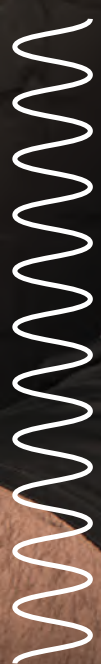




**THE
HEALTH
MECHANIC**
NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR MEN



A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION



UNPACK YOUR PEAK HEALTH

Evidence-Based Natural Solutions
for a **Stronger, Healthier You.**

By Sarah Manton

Readings on:

- Coffee - friend or foe?
- Let's Talk Sh*t
- Biohack with Mushrooms
- Seed Oils Exposed
- Eat Fat, Be Healthy
- Debunking Detoxing
- Sleep Secrets

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INTRODUCTION

A word from the Author!

There's no shortage of health advice out there, but let's be honest—most of it is designed to sell you something or push an agenda. Rarely is it shared just to help guys like you cut through the noise and figure out what's legit.

That's why I've created these free publications. They tackle the common health questions and challenges men face, with the goal of giving you straightforward, science-backed information that helps you make better choices for your health.

No gimmicks. No BS. Just the facts to help you take charge of your well-being.

Let's get into it shall we?

“Health isn't about perfection - it's about progress, one decision at a time.”

From the Lab to the Ring: A Mechanic for mens health solutions

Hi, I'm Sarah Manton, the founder of The Health Mechanic. I started this journey because I was fed up with how men's health is often overlooked or treated as an afterthought. With two science degrees, nine years of study, and years of real-world experience, I've seen it all— and I realised that most health services out there don't really hit the mark for men.

We are here to change that. Think of us as your health mechanics—getting under the hood to diagnose what's slowing you down, whether it's gut issues, low energy, or part of the machinery shutting down.

My background? From Muay Thai fights, to dancing with the Queensland Ballet, and placing runner-up Ms Fitness Australia in 2007: I know what it takes to look after your body. And in my down-time, you'll either find me walking my giant ridgeless ridgeback Dino, or at a music festival or gig with my husband (yes, even though I'm still in my 40's).

The mission behind The Health Mechanic is simple. We aim give Australian men the tools and support they need to take control of their health naturally and effectively.



READY FOR A HEALTH TUNE UP

This guide is all about cutting through the noise and giving you practical, science-backed advice to tackle some of the biggest health questions out there. Whether it's figuring out if your caffeine habit is helping or hurting, understanding why seed oils might not be as innocent as they seem, or diving into the truth about detoxing, we're here to keep it real.

We'll talk about the stuff most guys don't—like bowel health (yeah, it mat-ters), why fat is actually your friend, and how mushrooms can do more than just make a great pizza topping. And if you've ever wondered why you're so damn tired, we'll explore how better sleep could be the key to feeling younger and living longer.

Here's some rock-solid advice to help you feel younger, be stronger, and live longer.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	02
Table Of Contents	03
Caffeine: Energy Fix or Health Risk?	04
Let's Talk Sh*t: Why Bowel Movements Matter	07
Biohacking With Mushrooms	09
Why Seed Oils Are Bad For Your Health?	13
Eat Fat, Be Healthy	15
Debunking Detoxing	18
Under The Covers: Secrets Underlying Sleep	21



CAFFEINE: ENERGY FIX OR HEALTH RISK?



Coffee is a dietary staple for most of us. Australians consumed an average of [3.84 kilograms of coffee each](#) during the year 2023. In fact, 28% of us drink [three or more cups a day!](#) But is caffeine really promoting health? It's a hot debate as to whether caffeine is a good or a bad thing. So let's dive into the complexities of caffeine, and break all the research down for an evidence-based answer.

The Pros of Coffee- More Than Just a Buzz

There's no denying that coffee has its perks (pun intended). As I mentioned, some research even suggests that coffee could be a powerful tool for promoting health. Here are some examples of the possible benefits of caffeine:

1. **Polyphenols and Antioxidants:** Coffee is rich in polyphenols (such as chlorogenic acids), which have been shown to have [anti-cancer](#) and cardiovascular benefits ([including reduced risk of thrombosis and atherosclerosis](#)).
2. **Bile Stimulation and Colon Health:** Coffee can also stimulate bile production, which aids digestion. Research has shown that it can relax the muscles in the colon, and this may potentially lower the risk of [colon cancer](#).
3. **Cognitive Boost:** The compounds in coffee may also play a role in [improving cognitive health](#) by increasing blood flow (promoting oxygenation) to the brain.



