



Episode 305: A Day in the Life: Wellness Mama
Health Routines

Child: Welcome to my Mommy's podcast.

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Welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I am Katie from wellnessmama.com. And today it's just me and I'm answering a common question that I've gotten online, which is of all the health stuff that I've tried over the years, which things do I still do regularly? And it's a great question. Because with over 1,300 posts on wellnessmama.com, I have tried a lot of stuff over the years, and my views on some of it have really changed. In the last two years, specifically, I have been ruthlessly simplifying my life. And I feel like I have finally found a rhythm of things that are the most effective for me. Now, one thing to note before I jump in is that health is so personalized, and there's so many aspects of it that are individual. So I'm sharing what's working for me, these won't necessarily be the same things for all of us. But after 13 years of trying things, and writing about them, and tweaking, these are the things that are finally very much regularly part of my routine.

I do a lot of other things as well, but these are the ones that are my non-negotiable things I consider most effective. And, of course, also, before we jump in, I just wanna say I always recommend doing your own research and working with a doctor, especially if you have any specific health condition or concern. I personally use SteadyMD and their functional

medicine doctors, and I have access to them 24/7 via my phone and app, and I highly recommend that. But I definitely recommend working with a doctor who understands your goals if you have any specific condition whatsoever. Also, before we jump in, I have a small favor to ask. If you have two minutes, I would be so grateful if you would just spend time in whatever app that you listen to podcasts in, whether it be iTunes or Spotify, to leave a rating or review. Please leave me your honest feedback. It helps other people to find this podcast and it helps me to improve hopefully over time. And I always love hearing from all of you and I read every single rating and review. So please and thank you in advance if you do.

So as far as my philosophy on health at this point, I have narrowed it down, like I said, and it's about simplifying. And for me, it's about finding the minimum effective dose and doing those things regularly with a goal of metabolic flexibility. And basically taking this minimum effective dose or MED approach to health and wellness, it helps avoid giving up simply because we don't have enough time or because of being overwhelmed, which has definitely happened to me in the past. So I have some example of that, the statistics say that nutrition accounts for about 80% of a person's physique and that in most cases 20% of effort creates 80% of results in fitness. Mark Sisson has talked about this on "Mark's Daily Apple," Tim Ferriss has talked about this in his podcast and on his blog, he's also known as the Pareto principle, which I hope I'm saying correctly, I've only seen it written. But like, for instance, Tim Ferriss explains, there are two important minimum effective doses or MEDs when it comes to health and fitness.

So for instance, to remove stored fat, you want to do the least amount necessary to trigger a fat loss cascade of hormones, and to add muscle, you would wanna do the least amount of things necessary to trigger local and systemic growth mechanisms. So depends on what the goal is. So figuring out the goal and then working backwards to figure out that 80/20, minimum effective dose approach.

To put another way, as an example, water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit, that is the MED needed to boil water. Raising the temperature more is not going to make the water more boiled. So it's simply a waste of energy. Boiling water at 220 degrees is not going to make it any more boiled than 212 degrees. So, again, this is a very individual thing, but that's been kind of the foundation of this process in my own health over the last couple of years, is figuring out what are for me, those goals and then what are the 80/20 minimum effective dose things, the tangible things that get me to those goals without getting stressed or overwhelmed. And that'll be another podcast in and of itself is about overwhelm, and mom stress, and mom guilt. But in this one, I'm just focusing on the health stuff.

So in other words, my goal is I wanna be able to eat a wide variety of different things and my body be able to handle it. I want to be able to do different types of activities and exercise, and my body be able to adapt to that. So, in general, I don't do anything every single day, except for try to get great sleep. I think that's a non-negotiable. Try to get outside every day and try to move every day even if it's just walking or playing with my kids. Beyond that, I don't drink caffeine every single day. I don't even eat every single day, but there are a lot of things I do regularly that have really made a difference in my health. And just to get vulnerable for a minute, I'll share much more of the whole story soon, but in the last six months, I have lost I think close to 50 pounds at this point, and the interesting part is it has not been largely because of diet or fitness tweaks at all. I have been doing many of these things I'm gonna talk about today for a decade. I had food dialed in, I had exercise dialed in, I had sleep dialed in, and the part that I ignored was the emotional side thinking that I could just power through it, and that I didn't need to feel my emotions and I could just be strong. And I would deal with those later. And it turns out that was very much a key for me. And it's a whole, probably podcast, probably a whole book on its own, about working through past traumas, and working through all those filters, and I will share a lot of that in its own podcast. But I wanted to just put that caveat here. So these things were all part of that process and that transformation for me, but I think it would be remiss if I didn't say that I think the emotional and mental side is at least as big of a part at that as anything else.

So with that said, these are the physical health things that I do on the regular to be as healthy as possible and that work for me. Again, do your own research, do your own trial and error, work with your doctor, but maybe these will give you a starting point. So the first thing is, I have drastically simplified my diet over the last couple of years. There is so much information out there. I've tried pretty much all of it. I have tried pretty much all of the different systems, and diets, and programs, and protocols, and a lot of them have many, many good points. But I reached a point where I knew I was gonna have to simplify. And I've said before, that if you tried, you could find evidence for pretty much anything in the world, being both the best thing in the world for you and the worst thing in the world for you. And that goes for everything from broccoli, to beans, to any supplement. I could probably write a paper on either side, either of those. And the problem is if you're in the research constantly, you get to a point where you're almost afraid to eat anything because you know the potential downsides to everything. So I knew I had to simplify. I pretty much took the people I respect the most and try to figure out the common factors among their things, line that up with my gene report through Nutrition Genome, which I will link in the show notes, and then figure out what were gonna be the most nutrient dense foods that I actually love with the goal of nourishing the body versus depriving the body and that was a huge mental shift.

