

My Primal Lifestyle



Chris and his wife Terry came to my office the other day to discuss his periodontal treatment plan as well as the lifestyle changes I recommended both of them to consider. He brought his wife because she also had many questions. Two of her questions were, “How do you live your life?” and “What does your typical day look like?”

Great questions! I’m proud of the way I treat my body today, and I was eager to share that with Chris and Terry.

MY PRIMAL LIFESTYLE¹

My primal lifestyle started in 2013.² From that time forward, I have included a **nutrient-dense diet, efficient exercise, restorative sleep, and stress reduction** in the way I live.

In this summary of my primal lifestyle routines, you will read what I eat on typical weekdays and weekends, how I exercise weekly, the way I get my sleep, and my favorite stress reduction techniques. I am not an athlete or a marathon runner or a gym enthusiast. I am just a guy trying to stay as healthy as I can for as long as I can. Everything I try to do is rooted in keeping it simple, doable, and effective. I think you will agree.

NUTRIENT-DENSE DIET

The Days of the Week

I eat differently over the course of a week. Mondays through Fridays are different than Saturdays and Sundays. So, here is an example for a typical weekday and then my choices for a typical weekend. I also included my selections that are the same for all 7 days.

Typical Weekday

I usually do not eat breakfast because I am usually not hungry. But, I generally have a cup or two of my *Spiced BulletProof Coffee* in the morning.³

¹ Throughout this article I refer to specific companies and specific products. I do not receive any compensation from any entity for mentioning companies or products.

² <http://drdanenberg.com/i-could-have-died-ten-years-ago/>

³ <http://drdanenberg.com/my-favorite-paleo-recipes-spiced-bullet-proof-coffee/>

Often my first meal is around noon or 1PM. That frequently consists of 3 eggs over easy cooked in coconut oil. I will sauté several leafy greens (like spinach, Swiss chard, and kale) in coconut oil with spices and seasonings like turmeric, fresh garlic, Himalayan salt, kelp granules, and ground pepper. I either will drink filtered water or goat kefir (I prefer *Redwood Hill Farm Plain Goat Kefir*⁴) depending on what's available and what's my preference at the moment.

For dinner, one of my favorite meals is *salmon baked in parchment paper*⁵ with sides of sweet potatoes and steamed broccoli smothered with plenty of butter from pastured, grass-fed cows. I also like to sprinkle *Ceylon cinnamon*⁶ on my sweet potatoes.

For dessert, 85% dark chocolate is a regular indulgence. My preferred bar is *Alter Eco Dark Blackout*.⁷ When available, I enjoy some of my homemade *avocado chocolate pudding*⁸ that includes organic cacao powder.

Typical Weekend

My wife and I generally go out for breakfast or brunch both days. We look forward to eating at our local farm-to-table restaurants. At one of these restaurants, I usually get shrimp sautéed in olive oil with green peppers, onions, and garlic. I also have three sides: beets with ginger and raw honey, steamed cabbage, and sweet potato casserole made with raisins, apples, and pecans. Water with fresh lemon or lime is my preferred drink.

At dinnertime, we like a rack of lamb that we oven bake with olive oil, salt, pepper, and rosemary. I whip up a fresh salad of leafy greens with tomatoes, fresh fruit, raw pumpkin seeds, and my *creamy Caesar dressing*.⁹ We often have a side of live-culture sauerkraut.

Dessert is optional. I may have fresh fruit, dark chocolate, or my delicious *avocado chocolate pudding*.

All Day

I make a smoothie to drink that is available whenever I want during the day. It is a combination of leafy greens like Swiss chard, spinach, and kale with an avocado, berries of various types, a banana, and filtered water to create the right consistency. I use a *Vitamix Blender*¹⁰ and store it in a large Thermos-type container.

I rarely snack, but if I do it is usually with various raw nuts and seeds (cashews, macadamia, Brazil nuts, and pumpkin seeds,) along with fresh fruits.

At dinnertime I may have a glass of a full-body red wine. I have found several organic varieties that I favor.

⁴ <http://www.redwoodhill.com/goat-kefir/>

⁵ <http://drdanenberg.com/my-favorite-paleo-recipes-wild-caught-salmon-slow-baked-in-parchment/>

⁶ <http://drdanenberg.com/be-aware/>

⁷ <http://shop.alterecofoods.com/Dark-Blackout-85-Chocolate--Organic/p/ALT-000250&c=AlterEco@Chocolate>

⁸ <http://drdanenberg.com/my-favorite-paleo-recipes-chocolate-avocado-pudding/>

⁹ <http://drdanenberg.com/my-favorite-paleo-recipes-yummy-caesar-salad-dressing/>

¹⁰ <https://www.vitamix.com/Why-Vitamix>

EFFICIENT EXERCISE

My Philosophy

I believe an exercise program must be efficient for me. An efficient exercise program provides the maximum health and fitness benefits I am looking for in the least amount of time. I don't want to produce oxidative stress in my body on a chronic basis. Therefore, I want a program that allows my body to rest and recover before performing another similar exercise session.

To meet these desires, I follow specific guidelines weekly. I perform **high-intensity interval training, bodyweight strength training, aerobic exercise, and low-intensity physical activity.**

High-intensity interval training

I use a *Nordic Track Classic Pro Skier*¹¹, a cross-country ski machine that is set up in my spare bedroom. Once a week, I do four to six cycles depending how I feel that day. It goes like this:

I warm up by "skiing" at a slow pace for two minutes. Then, I "ski" at the fastest speed I can muster for twenty-five seconds, and then rest by "skiing" slowly for ninety seconds. That completes one cycle, which I will repeat until done. This routine is exhausting, as it should be.