THE DARK SIDE OF CAFFEINE



So that all sounds great. However, let's apply to real world situations rather than test tubes. And based on clinical experience with my patients, I find the main issue isn't with coffee itself- the problem lies in who uses it, and how. Here are examples of caffeine use which have negative implications on health:

- 1. Replacing Meals:** Many men use coffee as a meal substitute. While filling, quick, cheap and convenient, this habit can lead to reduced nutrient intake. A coffee doesn't provide the essential vitamins and minerals needed for overall health. When you use coffee as a meal, you miss out on a whole heap of really important nutrients (including protein) that are required for optimal health.
- 2. Masking Fatigue:** Coffee is also used as a quick fix to mask energy dips that result from chronic stress, poor sleep, or unstable blood sugar levels. Coffee is not a solution for fatigue- it is a bandaid. And by using caffeine regularly to cover up how sh!t you feel, it can allow small health problems to become much bigger ones.
- 3. Cholesterol and Blood Pressure:** Studies show that coffee (particularly in high amounts), can raise cholesterol levels and [increase blood pressure](#). These are risk factors for cardiovascular disease— an area where men need to be extra cautious. Not everyone responds to caffeine like this, but it's something I definitely consider in each patient's prescription.
- 4. Mycotoxins and Inflammation:** Another hidden downside of coffee is the frequent contamination by pesticides and mycotoxins (these are toxins produced by mould). Adverse health effects of pesticides include [Parkinson's and dementia](#), and mycotoxins are associated with [immune deficiency and cancer](#). Nobody wants that.
- 5. Caffeine and Mental Health:** Caffeine can exacerbate insomnia, sleep disorders, anxiety and mood disorders. Research shows that coffee can [increase the likelihood of panic attacks and worsen anxiety](#). For men struggling with mood imbalances or anxiety, caffeine can exacerbate the problem, leading to a cycle of stress and then exhaustion.
- 6. Cortisol:** While coffee can help wake you up by spiking cortisol, over time it can have negative effects on other systems. Why? When your system is under stress (which is what cortisol spikes make it believe it is!) your body will prioritise deal with the emergency "stress" over other less urgent functions such as immunity or fertility. This is a massive issue for guys trying to conceive, and for men with thyroid or autoimmune concerns. Cortisol dysregulation is difficult to detect with general one-off cortisol tests sometimes ordered by GP's. They don't capture fluctuations throughout the day or the full picture of adrenal function, such as adrenaline and noradrenaline responses. I run different tests in my clinic, which are done over a 24 hour period (but that's pretty complex and a topic for another day).



NAVIGATING THE COFFEE CONUNDRUM

So while all the benefits were encouraging, no one who conducts research actually weighs the pros against the cons in regard to coffee. Or considers individual differences. The saying “one man’s meat is another man’s poison” is true when we talk about caffeine tolerance and effects. Many factors, like genes, metabolism, body makeup, and gut health, can change how your body handles caffeine. This is called bio-individuality. This is why understanding your own body’s response to coffee is crucial.

And that’s where us clinicians have to piece all the research together in order to make the best recommendations for you.

My key concern in clinic is what’s lying behind the need for the coffee kick. Is it just a habit? Or is it something more.... Factors like inadequate sleep, stress, and nutrient deficiencies may need attention. B12 and iron deficiencies can both cause fatigue- and doctors blood test ranges often don’t pick these up quickly enough either.

So What’s The Answer?

That is completely dependent on the man I am treating! I often need to recommend some lifestyle changes for my patients but I never force coffee abstinence on anyone- because it took 2 years of my own health concerns to be prepared to make the switch to a coffee alternative. And even that took some careful planning and substitution, because I had a lovely ritual around my coffee routine which was important to me and my family (including exercise for the dogs!)

But this is what I would like you to initially consider:

1. **Pay attention to quality:** Opt for high-quality, organic coffee to reduce exposure to mycotoxins and other harmful substances. Choosing a dark coffee also increases the amount of beneficial compounds. There are some great Australian coffee brands that are mycotoxin-free and organic.
2. **Be mindful of timing:** Avoid using coffee as a meal replacement or crutch to get through energy slumps. Pair it with food to minimise the cortisol spike, and consider cutting back if you experience increased anxiety, fatigue, palpitations or feel jittery. There are some herbs you can add to coffee to mitigate cortisol responses,

including cardamom... which makes for a delicious Middle Eastern flavoured drink!

3. **Understand your body:** Everyone responds differently to caffeine. If you’re dealing with chronic stress or fatigue, or wanting to conceive, consider scaling back on your intake. If you feel tired- then you probably are tired. And perhaps need to consider why...
4. **Caffeine as a tool, not a crutch:** Coffee can be a powerful tool, but it shouldn’t be the foundation of your energy or your diet. It’s time to address the root causes of fatigue (whether it’s stress, poor sleep, or nutritional deficiencies) instead of masking them with caffeine.