I think a lot of us especially if there's ever a goal of weight loss, we start to get in this really unhealthy dynamic with food where it's about punishment or avoiding certain foods or food being bad. And that was definitely not something I wanted to pass on to my children. So I wanted to shift my own focus toward having food be nourishing and good. And focusing on the nutrients versus the deprivation and then finding the ways that I could best nourish my body. And that was a huge paradigm shift. Instead of like, what am I allowed to eat? It was, what can I eat to give my body the best nutrition? So that said, I settled on truly my kind of own approach, and I think that's the key for all of us. It's our own thing. Where I feel the best and it wouldn't qualify as Keto, it wouldn't qualify as Paleo, it is my own variation, even though it shares some of the similarities for some of those things. I will say I don't feel good at all on Keto, and this seems to be a thing some women feel, mainly the high fat aspect. That's partially because of some of my own genes, but I have found I feel much better when I avoid saturated fats and so I don't eat much saturated fat and would definitely not qualify macrowise as Keto. But I do eat a ton of green veggies, protein, healthy fats, and I would say probably I would qualify as low carb-ish most days.

But, again, I don't do anything every day. So if you want some specifics in general, what my diet looks like is lots of vegetables. And the ones that I make sure to try to get often are things like leafy greens, pretty much any leafy greens, things like onions and garlic, I love leeks and fennel, and I'll like pretty much chop those two up and just saute them and make that the base of a meal. Avocado, I eat regularly, often okra which I love by itself, etc. Lots of fermented veggies, like sauerkraut. I eat a wide variety of herbs and I'll make lots of pesto's with cilantro, or with parsley, or with mint. And then as far as proteins, I don't actually eat protein every single day. Like I said, some days I don't even eat at all, but I do try to get clean proteins often, especially because I'm working out quite a bit right now. And that's things like really clean meats and seafood, lots of sardines. I eat a lot of sardines because they are inexpensive and they're a great source of calcium and protein, and a lot of micronutrients. Mussels, which Dr. Gundry calls a nature's multivitamin, and they're delicious. Things like baruka nuts and macadamias for healthy fats, and then lots of olive oil, which, of course, is a staple in the Mediterranean diet. Dr. Gundry thinks it's one of the best things we can do for our health is to get enough olive oil and monounsaturated fats, and I've noticed I do feel better, my skin is much better when I do that.

As far as drinks, lots of water and then coffee, tea, herbal teas, and mushroom drinks. So anything from Four Sigmatic is a regular part of my life. I use their mushroom coffee regularly. I drink their reishi at night for better sleep, and then I'll mix in their other stuff during the day as needed. And I find like just having that source of something warm to drink especially in the winter is really comforting as a great way to get in extra nutrients. Another thing I do is I'll sometimes eat beans now which is a big change for me because I used to avoid them because of the lectins. And one thing Dr. Gundry said in my podcast with him is that if beans are pressure cooked in, for instance, an Instapot that that neutralizes

the lectins. It does not neutralize gluten, but it does neutralize lectins in which case beans are a source of protein and carbs. So I will sometimes eat beans or lentils if they are pressure cooked. He also gave the tip that the brand Eden uses BPA-free lining and they use pressure cooking in their preparation and I believe they also sprout their beans. So if you need a convenience food that is relatively safe, that would be an example there.

Another thing is I make sprouts at home which those are really easy, inexpensive way to grow veggies in your own kitchen and they have a lot of potential payoff. So nutrient-wise, to me, this is very much an 80/20 thing. It's an easy, like I said, easy inexpensive thing to add into a routine, and broccoli sprouts, specifically, I wanna talk about them and geek out for a second. They are especially beneficial because they are a source of sulforaphane, which is a potent cancer fighting and antibacterial compound that's found in cruciferous vegetables and sprouts. If you haven't, go listen to pretty much everything by Rhonda Patrick, but she has just several videos about sulforaphane and why it's so beneficial. But to summarize, sulforaphane is created, we're gonna get really geeky for one second, then I'll get back to normal I promise. Sulforaphane is created when there's an enzyme called myrosinase that transforms the glucosinolate glucoraphanin into sulforaphane. And myrosinase and glucoraphanin are found in different parts of the plant. So this change happens when the plant is damaged, for instance, by chewing, by blending, chopping, etc. And so these two compounds mix and react. Like young broccoli sprouts in a certain age window are particularly good sources of glucoraphanin. More specifically, sulforaphane is part of a group of plant-based disease fighting phytochemicals called, I hope I don't butcher this, isothiocyanates. And in the body, sulforaphane stimulates the production of an important enzymes that neutralize free radicals, you probably heard that word, because inflammation and free radicals get the blame for many types of cancer, so it's a big deal.

In fact, the first time anyone suggested to me eating broccoli sprouts, it was Dr. Christiansen who was my original thyroid doctor years and years ago, probably seven years ago now, as an easy way to help protect because I had at that point, nodules on my thyroid, and to protect them from growing or potentially becoming cancerous. So broccoli sprouts are an easy thing to add in to your diet because the isothiocyanate seems to block certain cancer-activating enzymes in the body. It's kind of like a double protection. And that's why sulforaphane, there are studies that show that it might help protect against various types of cancer specifically, I'm remembering the studies things like colon, prostate, breast, lung, and I think some other types of cancer. It may reduce the risk of neurodegenerative disease, ocular disease, heart problems, anything that has a tie to free radicals and inflammation, which is a lot of stuff and also support the brain and digestive system. So I grow broccoli sprouts regularly in our kitchen and I add them to salads. But an easy tip I have found is because the chemical reaction happens when you blend or when those two compounds mix, I will put broccoli sprouts in the blender and gently blend them into smoothie. And then just drink a cup of broccoli sprouts which is an easy way to get it in with less chewing since I also eat a lot of salad, I get tired of doing vegetables.

Another easy tip, no matter what type of diet you are on, that I would recommend is to pre-plan your meal plan and then stick to it. And for a family this can be, you know, pre-planning for weeks at a time in something like Real Plans, which I highly recommend, it's an app, or even if it's just jotting down the day before what you're going to eat the next day, and looking at it as a big picture of how you're going to get all those nutrients in versus trying to figure it out on the fly. And I found just the act of writing it down and knowing the plan ahead of time makes it way easier to stick to it for one, and it's just one less thing to think about in the moment during the day. And if I have time, I'll also sometimes pre-make the food for the family or for myself so that it's there. But just you writing it down even just jotting it down in a post-it note and stick it on the fridge.