Bodyweight strength training

I do four basic movements in the privacy and comfort of my home once or twice a week. They are pull-ups, squats, pushups, and planks. I only use my own bodyweight as resistance. I purchased a pull-up bar online and attached it to the doorframe of my bedroom. Here is an *online source*¹² that reviews various pull up bars. The squats, pushups, and planks require no equipment, only motivation. There are great videos demonstrating these movements on YouTube by Mark Sisson. The series is worth viewing:

- pull-ups¹³
- squats¹⁴
- pushups¹⁵
- planks¹⁶

Aerobic exercise

My favorite aerobic exercise is to ride my *Trikke*¹⁷ outdoors. For me, it's great exercise and great fun. I ride my Trikke for thirty-to-forty minutes on Saturday and Sunday mornings, unless the weather is not cooperative.

Low-intensity physical activity

Non-exercise movement is just walking or moving about. My goal is to walk approximately 10,000 steps a day. At first, I found a pedometer was best to count how many steps I was taking

¹¹ http://www.nordictrack.com/fitness/en/NordicTrack/Skiers/nordictrack-classic-pro-skier?utm_source=Shopzilla&utm_medium=cpc

¹² <http://www.pullupbarss.com>

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76HjVOoUX6U>

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNRIFnyqTxQ>

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UayvOd0xIAU>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrHG7m4m4-A>

¹⁷ <http://www.trikke.com/fitness/>

a day. Today's pedometers can be carried in your pocket, worn around your waist or wrist, or even worn around your neck. Here is an *online review*¹⁸ of various pedometers. After I learned how much walking I needed to do to add up to 10,000 steps, I didn't need to use a pedometer any longer.

Standing rather than sitting has been shown to be important for overall health and for the health of your joints and stabilizing muscles. Sitting most of the day is associated with increased health risk, independent of the performance of other active exercise.¹⁹

As a dentist, I sit while treating patients in my dental office. Standing while treating patients is practically impossible for me. While not treating patients, I try to stand as much as possible in my office. At home, I use a standup desk when I use my computer, and I stand while doing most anything I once did sitting.

Where I Am Today

I am almost 70 years old. These four categories make up my entire exercise program. Some experts have suggested that I could be more aggressive or varied in my routine. Personally, I don't know why. This program has allowed me to feel healthier today than I have ever felt. I plan to continue what I am currently doing for as long as I am able. This is a simple program that works for me and allows me to do whatever else I want to do.

RESTORATIVE SLEEP

Restorative sleep is critical to maintain normal hormonal repair in my body. It is based on the natural circadian rhythm that is a result of the sun rising and setting at different times in the year.²⁰

For the most part, I get at least seven to eight hours of sleep each night. I get up early to start my day, so my bedtime usually is between 9 PM and 10 PM. The lights are out; the room is cool; and it's quiet. I wake about 5:00 AM to start my day on weekdays, and I am usually up by 6:00 AM on weekends.

STRESS REDUCTION

Although I have written many articles about stress, I have found that reducing personal stress is much easier said than done. One specific way to reduce stress is to use stress management practices.

I have tried several techniques with varying degrees of success. The following methods have worked best for me:

Meditation: I do not find meditation difficult. It is very natural and simple for me. I sit in a comfortable chair in my quiet bedroom. I close my eyes and relax my thoughts. Whatever thoughts come in my head I simply tell myself, "That's Okay" and then let them pass. I often concentrate on something rhythmic like the exhalation and inhalation of my breaths, or

¹⁸ <http://www.toptenreviews.com/electronics/health/best-pedometers/>

¹⁹ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3572053/>

²⁰ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3689169/>

sometimes I repeatedly say to myself, “I am relaxed and still.” I’ll do that for 15 to 30 minutes at a time.

Diaphragmatic breathing: This is deep breathing in the diaphragm. To do this, I lie in my bed, and put my hand over my belly button. As I breathe in slowly and completely, I want my belly to push my hand out as far as I can. Then when I begin to exhale slowly, I want to try to get my tummy right up to my spine as my hand moves in that direction as far as I can. I simply repeat this a number of times. I find this very relaxing.

Progressive muscle relaxation: This will create total body relaxation. I actually learned this technique when I was in college decades ago. At that time, it was called *Jacobsonian Relaxation*.²¹

To get ready for this, I am ready to go to bed. I make the room dark, cool, and quiet. I lie down on my back in bed and make myself comfortable. The key for me is to progressively tighten groups of muscles and then relax them afterwards. I start with my feet. While lying in bed, I squeeze and curl my toes and constrict my feet as tightly as I can. Sometimes, I’ll be holding my breath. I keep the muscles really tight, and then let go slowly as I breathe out. Then I move up my body to concentrate on my legs, tightening and relaxing these muscles in the same way. I continue to move up to my buttocks, abdomen, back, shoulders, neck, hands, arms, face, etc. Progressively, I tighten these muscle groups and then let go. After one round, my entire body feels relaxed and stress-free. It’s a method I love, and it always works.

SUMMARY

I have described **My Primal Lifestyle**. It’s simple, doable, and effective.

The way our primal ancestors lived and the way hunter-gatherer societies live today are the ways our genes and anatomical structures have evolved so that we can survive and thrive. As human beings, we can’t improve on these basics. We can improve on so many other things in our lives, but our biology has taken its precious time to evolve to be the best it can be. I am not smart enough to try to change it. And, I don’t need anyone to prove what I believe.

Since 2013, my life has changed for the best. Moving forward, this is how I will continue to live the quality life I enjoy today.

²¹ <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/resources/relaxation/musclerelation.html>