In conclusion, while coffee offers some clear benefits, it’s the how and why of your consumption that matters. By shifting your focus to high-quality coffee and mindful consumption, you can enjoy the perks without compromising your long-term health. Coffee can be a tool in your health arsenal, and shouldn’t be the foundation of your diet or a solution for looking after yourself poorly in other regards.



LET'S TALK SH*T: WHY BOWEL MOVEMENTS MATTER

We don't talk enough about bowel movements. It is not sexy. In fact, it can be awkward and embarrassing. But that's a shame because how your bowels work is one of the most important signs of what's happening inside your body. Men often try to normalise (or some guys don't even recognise!) their issues in the bathroom department.

Healthy bowel movements are not just about comfort- they're pivotal to overall good health. Your bowel affects (and is affected by) mental health, immune function, infections, diet, and inactivity. For example, did you know that probiotic supplementation can reduce the symptoms of inattention in ADHD?

Talking openly about this business can help us recognise health factors that might need attention. That's why one of my key tips to feeling younger and living longer is making sure we keep your bowels moving along smoothly.

Heart Burn & Constipation? You're Not Alone!

Many of my patients have just been sucking-up long-term dysfunction related to their gastrointestinal system. Reflux occurs in 1 out of 5 Australian adults, and chronic constipation occurs in 23.9% of Australian adults. You'll appreciate why that's way too common when we talk about little-known side effects shortly!

These issues aren't just inconveniences that should be band-aided over with Metamucil, prunes or Rennie's. They are signals that something is out of balance in your body.

Why Are Bowel Movements So Important?

Your bowel movements are a major part of your body's elimination pathway. Think of it like a waste disposal system. When you eat, your body absorbs the nutrients it needs, and what is left over is waste. Your colon takes care of that, pushing the waste out as stool. But if this process isn't working well (whether you're dealing with loose stools or constipation) your body and health suffers.

Loose Stools: What's the Big Deal?

Diarrhoea might seem like just an inconvenience, but it can cause real issues. A major problem is nutrient malabsorption-when transit time is too fast (digestive time from ingestion to stool), we don't absorb the nutrients from our food. Most of your carbohydrates, fats, proteins and vitamins are absorbed in the intestines. You might be eating the healthiest meals AND taking the best quality supplements, but if you have fast transit time then you're not getting much out of it. Frequent diarrhea can lead to dehydration and gut irritation, causing fissures or creating issues with your kidneys.

Gastro-stop might be a short-term solution, but it's not addressing the root cause. Diarrhoea can be triggered by stress (too much adrenalin and cortisol increases gut motility), infections, food sensitivities, or even imbalances in your gut bacteria.

And it's often not only the digestive system that needs to be considered. For example, I find anxiety is commonly linked to diarrhoea.





Constipation: It's Hard Work!

On the flip side, we have constipation. When waste stays in your body too long, it is not only uncomfortable but can be bad news for your overall health. Constipation isn't always caused by insufficient fibre.

There are many [health concerns which contribute to constipation](#) including:

- Thyroid issues (particularly hypothyroidism)
- Depression (serotonin stimulates bowel movements!)
- Haemorrhoids
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Dehydration
- And some medications, including antacids (stomach acid is essential for breaking down food, and antacids slow that process down. You can read more about that on my website [here](#)).

One major consequence of constipation is the disruption of enterohepatic recycling. This is when bile acids (which are made from cholesterol) aren't properly eliminated, and this causes your body to reabsorb cholesterol. Over time, this can lead to higher cholesterol levels!

So How Do I Get Things Moving Smoothly?

This situation is highly individual, and there's no one-size-fits-all answer.

However, here's some information on several factors that can mess with your bowel movements:

- **Stress:** Constant stress disrupts digestion by triggering the "fight or flight" response, which pulls blood away from your gut, and inhibits your vagus nerve. This nerve controls digestion, and if it's not functioning well (often due to chronic stress), your gut slows down. This is often linked to IBS.
- **Food Sensitivities:** Sensitivities to foods (like dairy or gluten) can cause inflammation, and either diarrhea or constipation.
- **Digestive Insufficiency from Antacid Use:** Long-term use of antacids can reduce stomach acid, leading to poor digestion and nutrient absorption. Please note-coming off long-term antacid use requires tapering and professional support while your body learns to produce enzymes again. If you'd like to understand more about reflux, you can read my article [here](#).

The Bottom Line

Healthy bowel movements are a critical part of good health. If things aren't moving as they should, your body is trying to tell you something. Sh*t really does happen, and making sure yours is optimal is one of the best things you can do for your overall health.

I recommend reaching out to an expert if you think your bowels need some attention.