For me, also, getting enough protein was key. And I think this is a very individualized thing as well. Again, because of my own personal genes, I tend to have a higher protein need, I think, and I found I actually put on muscle relatively easily if I'm getting enough protein, but I had to play around with what that ratio was and how much and found that I do better when I eat bigger meal. I'll talk more about this later in the podcast. But when I eat a bigger meal earlier in the day with

more protein, I tend to sleep better and also have better energy levels. So, again, focusing on the good versus the bad in diet, just getting enough protein is one of the things I prioritize. It seems to make a big difference. Another simple not rule, but just guideline that I keep in mind most of the time, again, not every day, is to separate carbs and fat most of the time. And that's just an easy rule that actually crosses a lot of different dietary approaches, and an easy one to remember. So if you don't want a lot of rules, and you don't wanna get caught up in the specifics, just try that one, not eating carbs and fat together. If you think about it. Those two things don't occur naturally in anything in nature, in the same plant. It's a very rare thing.

But also, if you just separate those two, you actually meet most of the guidelines of many different types of diets and approaches including, so Keto would just be eating no carbs, pretty much all the times. You're always separating carbs and fat. Many bodybuilders follow this kind of approach, I think Bright Line might have some of that involved, Trim Healthy Mama, I think, has some of that involved. There's a lot of approaches that use that in some form. But just doing that alone actually can make a really big difference, it did for me. And it's an easy thing to remember that like, because think of it like most fried foods are carbs and fats together, most sweets are carbs and fats together. If you just do that, if you separate them, that'll get you a lot of the way there. And another note just quickly, that's one of my issues with Keto because I think there's a lot of potential there, are definitely use cases for Keto, especially with things like seizures. We know there are studies on that.

The problem is for those of us who would just maybe use Keto recreationally or to try to lose weight, in theory, if you follow Keto completely and you're 100% compliant, because you've separated carbs and fat, it can do that. The problem is most people are not 100% compliant, and if you're eating a lot of fat and then you also eat a lot of sugar, at least from what I can tell from my blood results that will mess up...or even a little bit of sugar. So you're eating a lot of fat, you eat some carbs, it can really mess with your triglyceride, your cholesterol, all kinds of levels. Mine did not look good when I was trying to be Keto, and I didn't feel good. Again, it's very personal, but that's just one of my concerns with it. All that said, so, I know there was a lot of information. Sometimes I don't follow any rules. And I will have a day or a meal of eating foods that I would not normally eat, including I do eat gluten once in a while. And this is normally for social reasons or at special events. Or if there's a food I wouldn't normally be able to try, or it was cooked by someone I love. Even if I wouldn't normally eat it, I will make an exception. So if I'm traveling if I'm in another country, if someone that I love has cooked home prepared meal, I won't not eat it unless it's an allergy. And I have found that I can even tolerate things like gluten just fine once in a while and that won't derail me at all. I think, again, this is very individual and that has been a change for me.

But I feel like there's a balance here. Because if we avoid everything entirely, then over time our body can get actually less able to handle it. So because my goal is to be adaptable and metabolically flexible, I want to be able to handle things sometimes. And I know that this has rollover effects into other aspects of health that I'm still learning how to navigate. For instance, previous podcast guest, Aaron Alexander has, I forget which one it is, like a Google Home, or Siri, or something in his home, and I was surprised by that. And his explanation was that, we can't avoid EMFs, and WiFi, and Bluetooth entirely in today's world. It's definitely not possible and I would agree with that. And so his thought was we actually need to develop kind of a low level of tolerance to it. So that we're not like living in a Faraday cage and then we get wrecked when we are in normal society where there's WiFi or there's Bluetooth, which I can definitely see his point and that makes sense.

I'm still trying to figure out how that integrates into other aspects of life. But I do seem to notice this in diet, that eating small amounts of things, not regularly and with good gut health, that's another key I'll talk about later, making sure my gut health was strong first, it seems to make me more adaptable, not less. I think there's also a mental health benefit to

not being so rigid, unless there's of course an allergy or a health reason that we can ever, you know, have a day off. So, again, very personal, but that's what is currently working for me.

And lastly, when it comes to diet, just as a quick note is that I'm currently not drinking any alcohol. I don't think this will be a lifelong change for me by any means, but it's a right now changed for me just...partially, I mentioned all the inner work that I'm trying to do. I didn't want alcohol to be a filter, or an escape, or thing that numbed that. But also just as I go through all these like physical transformations, I felt like it was good to give my body a break from alcohol. So, again, nothing against alcohol. I'm not saying I don't think people should drink alcohol, I'm just saying I'm taking a break from that.

Okay, so that was diet. Maybe it wasn't quite as quick or simple as I expected. Another very much regular part of my health routine is sauna use. And this is something I've done for years and got even more into after visiting Finland last year. And this is something else, again, if you're not already following Rhonda Patrick, I would highly recommend following Rhonda Patrick, and reading, and listening to all of her research on sauna use. She's got the best most comprehensive overview of it I have ever seen or read. But to give you an idea of some of the reasons that I consider sauna to be such an important aspect of health and I know that it's not something that everybody can do, it's something that I prioritize and our family prioritized. And here's why. So sauna use, it's known as an exercise mimetic, which means it's similar to exercise in that it raises heart rate, body temperature, and cardiac output. This is the reason it has so many of the same benefits as exercise. It does not, of course, replace exercise, but it can actually be a really good thing to use. So I prefer things like high intensity exercise, which I will talk about later on in podcast, which doesn't have the same cardio benefits necessarily. And so I do that plus sauna.

So statistics show that sauna use is good for cardiovascular health. It can reduce blood pressure, for instance, in studies, and raise heart rate variability, which is something I'm really interested in these days. And it's one of the metrics I like to track because it's not a negative metric. It's a positive metric, and improving, and raising your heart rate variability is linked to reduce risk of all cause mortality and basically longevity. So it's a cool thing to pay attention to, to see what we can do to affect. For me, sauna use is one of those things as is breathing, as is sleep. I'll go into some more of those things later. And sauna is beneficial in other ways as well. Of course, it induces sweat, which exercise also does. And lots of good things happen when we sweat. A lot of people who have been on this podcast say that sweating is something we should all do daily because it's a natural detox mechanism of the body. We don't need to do any crazy detoxes. The body is really good at that on its own, if we just support it, and sweating is one of the great ways to do that.

