets That Could Save Your Life!" The way I see it, part of the problem is that once something is widely reported and becomes accepted as medical dogma, few people invest the work needed to study alternative theories, and those few researchers who do get minimal attention and funding.

Perhaps one of the best examples of dogma in medicine is the idea that eating foods that contain cholesterol raises cholesterol levels in the blood. Early studies suggested this was true, but more recent and better-designed trials have shown that dietary cholesterol doesn't increase blood cholesterol in the majority of people. Today, few researchers working in the field believe that eating eggs has a significant effect on cholesterol levels in the blood. Yet the public and much of the conventional medical establishment still think there's a connection. And millions of Americans continue to avoid nutrient-rich foods like eggs and red meat on the basis of this outdated science.

Admitting we don't have all the answers is the key to progress in science and medicine. I would invite you to keep an open mind as you read this book, especially when you encounter sections that challenge your beliefs. If you have scientific training or you're just the curious type, you can also scour the detailed chapter notes and references for this book (listed on the website) and read the original studies I cite.

Science is constantly evolving. We look back on the beliefs people held one hundred years ago and think them ignorant. What do you imagine people living one hundred years from now will think about our ideas?

Three Steps: Reset, Rebuild, and Revive

There are three steps to discovering your own Personal Paleo Cure: Reset, Rebuild, and Revive.

In **Step 1: Reset**, you'll begin the Thirty-Day Reset Diet. This quick-start eating plan presses the reset button on your diet, targeting and eliminating the modern foods that humans aren't genetically designed to eat—the foods that are the leading culprits in weight gain and health problems. I formulated this program so you'd feel better right away, and I think you'll be pleasantly surprised to discover how many of the foods you thought were off-limits you can enjoy. You'll experience improved digestion, reduced inflammation, fewer allergic reactions, more energy, and an evening out of your blood sugar and mood. You'll also burn fat and shed pounds. If you're like my patients, you'll feel better than you have in years!

In **Step 2: Rebuild**, you'll begin to customize your Personal Paleo Cure by reintroducing some foods you eliminated during the Thirty-Day Reset to see how they work for your body. A lot of Paleo purists believe humans shouldn't eat anything that wasn't around at the time of our Paleolithic ancestors. Therefore, they'd keep tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and other nightshade vegetables off your table forever.

They'd have you bid a permanent farewell to dairy products and all grains and legumes. But the science doesn't support this stance, so neither do I. Why rule out dairy, for example, if you thrive on it? I'll show you my proven method for testing gray-area foods so you can rebuild the repertoire of foods you love.

In **Step 3: Revive**, you'll take the final steps in creating your unique prescription for optimal health, tweaking your Personal Paleo Cure until it's a perfect fit. What's the ideal balance of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats for your unique needs? What makes you feel your best? Three meals a day? Six? Intermittent fasting? We'll figure out all this and more—including how to be flexible when you need to be (see "The 80/20 Rule," below)—so that you can follow your Personal Paleo Cure for life.

I'll help you get started on this exciting new way of eating with seven days of meal plans that include delicious fan-favorite recipes developed by a foodie/chef couple whose creations are big hits on my website and some brand-new culinary delights created by a French chef trained at Paris's renowned *École de Cuisine La Varenne*. On the website, you'll also find an additional three weeks of meal plans and recipes.

But life is about so much more than what we eat. You'll also learn other techniques to make your life more joyful; I'll show you how to manage your stress, find fun ways to move, sleep more deeply, emphasize pleasure and play, and reconnect with nature.

Do you have a particular health problem? I've got you covered. You'll learn specific diet and lifestyle tweaks to address conditions like weight gain; heart disease; high blood pressure; digestive problems; high or low blood sugar; anxiety and depression; thyroid disorders; difficulty concentrating and memory issues; and acne, psoriasis, and other skin problems. These natural approaches are sometimes all it takes to halt or even reverse symptoms that have plagued you for years.