BIOHACKING WITH MUSHROOMS

In a world that wants to live longer and feel younger, there are some game-changing everyday foods- and for this, mushrooms are at the top of my grocery list. But how can the humble mushroom be the answer to living a longer and healthier life? For centuries, mushrooms have been revered for their potent health benefits- and the cool thing is that now science confirms that mushrooms really do have the power to extend life!

In fact, in one recent study, it was found that participants who consumed mushrooms daily had a [lower risk of all-cause mortality](#) (otherwise known as death) compared to those who did not include mushrooms in their diet. So, Let's go down the science behind a veggie lots of people just push to the side of their plates.



Ancient Wisdom Meets Science

Mushrooms have been used therapeutically for thousands of years. For example, in ancient China, the reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*) was valued by emperors and labelled the "Mushroom of Immortality". *Ganoderma* was believed to promote longevity and vitality. Today, [research shows](#) that *Ganoderma* extracts exhibit anti-aging properties by modulating the immune system, reducing oxidative stress, enhancing mitochondrial function, and protecting heart, liver, and brain tissues. How amazing is that!



What Makes Mushrooms Work?

Mushrooms are full of bioactive compounds that you don't see in many other foods. Some of these important compounds are polysaccharides, ergothioneine, and triterpenoids.

Polysaccharides are a kind of complex carbohydrate. Beta-glucans are an example of polysaccharides in mushrooms. They [activate immune function](#) in relation to both early and late stage cancer tumours.

L-Ergothioneine is an antioxidant that appears in high amounts in mushrooms. Research shows that L-Ergothioneine might help protect against [age related memory decline](#) and other chronic diseases.



One Mushroom- Many Jobs!

The unique thing about mushrooms is their broad range of therapeutic effects. The polysaccharides and beta-glucans in fungi are compounds known to

support the immune system and modulate inflammation. What's more, mushrooms act as adaptogens, which help the body protect itself in times of physical AND emotional stress.

Here are some of their key medicinal actions:

- **Immune Enhancing & Immunomodulatory:** This boosts your bodies ability to fight infections, while also regulating its activity to prevent overreactions like autoimmune responses.
- **Antioxidant:** To protect cells from oxidative stress, reducing aging and the risk of chronic diseases.
- **Anti-Cancer:** Many mushrooms are studied for their anti-cancer properties, helping to fight and prevent tumour growth.
- **Nootropic:** Studies have shown that *Hericum erinaceus* or lions mane mushroom could promote the growth of brain cells and improve memory.
- **Prebiotic:** Nourishes the gut microbiome, supporting digestive and immune health!

Because of their wide array of benefits, mushrooms can affect multiple organs and systems in the body, from the immune system to the brain, making them true all-rounders for overall health.

What Is Immune Modulation?

Most people focus on anti-inflammatory benefits for health, but we don't always want to suppress inflammation.

Immune modulation (regulation and balance of the immune system) is just as crucial. While immune-enhancing mushrooms boost the immune system to fight off infection, immunomodulatory mushrooms can ensure it doesn't become overactive.

This difference matters because an overactive immune system can be as harmful as a weak one (this is known as autoimmune disease, or even allergic responses!) This fine-tuned balance is critical for maintaining long-term health and preventing disease.



There's Mush-Room For Everyone

Sorry about that- I couldn't help myself. Every medicinal mushroom offers its own unique set of benefits. For example:

- **Reishi** (*Ganoderma lucidum*) is renowned for reducing stress, improving sleep, and enhancing overall vitality.
- **Lion's Mane** (*Hericium erinaceus*) is a brain-boosting mushroom shown to support cognitive function and potentially even repair nerve damage.
- **Cordyceps** (*Cordyceps sinensis*) is known for increasing energy and libido.
- **Turkey Tail** (*Trametes versicolor*) is well-known for its immune-boosting properties, particularly for supporting patients undergoing cancer treatments.

The diversity of their effects means that medicinal mushrooms can be tailored for a variety of health concerns—from mental resilience, and energy recovery to infection resistance and promoting longevity.

Could You Benefit from More ‘Shrooms?

Medicinal mushrooms are particularly helpful for:

- Men looking to increase their energy and physical resilience.
- Those recovering from illness or infection.
- Individuals with reduced immunity or susceptibility to infections.
- Anyone seeking to promote longevity and vitality.

Whether you're adding them to your diet or taking them as a supplement, mushrooms are a must-have for anyone serious about being stronger, feeling younger and living longer.

However, please understand that prescribing herbs therapeutically is a science that I (and other natural health practitioners) studied for years, and it can be complicated by medical conditions and pharmaceutical drugs.

Professional support, It will ensure what you are taking is safe, and effective in dosage and type—which will save you time and money long term.