So to get a little bit more specific, sauna use reduces the risk of a lot of stuff that will kill you. That's the short version. If you want more specifics, basically, you get a 40% reduced risk of all cause mortality for people who use saunas 4 to 7 times per week. And I'll get into the specifics of what counts as sauna use, but in the scientific world, in the world of statistics, 40% reduced risk of all cause mortality is drastic, and it's one of the reasons that saunas are, like I said, very much a daily part of my life. I also sometimes use cold, but not as often as heat. And I think that there are very different and beneficial effects to using them separate and together. So, for me personally, sauna use is almost every day, cold is a couple times a week. And sometimes that cold will be interspersed with sauna use, sometimes it will be on its own. And I usually do not do cold after certain types of hard workouts because it can actually blunt the effects of those types of workout. Whereas studies show using sauna after workout can actually increase the effects. So we'll talk about that more in a minute as well.

So here's what some of the studies say. Sitting in a sauna for 30 minutes increases heat shock proteins by as much as 50%. And I'm going to quote Rhonda Patrick on this for a minute because like I said, she's super smart and the best out there on this topic. But the most important thing she explains that heat shock proteins do is they help maintain the structure of cellular proteins. And here's why that is important, when a proteins three dimensional structure is altered, it tends to sit around for longer than it's supposed to, instead of being degraded. So this causes it to start forming

something called protein aggregates with other proteins. Protein aggregation has been shown to play a causal role in things like neurodegenerative disease, something we don't want. Heat shock proteins also slow muscular atrophy, which is a wasting way of muscle. So you want these guys in your body, sauna is an easy way to do it. There's some genetic factors at play. Some people naturally have more heat shock proteins, and they actually live longer. But for those of us who don't have those fun genes, sitting in a sauna is one way to, like I said, increase your heat shock proteins by as much as 50%. Some other fun statistics.

Men who use sauna 4 to 7 times a week had a 63% lower sudden cardiac death compared to those who use a sauna only once a week or not at all. In the same way, there does seem to be a dose dependent thing. So men who use the sauna 2 to 3 times a week had 23% lower coronary heart disease related deaths compared to men who didn't use it at all or used it once a week. And the studies were done in men, but a lot of scientists think it's very much the same for women. So with men same thing, that number jumps to 43% reduce risk when they use the sauna 4 to 7 times a week. So dose-dependent effect. Same with those who use the sauna 2 to 3 times a week had a 27% lower cardiovascular related mortality. When someone uses it 4 to 7 times a week, that number jumped to 50% reduced risk. Using the sauna 4 to 7 times a week also resulted in 61% reduced risk of stroke. So the magic number seems to be four to seven times a week, which is why I say I do this almost daily. I think that's one of the easiest best things we can do for our health, especially because it's quiet in the sauna, and you just sit there. It doesn't require anything really hard.

And if you look at the studies, it seems to show that you wanna be at about 170 plus degrees for at least 20 minutes. In my house, I have two types of saunas. I have an infrared sauna and also a Finnish barrel sauna outside and I use them both. My infrared sauna inside can get that hot, not quite as hot, usually about 160. But my head is out, which lets me stay quite a bit longer. So I can stay up to an hour in that one or if I'm in the Finnish outside, it will be 180 degrees-ish, and I'll stay for about half an hour. And like I said, I aim for at least 4 times a week for that 30 minutes plus in every day if possible. If possible, I also tried to do sauna post exercise, because using the cold, they find, right after exercise it's great for not being in pain if you do a really hard workout, but it can blunt some of those muscle building effects of exercise whereas sauna use seems to improve them. So try to stick to saunas after working out when possible.

Another easy thing that I have added as part of my regular routine that seems to make a big difference for me, is time restricted eating, or TRE, and there's a lot of studies about this as well. This is similar to intermittent fasting. There are some differences. And again, I don't do it every day and I try to mix it up to have metabolic flexibility. But in most cases, I eat within a 4 to 10 hour window each day. Usually it's around 6 to 8 hours. Sometimes, I will drink black coffee or herbal tea during that window, sometimes I won't. And my biggest meal is my first one of the day and this is with good reason. So a lot of studies show that your insulin response, and your fat response, and all of your digestive responses tend to be better earlier in the day. So in my case, lunch is almost always my biggest meal of the day. It'll include a lot of greens, some protein, the most I'm going to eat in the day, and then good fats from avocados and olive oil. If I am going to eat the rest of the day, I will eat one to two smaller meals later in the day. Sometimes one of those is a smoothie, sometimes more often, it's just a huge salad. Again, mix it up every day.

And for time-restricted eating, I use an app called Zero, Z-E-R-O, which just lets me track how long I've been fasting. So right now as I record this, for instance, it is 11:00 in the morning my time, and I have been fasting for about 20 hours. But that's just today, and it's different every day. And the reason I started using time-restricted eating. So there's a lot of evidence and studies that show that caloric restriction increases longevity. But there's two ways to accomplish this. So we can eat less, or we can eat less often, which also accomplishes the same as eating less. There's some studies to back up this. There's a lot of researchers to talk about this including Dr. Sachin Panda. One study is the Salks study, which if I'm remembering researchers fed two sets of mice the same high fat, high sugar diet. So, again, they combined fats and carbs, something I don't do, but the diet was trying to replicate the standard American diet that a lot of people eat. And one group of mice had 24 hour access to food, and the other group could only eat during an eight-hour window at night. So mice are nocturnal, so that would be like us being able to eat during the day.

And after 100 days, the group who had access to the high fat diet all day and all night gained weight, and they developed issues that you would see with the standard American diet, including high cholesterol, high glucose, liver damage, diminished motor control, etc. The group who only had access to food for the eight hour period during the time when they should have been eating, they weighed 28% less than the first group, which if you wanna look at statistics, that's the difference between our obesity rate and not having an obesity rate. And despite eating the same amount of calories from the same amount of food, the time-restricted eating group did not develop the same health issues. So that, to me, is a huge, huge key and one of the reasons I really started doing this. So basically what that means is, they didn't eat less, they didn't eat different, they weren't eating a different diet, they ate the same amount of calories. So same amount of food, but in a shorter window, the same kind of food, but in a shorter window, and the time-restricted eating group did not develop the same health issues. And I know a lot of people are averse to the idea of fasting or time-restricted eating, but I think it's important to realize that we all do this every day anyway, because nobody's eating while they're asleep. So we all practice time-restricted eating, time-restricted feeding, depending on what you wanna call it. It just depends on how long of a window we're doing that in.