THE 80/20 RULE

Once you have worked through the Thirty-Day Reset in Step 1 and have fully customized your Personal Paleo Cure, I recommend you follow it closely 80 percent of the time but loosen up the other 20 percent of the time and eat what you like. A truly healthy body is a resilient body, one that doesn't get sick if you have foods outside your Personal Paleo Cure.

In time, most people end up very happily eating more like 90/10 or 95/5 because they've lost the physical and psychological cravings for the Chips Ahoy! cookies or the can of soda. Why? Because after doing Step 1, they feel so much better *without* those foods, and they've filled out their diets with an array of new and delicious foods, as you will. They save their full-out 80/20 times for that Caribbean vacation or Super Bowl weekend.

I want you to nourish yourself at every level, including having the joy of eating foods outside your Personal Paleo Cure. Your mother's cherished Sunday dinners. The incredible buffet at the wedding. The chef's special at that fantastic new restaurant you and your friends are heading to on Saturday. Enjoy yourself! (For more on how to follow the 80/20 rule for life, see [here](#) to [here](#).)

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

- **Feel better right away.** If you're new to the Paleo approach and eager to get started because you're feeling lousy or you want to lose weight, **start with Step**

1. Once you're on the Thirty-Day Reset Diet, you'll experience the benefits of the Personal Paleo Cure right away, and that will give you the motivation to continue with Steps 2 and 3. While you're going through your Thirty-Day Reset, read up on topics like nutrient density, minimizing toxins in your diet, and choosing the best possible foods; you'll realize why you feel so good. Continue with Step 2 (Rebuild Your Life) to find out how to improve your sleep, manage your stress, exercise more effectively, and more. Then move on to Step 3 (Revive Your Health) to help you customize your program further for any particular health conditions or goals you might have and for tips on following your Personal Paleo Cure for life.

- **Improve your results.** If you're already following a Paleo-style diet, but you're not getting the results you'd hoped for, you might want to **start with Step 2, Rebuild**, to focus on some of the important lifestyle factors you might have neglected until now. Then move on to Step 3, Revive, to learn how to personalize your diet and lifestyle according to your unique needs so they are even more effective. (I do suggest you take a look at Step 1, Reset, to make sure that the diet you're currently following tracks with my recommendations.)

Doing the Thirty-Day Reset Diet is the essential first step in discovering your Personal Paleo Cure, but in the same way that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to diet, there's no right or wrong way to read this book. Just choose what works best for you depending on your background, needs, and goals.

YOUR PERSONAL PALEO CURE, YOUR WAY

Throughout this book, I'm going to remind you to trust yourself. Of course, you should always partner with your health professional and learn all you can about health options from trusted resources, but no one is more motivated than you to create your optimal health.

I'm not doctrinaire. I don't think that all medications and surgery are evil or even avoidable. I refer my patients to physicians when I think a drug or surgery may be necessary. We live in amazing times, when we can pick and choose from many quarters to find the best options available to us. Stay curious, motivated, and involved. Learn all you can. Let this book be one of many powerful tools at your disposal.

I've helped hundreds of my patients and thousands of blog readers and podcast listeners overcome chronic health problems using the knowledge and experience I gained over my own ten-year healing journey as well as in my formal education as a practitioner of integrative medicine. But there's more work to be done. There are so many others out there still suffering from chronic illness or weight problems who haven't been able to find help anywhere else. Maybe you're one of them. If so, this book is for you. It will teach you how to heal yourself so your health won't stand in the way of your fulfilling your dreams. The methods I share in this book have changed my life and the lives of thousands of others. It is my deepest wish that they will also change yours.

So let's get started. In the next chapter, I'm going to give you a brief history lesson. (Don't worry; there's no pop quiz!) I'll lay out the scientific argument that

explains why you can live longer into the future by eating the way our ancestors did tens of thousands of years in the past.