Aging is a complicated process shaped by genetics, environmental factors, and lifestyle. However, these discoveries suggest that adding mushrooms to our diet could be a great way to support healthy aging.



WHY SEED OILS ARE DESTROYING YOUR HEALTH?

Margarines and canola oils were celebrated for their heart healthy benefits for decades. Butter was demonised while these industrially-produced seed oils (like canola, sunflower, and soybean) found their way into everyone's pantries.

However, the new research on the impact of seed oils on our health tells a different story. These oils are a key contributor to chronic disease in Australia and avoiding them is one of my key tips to feel younger, be stronger, and live longer. Here's why.



What Are Industrial Seed Oils?

Industrial seed oils are extracted from seeds and grains like soybeans and sunflower seeds. In the 1870's, two enterprising soap manufacturers figured out that they could chemically alter oil so it hardened. They took this a step further and used their soap-making process to produce a cooking fat that acted like lard. Prior to this, cottonseed oil was just seen as a waste product. With the rise of the industrial food system, chemically altering seed oils seemed like a solution reduce food production costs and feed hungry people.

In 1940, a large donation was made to some cardiologists by Proctor & Gamble (which happened to be the company of the original enterprising soap manufacturers). Some dubious research was conducted, and this artificial lard (now known to us as margarine!) was lauded as "heart healthy".

Many years later, these fats are a staple ingredient in most foods- and our health is suffering for it.

How Are Seed Oils Produced?

The production of seed oils involves high heat and a petroleum-based solvent (like hexane) to remove the oil from the seeds. Then there is chemical deodorisation of the oils (which have a really unpleasant smell), followed by more chemicals and bleaching to improve the colour.

This process leads to the oil becoming oxidised- the health effects of which we will discuss.

So.... What Is Oxidation?

When seed oils are exposed to high heat during processing or cooking, the unsaturated fats oxidise. Oxidation produces free radicals, which are unstable molecules that damage cells, tissues, and DNA in the body.

The oxidation of seed oils has a significant negative impact on health:

- **Free Radical Formation:** Free radicals are highly reactive molecules that can cause oxidative stress. This stress damages cell membranes and proteins, accelerating aging and contributing to various diseases.
- **Inflammation Trigger:** Free radicals and oxidative by-products from seed oils prompt an immune response. This response results in chronic, low-grade inflammation, which underpins many modern chronic diseases (research below).





Explaining Inflammation

Research has shown that inflammation is linked to conditions such as:

- **Heart disease:** [Inflammation promotes plaque buildup and atherosclerosis.](#)
- **Type 2 diabetes:** [Chronic inflammation interferes with insulin signalling, contributing to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes.](#)
- **Cancer:** Oxidative stress from seed oil consumption can damage DNA, [increasing the risk of mutations and the development of cancer cells.](#)
- **Arthritis:** Inflammation promotes joint degeneration and worsens pain in conditions like [osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.](#)



Seed Oil Alternatives

So, what should you use instead? The answer is easy. Ditch the seed oils and turn back to traditional fats that are naturally occurring. These fats are stable, minimally processed, and provide essential nutrients like vitamins A, D, E, and K.

- **Butter:** Rich in fat-soluble vitamins.
- **Coconut Oil:** A source of medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which are easily used by the body for energy and have anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Ghee:** A clarified butter that's free of lactose and casein, making it suitable for those with dairy sensitivities. It's also full of fat-soluble vitamins.
- **Olive Oil:** While not great for high-heat cooking, olive oil is packed with heart-healthy monounsaturated fats and antioxidants when used in salads.

The science is clear- removing seed oils from your diet can significantly reduce your risk of chronic disease. Making the switch from inflammatory seed oils to traditional fats is one of the simplest yet most powerful changes you can make to protect your heart and your overall health!



EAT FAT, BE HEALTHY: WHY FAT IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR HEALTH?

For decades the low-fat diet mantra has dominated. But is saturated fat really the bad guy it has been made out to be? Actually, that couldn't be further from the truth. Despite the decades-long promotion of low-fat diets, research now shows that healthy fats (even those that are saturated) are critical for optimal health, strength, and longevity.

The sceptical research behind the low-fat trend (enhanced by some clever marketing) created a cascade of misinformation which led to a fear of dietary fat- and a whole new range of health problems.

So, let's unpack why fat is back in fashion and fact-check some long-standing myths.

Why Fat Was Demonised?

The war on fat began in the 1960s, when three Harvard researchers were paid by the Sugar Research Foundation to review studies on sugar and heart disease. Their 1967 paper (published in the New England Journal of Medicine) downplayed the link between sugar consumption and heart disease and shifted the focus to cholesterol and saturated fats. The researchers did not disclose their industry funding, as disclosure was not required at the time.