A study that was conducted in University of California, I believe in San Diego, found similar things. So they had over 2,000 overweight women, divided them into groups, one group fasted for 12 hours at night, the other group fasted for less time. So, again, they both fasted because nobody eats when they're asleep. The group that fasted for 12 hours or more had better blood sugar levels than those who fasted for shorter periods. We know that blood sugar levels are tied to a lot of aspects of health. I mentioned Dr. Sachin Panda. He has a great YouTube video where he explains that liver genes are more sensitive to the act of eating than to light and I'm gonna talk about light later on. But these are both ways that we can regulate our circadian biology.

One study that I believe he was involved in, found that mice who are fed during the day had liver genes turn on and off at the time when the mice were fed at night were different. So like basically in other words, eating during the day is important for keeping the liver processing food during the day. Fasting at night for humans is important for keeping the liver in repair mode at night. So because of this, the study found that eating during the day can protect against mild age-related fatty liver for humans, and that eating at night can make it worse. So in other words, some of the benefits of time-restricted eating they found in these studies are: things like increasing mitochondrial volume, especially in the liver and brown fat, improving ketone body production, speeding repair processes in body leading to better aerobic endurance improvement, and increasing lean muscle. So some easy things, to me, this is again an 80/20 minimum effective dose.

That said, I also do practice other forms of fasting and I don't think these are for everyone, this is not something I would have done before I fixed my gut health, before I fixed my thyroid, if I had any sleep issues, if I was pregnant, this is something that is much more recent to me in the last few years, and I found really beneficial, but I'm not recommending. I think this is something you definitely need to work with a doctor on. But personally, I do longer fasts, several times a year, up to five days. And I do start the year with an even more extended water fast. And the reason I did this is I was finding studies that show that this type of fasting can create autophagy in the body, it can lower age-induced inflammation in the body, reduce oxidative damage, it can lower NF-kB activation and it can boost the immune system. And one of the ways it does this is something called autophagy. And research shows that autophagy is a key part of the body's ability to detoxify and regenerate itself. So things like fasting and high intensity exercise both stimulate autophagy in the body and can lead to positive results for that reason.

Even intermittent fasting or time-restricted eating like we talked about can have the same benefit, but there seems to be a bigger result from longer term fasting, especially anything north of three days. Studies have found that autophagy can lead to a decreased risk of cancer, heart disease, and I believe also Alzheimer's. And other studies found that autophagy can or is correlated to longevity and reduce risk of all cause mortality. Which, again, two things that I'm hoping for I wanna see my great-grandkids one day. Other studies show that fasting produces pro-inflammatory cytokines...or I'm sorry, fasting reduces pro-inflammatory cytokines and inflammation in the body. And there was a study, I believe it was the Yale School of Medicine that found that a compound called beta-hydroxybutyrate inhibits something called NLRP3. And I know that sounds really geeky, but NLRP3 is a set of proteins called the inflammasome, which drives the inflammatory response in several disorders, including things like autoimmune disease, which was important for me with Hashimoto's, as well as Type 2 diabetes which runs in my family, Alzheimer's, heart disease which also runs in my family, and other types of inflammatory disorders. And I think inflammation is a huge key and we know that fasting can reduce inflammation.

The researchers found that beta-hydroxybutyrate is produced by most effectively fasting, also by high intensity exercise, by caloric restriction, low-carb diet, there's a lot of ways to do it. Fasting seems to be the biggest bang for the buck, most quickly if we're talking about water fasting. It's also important to note here that there are things called fasting mimicking diets. Dr. Valter Longo, who has been a guest on this podcast is pioneering that research, you can listen to that episode with him. So if you don't want to do full out fasting, that's another way to get a lot of the same. And he would argue that all of the same and potentially more benefits. A 2014 study found that water fasting for only 3 days could regenerate the immune system. And the reason that seems to work is these researchers found that fasting, water fasting specifically, flips a regenerative switch and prompts stem cells to regenerate new white blood cells.

So basically, it tells your stem cells, it's okay to go ahead and begin proliferating and rebuild the entire system. And that's what Dr. Valter Longo found in his study and you can read all about that also in his book, "The Longevity Diet." So, again, not recommending it, not getting medical advice, I'm just saying that I, about once a quarter, water fast for 5 days and I start the year, every year with a 10-day water fast, which is as much for the mental and emotional benefits as it is for the physical. I don't think that that's right for everybody. But it's been an important thing for me.

So another thing that is part of my minimum effective dose 80/20 type approach, is when it comes to exercise. And this was a tough one for me because for a lot of years I had this idea that I didn't like exercise and it was the thing I had to do, and just like with the food, I had to switch my mindset here. And so in general, I tried to do high intensity exercise and just a lot of regular movement. It took me a lot of years to figure out this piece and I'm still not where I would like to be on a fitness level, but I'm making really steady progress right now, which is exciting. And part of the way I'm doing this is through high intensity interval training called HIIT training. And I'm using a device called CAR.O.L, which I believe it stands for cardiovascular optimization, something rather. It's basically an exercise bike that uses AI to teach your body how to do high intensity interval training the most effective way. And the cool part is it beats cardio in studies, it beats like long term moderate exercise, which is great for me because I can get in a great workout in under nine minutes, which is much better to fit in my day than going for an hour-long run.

Like I said, I'll combine that with sauna use to get some of the other cardiovascular benefits and just sweat because high intensity interval training, I actually won't sweat it's such a short, intense, fast workout. In fact, I've seen studies that the health benefits of high intensity exercise beat much longer moderate exercise. It is tough to do correctly to get enough intensity and that's the reason I do CAR.O.L, because I found if I was just sprinting, it was easy to not push myself that hard and it was hard to know if I was pushing myself enough. So using CAR.O.L, it's constantly adapting just beyond my ability and pushing me and it's very motivating that way.