CHAPTER 1

Why Paleo? From Cave to Chronic Illness

Consider the following:

- Diabetes and obesity combined affect more than a billion people worldwide, including one hundred million Americans.
- More than half of Americans are overweight; a full third are clinically obese.
- Heart disease causes four out of every ten deaths in the United States.
- One-third of Americans have high blood pressure, which contributes to almost eight hundred thousand strokes every year—the leading cause of serious, long-term disability. Annually, there are 12.7 million strokes worldwide.
- More than thirty-six million people are now living with dementia.
- Depression is now the leading cause of disability, affecting more than 120 million people worldwide.

I could go on, but I think you get the point. We're getting fatter and sicker every year.

Now imagine, for a moment, a world where:

- Modern, chronic diseases, like diabetes, obesity, some cancers, autoimmune disorders, and heart disease, are rare or nonexistent.
- The world population is naturally lean and fit.
- We all age gracefully with strong bones, sharp vision, and normal blood pressure.

While this might sound like pure fantasy today, anthropological evidence suggests that this is exactly how human beings lived for the vast majority of our species' evolutionary history.

Today, most people accept disorders like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease as normal. But while these problems may be common now, they're anything but normal. Our species evolved roughly two million years ago, and for more than sixty-six thousand generations, humans were free of the modern diseases that today kill millions of people each year and make countless others miserable. In fact, the world I asked you to imagine above was the natural state for humans' history on this planet up until the agricultural revolution occurred, about eleven thousand years (366 generations) ago—less than 0.5 percent of the time recognizably human beings have been here. It's a tiny blip on the evolutionary time scale.

What happened? What transformed healthy and vital people free of chronic diseases into sick, fat, and unhappy people?

In a word? *Mismatch*.

AGRICULTURE: THE WORST MISTAKE IN HUMAN HISTORY?

Like it or not, we humans are animals. And like all animals, we have a species-appropriate diet and way of life.

When animals eat and live in accordance with the environment to which they've adapted, they thrive. Cats, with their sharp teeth and short intestinal tracts, evolved to be carnivores, so when we feed them grain-rich kibble, they develop kidney trouble and other woes. Cows naturally graze on grass; when they eat too much grain, harmful bacteria proliferate and make them sick. We humans face a similar mismatch. Our biology and genes evolved in a particular environment. Then that environment changed far faster than humans could adapt, with a few important exceptions that I'll cover later in this chapter. The result? The modern epidemic of chronic disease.

For the vast majority of existence, humans lived as Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, eating the meat they hunted, the fish they caught, and the vegetables, fruits, and tubers they picked while on the move. The agricultural revolution dramatically altered humans' food supply and way of life. They learned to stay put, planting crops and domesticating cows, sheep, goats, and pigs. Early farmers consumed foods that their hunter-gatherer predecessors didn't eat, such as cereal grains, milk and meat from domesticated animals, and legumes and other cultivated plants.

While scientists have argued that these developments allowed our species to flourish socially and intellectually, the consequences of this shift from a Paleolithic to an agricultural diet and lifestyle were disastrous for human health. In evolutionary terms, eleven thousand years is the blink of an eye, not nearly long enough for humans to completely adapt to this new way of eating. This is why the influential scientist and author Jared Diamond called agriculture "the worst mistake in human history." He argued that hunter-gatherers "practiced the most successful and longest-lasting lifestyle in human history" and were all but guaranteed a healthy diet because of the diversity and nutrient density of the foods they consumed. Once humans switched diets and became more sedentary, our species' naturally robust health began to decline.

How do we know that agriculture has been so harmful to humanity? There are three main points of evidence:

- A decline in health among hunter-gatherer populations that adopted agriculture
- The robust health of contemporary hunter-gatherers
- The poor health of people who rely heavily on grains as a staple

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

What happened when hunter-gatherers became farmers?

Studying bones gives scientists a window into the health of our distant ancestors and offers insight into what an optimal human diet might be. Some archaeologists and