This led to widespread recommendations to cut fat. And this was a message reinforced by the food industry. Particularly cereal companies- who jumped on the trend and began heavily promoting low-fat products. These high-carb, high-sugar, processed foods (which were cheap to produce, therefore very lucrative!) started to become dietary staples. By the 1970s, the American food pyramid had solidified these ideas, and a recommendation was made for everyone to follow a diet low in fats- and heavy in grains.



Many people began avoiding naturally healthy saturated fats like those in eggs, dairy, and meat. Unfortunately, this guidance ignored the critical roles fats play in the body. The irony of this health advice? Rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity skyrocketed.

So A Low-Fat Diet Is Not the Answer?

Contrary to popular belief, low-fat diets do more harm than good. Take milk, for example. Removing the fat from dairy doesn't make it healthier—in fact, full-fat dairy helps reduce the glycaemic index (GI) of dairy foods! [Research also shows](#) that people on low-fat diets often end up eating more refined carbohydrates, which can lead to weight gain and increased risk of type 2 diabetes.



New Findings on Saturated Fat

A recent meta-analysis pooled data of almost 350,000 participants over 23 years. Over 14 years, about 11,000 people developed cardiovascular disease. The conclusion of the study? There is no relationship between the intake of saturated fat and the incidence of heart disease or stroke. Put simply: eating saturated fat does not cause heart disease.

Let's Get Down To Finer Details

Ok, so saturated fat isn't the devil we thought. However, when making dietary recommendations we need to carefully consider individual factors. If you have been diagnosed with high cholesterol, or the numbers have jumped up slightly in your latest blood test, it's really important to ask why.

I mentioned the process of oxidation in plaque formation in the seed oil discussion. If you missed that, it might be worthwhile skipping back to gain an understanding of what really causes atherosclerotic plaques (which is not saturated fat).

So as you can see, your diet may not be the problem.



The Types of Fat You Need

Now you have the all-clear on eating saturated fats, what types should you eat? First, understand that not all fats are created equal. As we discussed in the previous post, eating fats that are naturally occurring is key.

I also focus on omega-3's with my patients because of the research supporting their heart health benefits. I test my patients for the balance of Omega-3s to Omega-6s as that ratio it plays a crucial role in predicting and preventing chronic diseases. That being said, many fish oils are oxidised- which means they have the ability to cause more harm than good. Please choose a reliable brand, not just what's on sale at your local chemist.

Primary vs. Secondary Causes of High Cholesterol

High cholesterol can be classified into two types: primary and secondary. Primary causes are genetic (like familial hypercholesterolaemia)- but despite "genetics" being a common excuse for elevated lipids, it only affects about 1 in 250 Australians. However, if you have this genetic trait makes it hard to control cholesterol levels through diet alone.

Secondary dyslipidaemia, the more common form, is influenced by lifestyle factors such as poor diet, physical inactivity, and excessive alcohol consumption. Understanding whether your cholesterol issue is primary or secondary is crucial for determining the right course of action, be it through lifestyle changes or targeted nutritional therapies.

Now you have the all-clear on eating saturated fats, what types should you eat? First, understand that not all fats are created equal. As we discussed in the previous post, fats that are naturally occurring get a big tick from me.

Advanced Testing For Lipids

While standard lipid panels give good information about total cholesterol, HDL, and LDL levels, advanced testing offers deeper insights into cardiovascular risk.

- Markers like homocysteine levels, LDL particle size and number, and lipoprotein(a) (Lp(a)) can provide a clearer picture of a person's heart disease risk.
- Elevated homocysteine, which can occur due to genetics or nutrient deficiencies, raises heart disease risk even with normal LDL levels.
- Smaller, denser LDL particles are also more dangerous, as they are more likely to build up in the arteries.
- Elevated Lp(a) increases the risk of atherosclerosis and blood clots, making it an important marker to test—especially since it doesn't respond to typical cholesterol-lowering therapies.

I go to great depth on the extra tests I run with my cholesterol patients, and if it's a topic of concern for you, you can [read more about it in my article here](#).

What Fats You Don't Want

On the flip side, avoid trans fats at all costs. These are saturated fats but they are artificially produced fats created to improve the shelf life of processed foods. Studies have shown that trans fats disrupt brain structure and function, increasing the risk of [cognitive decline and diseases like Alzheimer's](#). [More studies show](#) that a 2% increase in energy intake from trans-fat is associated with a 23% increase in cardiovascular risk.

And that's only the tip of the iceberg.

Trans fats are banned in many countries, but they still lurk in Australian foods due to lack of regulation. They damage health by raising LDL (bad cholesterol) and lowering HDL (good cholesterol), increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

These are the bad guys—not the saturated fat in your steak and eggs.