One study using high intensity found, for instance, that those types of sprints increased metabolism over 24 hours, 12 hour period as much as 30 minutes of running. And I'd much rather do sprints for under 9 minutes than run for 30. Studies also show that this type of exercise can reduce body fat, and especially visceral fat, which is the fat around our organs, and one that is tied to some pretty bad health problems. You don't want a lot of fat around your organs. It also has been shown in studies to improve VO2 max and heart rate variability in my test which I mentioned is something I'm paying attention to and trying to improve. It also, I've seen over time, it reduce your resting heart rate and a lot of people see a reduction in blood pressure if they have high blood pressure. There's other studies showing that it increases mitochondrial biogenesis, which is another great important aspect of health.

So CAR.O.L's kind of the core of what I'm doing right now, but I also do weight training, like deadlifts, and squats, and like I mentioned, lots of regular slow movement, like walking, stretching, different types of classes that are just slow, comfortable, fun movement. So I do CAR.O.L for the high intensity, and then I go to the gym because I want to, not because I have to, and I'm not working out for weight loss. That's another important shift that I made mentally, I do it for the health benefits, and I think that has been part of the key to sticking with it for me. But also, it's important because from my own past experience, and I've heard this from others as well, exercising, specifically for weight loss can backfire. Because when you start exercising, you actually get more hungry. So a lot of people will go on a strict diet, do caloric restriction and then add in a bunch of exercise which is great, but you're signaling your body that you need more calories. So you're going to be fighting your body the entire time.

I have a friend who years ago lost a lot of weight and she didn't exercise at all until she had lost the weight because she found it made her more hungry and it made it harder. Again, I think there's so many benefits to exercise, but I think you wanna look at the 80/20. The effects of weight loss, for me at least, have very much been from food, and emotions, and sleep. Much more than exercise and I'm using the exercise for the health and cardiovascular benefits, but not for the weight loss.

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So another important aspect and this is one of the few things that I would say I think is universal applies to all of us, and I think most experts and people who have been on this podcast would completely agree with me, and that is sleep.

We know that sleep is important for essentially every aspect of health, we know that if you don't get enough sleep, you have blood sugar levels like a diabetic, it messes with your hormones, you're more likely to get all kinds of diseases, problems, have cancer, etc. Sleep is a big deal. I think everybody needs to optimize sleep and I think it's something Americans especially, are pretty bad at. For me, this means...I found a few factors that really improved it. And I measure it my sleep with an Oura Ring. I'll talk more about the Oura Ring later, but I'm able to see in real time, essentially, what's improving my sleep and what's not. The things that really make a difference, things like light. So I think manipulating light is one of the best things we can do for our sleep. For me, this has several key components. First, getting morning sunlight every day, which means getting outside even if it's cloudy, as soon as possible after waking up and getting light. Outside, even on a cloudy day, outside light is so much brighter, and so much more spectrum than indoor light. And so there's really no comparison. You can use, and I'll talk about it again soon, but 10,000 Lux light, you're still not gonna get the same benefits of a cloudy day even if it's cloudy outside. So getting morning sunlight daily, even if it just means going outside, if it's warm enough being barefoot on the ground drinking your morning tea or coffee outside, or just spending time with family outside.

If I'm gonna use red light, that's essentially fine. Anytime of day, I like to do it in the afternoon or the evening, and then avoiding blue light after dark. And there's logic behind that as well. So in nature, the only time you're going to encounter blue light is during the brightest part of the day. But in modern world, we encounter artificial blue light in many sources from our screens, from certain types of light bulbs, pretty much everywhere that we are almost always in contact with blue light. The body has built in systems like I mentioned that help regulate circadian rhythm. And these rely on outside inputs, including food and light to signal times that the body should be awake versus the time it should be asleep. So there's, from what I remember, there are about 30,000 cells in the eye that can sense blue light, and these cells signal the brain to turn off melatonin production. You probably know melatonin is important for sleep, and when you suppress melatonin, it might make it difficult to sleep or it can affect sleep quality, and blue light does that. We know dozen studies.

So, blue light wavelengths would, like I said, only be seen in nature during the brightest part of the day and found in sunlight. These wavelengths are not present in things like fire and natural light sources that would have been used at night for most of history. Have you ever sat around a campfire at night, it's kind of that people will describe natural light sources like fire as being soothing and promoting sleep, a lot of people say they sleep really well when they're camping, largely because of the lack of blue light. In fact, if I'm remembering there's a study that showed that people who camped for seven days with no artificial lights, so just fire, candles, etc., were able to totally reset their circadian rhythm in a week which is really drastic, because lights are that important. So at the end of the day, it's all about the timing. Blue light during the day can be very beneficial. It can help send the correct signals to the brain for melatonin production later in the day, it can promote alertness.

In fact, some people notice more of an effect from light than coffee. It is important for signaling the body to maintain healthy weight and adrenal function. And Dr. Alan Christianson, who I mentioned before, wrote "The Adrenal Reset Diet," and he's also a huge proponent of morning light. Those are all vital during the day. And you can use things like blue light and carbohydrate intake to help balance your cortisol and other hormones. It's a good thing. Blue light is not objectively a bad thing. It's all about the timing. The problem occurs when we are routinely exposed to blue light in the evening after the sun has set, especially when this happens all the time because, like I said, this signals a reduction in melatonin, which is necessary for sleep.

Harvard medical study has an effect on this or a study on this. It showed that there's a connection between a blue light and potential diabetes and obesity. The researchers put 10 people on a schedule that gradually shifted the timing of their circadian rhythm and their blood sugar levels increased throwing them into pre-diabetic status. Like I mentioned, if we don't get enough sleep if you're pre-diabetic, and it messed with their leptin which is a hormone that helps you feel full after a meal. And apparently even dim light could interfere with a person's circadian rhythm and melatonin secretion. The study, I believe, showed that a mere 8 Lux of light, which is most table lamps, or even a nightlight, has an effect. So this is something I feel like is really a big thing we can address and the way I dress it in my house is we try to stay off of screens after dark and we have light bulbs that do not have blue light in them that we turn on after dark.