Final Thoughts

It's time to stop fearing fat. Healthy fats are essential for your body to function properly and thrive. While outdated advice still circulates, modern research tells us that the real culprits of heart disease are poor-quality processed foods, not naturally occurring fats.

So, eat fat and be healthy- one of my key tips for being stronger, feeling younger, and living longer.



DEBUNKING DETOXING

The term “detox” has been tossed around so recklessly that it’s practically lost its meaning. There are a lot of dubious detox practices advertised, from juice cleanses to colon cleanses and extreme fasting. The wellness industry has capitalized on the detox craze— and a lot of pseudo experts are full of advice on the topic.

There’s no denying that the concept of a detox is appealing. The idea that you can quickly “flush out” all the bad stuff from your body with a single supplement or regimen is attractive in a world where instant fixes are the norm.

But the truth is that your body is already equipped with a brilliant system that naturally metabolises waste and toxins— if it is given the right tools to do so. That being said, our modern environment (which is filled with synthetics and chemicals) is making it harder for our bodies to cope.

So, let’s get into the science of what “detoxification” actually involves, and what research shows we can actually do to improve our health.



From Top To Tail: How Your Body Handles Waste

All of your organs work together as a waste management system to ensure harmful substances are efficiently removed. For example:

- Your lungs filter air and remove CO₂, preventing it from building up in your bloodstream.
- Skin and sweating help remove toxins like urea, ammonia, and heavy metals through your pores.
- Kidneys handle water-soluble waste like urea, which results from protein breakdown.
- Your liver processes toxins, drugs, and metabolic waste by converting harmful substances into less toxic forms that can be excreted.
- The gut excretes food waste and fat-soluble toxins processed by the liver.

This is happening all day, every day—no fancy juice cleanse required!

That being said, if you keep putting crap into your body, it’s going to get harder and harder for it to keep up and maintain a healthy equilibrium (this build-up is often what brings patients to me in their 50’s).

“

Your body is already equipped with a brilliant system that naturally metabolises waste and toxins—if it is given the right tools to do so.



The Science Behind Toxins And Health

Despite our bodies amazing mechanism and the marketing fluff around detox products, environmental toxins (chemicals and metals) are a real health concern. For example, a study found lead exposure can have a [significant effect on mental function and the IQ of children](#). And exposure to pesticides has been associated with different types of [cancer, neurological disorders, developmental delays in children, and reduced fertility](#).

Toxins can wreak havoc on your body in multiple ways:

- **Oxidative Stress:** Exposure to pollutants and chemicals increases oxidative stress, which depletes antioxidants like glutathione (more about that shortly!)
- **Nutrient Displacement:** [Research shows](#) that harmful substances can deplete essential nutrients, and reduce their absorption.
- **DNA Damage:** [Environmental toxins can modify your DNA](#), reducing your cells ability to repair and regenerate- leading to accelerated aging and disease.

Is There Anything That Reduces Toxic Load?

All of that sounds pretty dire- so what can you actually do? After all that science you'll be glad to hear the answer is simple.

We go back to basics and support your body's natural systems for optimal performance.

And we do it with food. [Studies have found](#) that nutrition can modulate the toxicity of pollutants, by either increasing or reducing and person's vulnerability based on their dietary choices. [For example](#), foods high in trans fats may worsen the effects of toxins, while antioxidant-rich foods protect against them.

It seems too simple, right?! But it's basic science- some foods support your natural detoxification processes, while others tax it.



What Are The Secret Ingredients?

Countries with the highest life expectancies, like Japan and Italy, have diets rich in antioxidants and sulphur-containing foods, which help protect their cells and detoxification systems.

- **Sulphur-Containing Foods:** These include garlic, onions, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, kale, cabbage), and eggs. Sulphur helps your body produce glutathione (the antioxidant I mentioned earlier that plays a key role in detoxifying harmful substances in your liver). By boosting glutathione levels, you can support your organ's ability to metabolize toxins.
- **Antioxidants:** Foods rich in antioxidants, such as berries, green tea, and dark leafy greens, help neutralize free radicals that damage your cells and DNA. These antioxidants support cellular repair, protect your mitochondria (which produce energy) and slow the aging process.

A Balanced Approach to Detoxification

So, there you have it. Feeling younger and living longer can't be achieved by a 3-day juice cleanse after a holiday in Europe where you picked up some extra "luggage". Detoxing needs to be understood as the long-term process of supporting your body's natural metabolic processes with good nutrition and better lifestyle choices.