Another thing for me that makes a big difference in sleep is not drinking caffeine after about 11:00 a.m. So I mentioned that it's about 11:00 a.m. now when I'm recording this, and I will not drink coffee for the rest of the day. I think I'm more sensitive than a lot of people, so my husband can drink caffeine right before bed and be fine. I can't. If I drink it afternoon especially I will have trouble falling asleep. So I limit caffeine and I only drink it in the morning before 11:00 a.m., and I don't drink it every day. I also found that, like I mentioned a minute ago with light being such an important factor for sleep, that minimizing and limiting light in the bedroom makes a huge difference. So I have blackout curtains in my room and cover all lights in my room. So that is completely dark in the room, and there's a lot of studies showing that that can help sleep as well. It's also been an important factor for my kids. So they have blackout curtains in their room as well and it's great. They don't wake up quite as early with the sun coming in their window when they have the blackout curtains.

Temperature is another really important factor when it comes to sleep hygiene and sleep quality. And there's a lot of studies on this. Some of them disagree a little about what the exact temperatures are, but most seem to settle on the idea that we should be sleeping somewhere between 60 and 67 degrees Fahrenheit, and that if the temperature goes above 75 or below 54 degrees, it can interfere with sleep. So the reason this matters is that our body temperatures naturally peak and decline over a 24 hour period with the highest temperature numbers occurring in the late afternoon, and the lowest ones around 5:00 a.m. So there's a rhythm to this, just like with food, with hormones, with light. Sleep usually begins when our body temperature drops. So a colder room signals the body to fall asleep faster. Whereas sleeping in a room warmer than 70 degrees can stop your body from releasing melatonin, which we just talked about, and it's also a very important anti-aging hormone. You want melatonin at night.

In the winter months, I love to sleep with the windows open if possible to hit that temperature. But rather than in the summer running the air conditioner to get that which can use a lot of energy, I have found that using a chillipad is more effective or now there's one called an OOLER. And basically what this is, this is a very thin pad that goes underneath your sheet on the bed, and it lets you temperature control your bed. And there's no EMF, it's just water that runs through the tubes. There's a low EMF device that causes the water to run through the tubes and it's placed several feet from the bed.

So I've measured it, there's no measurable EMF effect of that in the bed. It does not interfere with my sleep at all. And it lets me set the temperature of my bed anywhere between 55 and 110 degrees.

I typically sleep at about 62 degrees which, because my bed stays a little bit warmer, I think it stays in that 60 to 67 degree range all night and I see a measurable difference on my Oura Ring, in my sleep scores when I optimize temperature at night. And all these things we're talking about, I will link to my post about them in the show notes so that you can read more about them. But like I said, I don't mess around with sleep. I think improving sleep is the single best thing that we can do for other aspects of our health, and it's one of those things that if you don't get it right, you can do a lot of the other things and you're not gonna see the maximum benefit that you could from a healthy diet or from exercise if you don't have your hormones in the right place with good sleep.

If I need it, say if I'm traveling, I will sometimes take CBD to sleep better at night. I use a brand called Ojai, which I will link in the show notes. It's a water soluble full spectrum, and I notice its effects within 30 seconds, unlike oils which take a lot longer, and my kids will also take that if they have trouble sleeping. Another thing that makes a huge like measurable difference in my Oura Ring and also in my blood levels when I test is food signaling. So I mentioned that food is another way that we can signal circadian biology. And so I make it a point not to, again, most days, not every day, but most days not to eat after about 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. And to give more time for digestion before I go to sleep, because it lets my body not need to digest while I'm sleeping. So the body can prioritize other things that can happen best like liver repair during sleep. This is called also circadian gut rest. Basically, the idea is just don't eat when it's dark outside. That's all you have to remember if it's dark, don't eat. If you want more information on this you can follow FastingMD Dr. Amy Shah on Instagram, and she talks a lot about this, why circadian gut rest is so important. But I would say for me, I have definitely noticed a difference when I do not eat after about 5:30 or 6:00 p.m.

I know this was supposed to be a short podcast, it's apparently not gonna be. I'll try to go quickly through the rest of it. Other things I do regularly. I do take supplements regularly. But I don't take supplements every day either. I don't take supplements on the weekend, or sometimes when traveling, because again, I want metabolic flexibility. I don't want the body to ever adjust to getting any nutrient externally or not from food, and I don't want it to ever like take those nutrients for granted. So things I take almost every day or relatively regularly would be probiotics. I take a spore-based one from Just Thrive. That'll also be linked in the show notes. We have a discount you guys can use on that one. But it's a spore-based probiotic, which means it survives through the small intestine and it's heat stable, temperature stable. So think about it if you have a probiotic that needs to be refrigerated, it's not gonna make it to the acidity and the heat of your stomach.

This is only probiotic I've ever taken that I can see, like I can feel a difference from because it's heat stable up to 400 degrees. I can put it into food when I cook so my kids if they can't swallow pills, I can put it into something I bake or cook, or in smoothies. And we've noticed a huge difference from that probiotic. I also take vitamin K27 which there're studies showing that can reduce inflammation, has cardiovascular benefits. Because I'm now in remission, but I had Hashimoto's, inflammation was a thing I was trying to counteract. So I would take that regularly. And then other things I take based on need, but not everyday, things like vitamin D in the winter based on blood test levels, always test first because that is a fat soluble vitamin. I sometimes take a selenium, zinc, pantothenic acid and here's what I'll mention just a little bit of detail on it. There was a podcast episode with Dr. Chris Masterjohn, where he talks about pantothenic acid and its effects on skin health, specifically, and acne. And I've noticed during weight loss and as my hormones change, that I was breaking out a little bit. And his reason was a reason teenagers, for instance, break out more is because I think he said was unmetabolized extra cholesterol in the body and things like testosterone can increase that. So teenage boys obviously have an influx of that.

But he said that in his research, that even relatively big doses of pantothenic acid can help reduce that. And I noticed when I take pantothenic acid, it does help with breakouts.

I also sometimes take HCL with high protein meals just because that's one thing I have not fully optimized yet, and sometimes need an extra little boost. So I'm eating a lot of protein. I do sometimes take fish oil, this is I know controversial one, and I alternate. I don't take it all the time. There are some sources that say it oxidizes and goes rancid and it can be harmful to the body, there are other sources that say it's really important and vital. I don't think we have a definitive answer on this and there's probably very much a personalized aspect to this, but I don't take fermented cod liver oil anymore. I just take regular fish oil from really high quality sources. I can link to the one I take in the show notes. I think I'm taking the one right now that Dr. Rhonda Patrick recommends. Again, I think we still don't officially know, but there's some really smart people with differing opinions on this one.

I take, like I said about Four Sigmatic, take mushrooms of some form pretty much daily, whether it's Lion's Mane, chaga, cordyceps, reishi..... I alternate, but I almost always consumed some type of mushrooms. I add prebiotics to my smoothies that's also from Just Thrive. I'll link that in the show notes. I'll sometimes take aminos, there's one from Kion. I'll link in the show notes. I'll take that pre or post workout. And then I sometimes drink green, or red, or gold drink from Organifi. I'll link to those as well. These are just all mostly sources of extra nutrients. And then I take magnesium regularly. And I'll link to my post about this in the show notes as well. Most people do really well taking this at night, I seem to be one of the weird cases where I need to take it in the morning. It'll keep me up at night. But I do see a big difference when I take magnesium versus when I don't.

And then occasionally, if I'm in a podcast day like today, I will take something called CILTEP, C-I-L-T-E-P. I'll link to that as well. It is a nootropic, and it helps me focus without the need for lots and lots of caffeine. Another thing that has had a huge impact on my health, and I think often gets overlooked is the mental emotional shifts, and things like gratitude and breathing. So I won't go into this a lot because, like I said, I will do a whole podcast just on the emotional side at some point when I can sort it all out and feel brave enough to go that vulnerable. But I do think that having some form of this is really important and it's gonna be different for everybody. For me, it's things like focusing on gratitude, having a daily list of things that I'm grateful for. Having gratitude letters, and writing letters to friends and family members, and just thanking them and saying I'm grateful for them, might be doing little acts of kindness that don't go noticed, but just help with that mental shift or keeping a gratitude journal of things that I'm grateful for.

On the breathing aspect, podcast guest, Gabby Reece talked about the importance of breathing in and out through the nose, and how that signals calm in the body and helps the body go into parasympathetic. So I will try to breathe in as slowly as possible through the nose, and then out as slowly as possible through the nose. At night, I'll do four, seven, eight breathing, to help fall asleep. Just something to focus on to help me fall asleep, which is breathing in for a count of four, holding for a count of seven, and then breathing out for a count of eight. And that usually a few of those is all it takes for me to fall asleep. So there's just some easy things to do. And then, like I said, I'll go into it much more, but just letting go of a lot of the emotional baggage and trauma which is a very individual process. For me, some things that are helpful reminders are the Four Agreements from the book, "The Four Agreements" about not taking things personally and always doing your best. And then "The Untethered Soul," was a good book about learning how to let things go.

Let's see, other things that I do. I've always been a nerd when it comes to oral health, and I still very much prioritize that. So I do oil pulling regularly, and make sure that I'm eating in a way that supports oral health. I also I believe it will be out

by the time you are listening to this. You can go to wellnesse.com, just wellness with an E on the end. I spent years developing a toothpaste that supports oral health naturally and that does not have fluoride, does not have glycerin. It does have things like neem, and green tea, and hydroxyapatite which are all really good for the teeth, and this is finally available after many, many, many years of work. I could not be more excited to share it with you, but I feel like oral health is a huge part of overall health. Because we know that oral health impacts the whole body, and that, for instance, people who are immunocompromised or have a heart condition, often have to take antibiotics during dental work because there's such a connection between the health of our mouth and the health of the body. So I feel like prioritizing oral health not just helps our teeth look great, but it's also actually really important for overall health.

And then some other random things I do just related to health, not that maybe necessarily impact my health, but that helped me maintain it are things like tracking. So I've mentioned the Oura Ring a couple of times, I will link to that in the show notes. I don't remember it off the top of my head, but I know I have a discount code I can share with you guys. But it tracks heart rate, sleep, including all the sleep stages, deep sleep, REM, heart rate variability, body temperature, which has been really helpful for fertility tracking, movement, etc. So I wear my Oura Ring all the time. It's also important to note that the Oura is the only fitness tracker I have found that can go into airplane mode. So there's no Bluetooth or measurable EMFs when it's in airplane mode, which you can keep it in airplane mode, except when you're charging it, so you're not constantly exposed to that.

I also personally, during this process, have run labs with my doctor every month or so, just to keep an eye on all new markers and make sure everything's moving in the right direction. I typically run a comprehensive metabolic panel, a thyroid panel, and iron fairs and etc, because my iron tends to run high. So for me personally, again, it's very personal. I found that getting blood every couple of months is really beneficial to my health to keep my iron levels in the right range because even if I don't eat a lot of red meat, I still tend to have high iron levels. And I also think this is not just good for me, but hopefully I can help others and maybe even, you know save someone's life who's been in the accident. But I also think because I try to work so hard to keep my blood healthy, I'm glad I can hopefully give it to someone else who can use it a lot more than I can.

And then another random thing that seems hard to measure, but good mental difference is to do a digital detox every now and then, and just not be on the phone, not be on a computer, and just be with the real people in my life. So that was going to be a short episode, that got much longer because I love talking about the science. But I hope that all of that is helpful as a starting point. To reiterate what I said in the beginning, I do think that health and nutrition, all of this is extremely personalized. And I'm not trying to give any kind of prescriptive approach, certainly not trying to give medical advice. I'm happy to recommend doctors, I'll link to my doctor in the show notes and other amazing doctors at StudyMD, who could give medical advice and who are qualified, I am not. So, again, don't take any of this as medical advice. This is my personal experience and what's working for me. I hope that maybe it will be a springboard to anybody listening to find those things in your own life. And I would love to hear from you, if you found those minimum effective dose things that you still do all the time in your health that have made a big difference. I would love to hear those from you.

But definitely don't just follow what I do, use them as a starting point for your own research for your own health. And if you stuck with me this far, first of all, thank you. It's an honor to have shared this time with you. And I hope that you will consider just taking a couple minutes to leave me some honest feedback on whatever app or device you used to listen to podcast, so that I can improve hopefully, maybe I talk too fast, probably did. Till then I get into science, I get really excited and I talk way too fast. But your feedback helps me improve and it also helps the algorithm helps other moms and other people find this podcast and listen as well.

So as always, thank you so much for sharing your time, which is one of your most valuable treasured assets with me today. I'm so grateful that we got to share this time together, and I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.