SLEEP: A KEY TO FEELING YOUNGER AND LIVING LONGER

When was the last time you truly felt rested? For many men, quality sleep is elusive, and it's tempting to reach for a quick fix. But here's the thing: I'm frustrated by how often melatonin is prescribed as a solution for insomnia when simple melatonin deficiency in healthy adults is rarely the sole cause of sleep disruption. In fact, insomnia has less to do with sleep than wakefulness! Medically, [insomnia is considered a disorder of hyperarousal](#) experienced throughout the entire day. The [TGA only recommends melatonin](#) for the short-term treatment of primary insomnia characterised by poor quality of sleep in patients aged 55 or over.

While melatonin supplements can be useful in specific cases (such as for shift workers or those experiencing jet lag), it's not a cure-all for insomnia. If you're reaching for melatonin without understanding the underlying causes of your sleep problems, you might be missing the bigger picture.

So, why is melatonin (and the stronger stuff!) handed out like lollies to everyone, and.... what's really keeping you up at night?

Common Causes of Sleep Disturbances

Sleep problems can be triggered by a range of factors. Addressing these underlying causes is crucial for resolving sleep disturbances and improving overall sleep quality.

- **Nocturia:** Frequent nighttime urination is a common sleep disruptor. Nocturia can be caused by conditions like benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate- you can read more about that in one of my articles [here](#)) or overactive bladder. It's also sometimes linked to uncontrolled diabetes or heart conditions.
- **Stress:** Chronic stress activates adrenalin, noradrenalin and adrenalin, which keeps your mind and body alert when you should be winding down.
- **Poor Sleep Hygiene:** Irregular bedtimes, incorrect meal timing, screen exposure before bed, or uncomfortable sleep environments can severely affect your ability to fall asleep. FYI- did you know your iPhone has a red-light filter setting? I have mine on all day!
- **Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS):** This condition causes an uncontrollable urge to move the legs, especially at night, making it difficult to fall asleep. RLS has been linked to [iron deficiency](#), [folate deficiency](#), or [dopamine imbalance](#)- all of which natural medicine can support. RLS can also be associated with diabetes, kidney disease, and certain medications.
- **Hormonal Imbalances:** Thyroid dysfunction or low testosterone levels can contribute to poor sleep quality.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Anxiety and depression are frequently tied to insomnia and difficulty maintaining deep, restful sleep.

Health Conditions Linked to Insufficient Sleep

Sleep deprivation isn't just a minor inconvenience- studies show that it's linked to serious health consequences. Research has shown that chronic insufficient sleep is connected to:

- Increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity.
- Cognitive decline, impacting memory and decision-making abilities. In fact, a study found higher level cognitive capacities are degraded by sleep deprivation despite restoration of alertness and vigilance with stimulant countermeasures (ie. coffee).
- Insomnia increases risk of mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Herbal and Nutritional Supplements for Insomnia

In my clinic, I don't rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. Every man's sleep needs are different, so it's important to address and treat the actual cause of the problem. Strangely enough, this may be addressing blood sugar dysregulation rather than sleep remedies! Or nutrients for reducing prostate enlargement to prevent nocturia.

This is why patients find a lot of the sleep herbs they've tried off the shelf have been ineffective. Supplements like GABA, *Verbena*, *Valeriana* and *Humulus lupulus* ARE actually highly effective, but it's critical to tailor them to your specific needs rather than following generalized advice and just reaching for a sedative.

Managing Cortisol Dysregulation

One often overlooked cause of sleep disturbances is cortisol dysregulation. Cortisol, the hormone your body produces in response to stress, follows a natural rhythm, peaking in the morning and tapering off at night.

However, chronic stress can disrupt this pattern, leading to

elevated cortisol levels in the evening, which can make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep. And it is a vicious cycle because then insufficient sleep increases cortisol! My husband used to be up until 3am every morning until we balanced out his cortisol levels. It took some time but now he has a 10am bedtime and sleeps like a log!

From a functional medicine perspective, managing cortisol dysregulation involves:

1. **Lifestyle Adjustments:** Stress management herbs, nutrients and other techniques can help lower cortisol levels and improve sleep quality.
2. **Nutritional Support:** Nutrients like L-theanine, magnesium, B vitamins, and vitamin C support adrenal health (which produces cortisol), promoting better stress management.
3. **Circadian Rhythm Optimization:** Resetting your bodies sleep-wake cycle by getting plenty of morning light and reducing blue light exposure at night can help regulate cortisol and improve sleep.

Addressing cortisol dysregulation can significantly improve sleep quality, particularly for men experiencing stress-related sleep issues.

Every Man is Different

The most important message here is that every man's sleep needs are unique. While melatonin may work for some, many others require a more personalised approach. Whether it's addressing stress, supporting neurotransmitter levels, or managing cortisol dysregulation, the solution to your sleep issues should be tailored to your individual health picture.

Prioritizing sleep will help you feel younger, and prevent disease for a longer and healthier life.





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