

Paleo Solution - 321

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Robb Wolf:

Hey, folks. Robb Wolf here. Six listeners can't be wrong. It's another edition of The *Paleo Solution* Podcast. Today's guest is Eileen Laird. She is the founder of the website Phoenix Helix. She is the author of the book, *A Simple Guide to the Paleo Autoimmune Protocol* and she also runs a podcast which happens is in my opinion the best interview that I've ever done on anyone's podcast anywhere.

So it's a huge honor, Eileen, to have you on the opposite side of the microphone this time. Welcome to the show.

Eileen Laird:

Thank you. I have the biggest smile on my face. That's a huge compliment. Thank you.

Robb Wolf:

Many folks have downloaded that show and listened to it and the consistent message out about is that it was a pretty incredible show. You took me into some places that I usually don't go as far as what I talk about so I'm still tickled over that thing and hopefully will stand the test of time. It was really good time doing time. It seems like it spurred some good conversation in folks.

Eileen Laird:

Absolutely. So for anyone who hasn't listened, we talked about the history of the AIP. So we tried to really honor all the people who brought the information forward that all of us almost-- I wouldn't say we take it for granted but it's just kind of part of the paleo community and we don't give hat tips often enough to the scientists, researchers and writers who brought it forward including you so I really appreciate you educating us on that.

Robb Wolf:

Thanks. You know it's funny that things grow and develop so incredibly quickly on the interwebs that a couple of years can go by and it becomes kind of unclear what the-- linkages are kind of like the file and genetic tree is of a history of a topic. So it was really a ton of fun to get some attribution to the folks like Loren Cordain, Staffan Lindeberg, Pedro Bastos, and a number of other people who have been fighting this fight a long time. It's really exciting. It's kind of fascinating because if you do some Google trends analysis, it kind of looks like the paleo concept has peaked maybe around 2013.

There's less search volume around it. Its state is pretty consistent. It seems to have kind a plateaued out at a consistent level. But fascinating

to me is that now almost weekly we get more and more research papers being published and launched with this term or this concept of evolutionary medicine or paleo diet or what have you and particularly a ton of interest in this autoimmune realm. The concept is going through some sort of an evolution but what's fascinating to me is it's really carked into the research community and I think that folks are figuring out that there might be something to this evolutionary medicine concept and it doesn't seem to be going away.

Eileen Laird: I'm so glad too that the research is going that direction because as we know most of the research is going medication direction and hey if they could find a cure, that's fine. But that's not what they've come up with so far. So that's wonderful.

Robb Wolf: So you have a pretty interesting story with regards to health and what led you to starting your podcast and writing books and what not. You make a really interesting point which is that if we add a simple solution for things like autoimmune disease or cardiovascular disease what incidentally appears to be an autoimmune disease also. Maybe we'll talk about that a little bit later. But we don't have a solution the same way like if we get strep throat we have some antibiotics which thankfully still work and work consistently to alleviate that situation. We have a whole host of diagnosed and maybe not currently yet well understood degenerative disease that seemed to be a mismatch between our genetics and the way that we're living in this modern world. We have really poor solutions for that. Tell folks a little bit about your background and some of the solutions that you investigated and how you ended up exploring this paleo autoimmune kind of landscape.

Eileen Laird: I was just tracking along, living my life thinking I was healthy but ate nothing like paleo. I ate basically an organic standard American diet thinking that was okay to have wheat and dairy and sugar every day as long as I bought it at the health food store. But I was working full time as a massage therapist. I was really strong. I specialize in deep tissue therapy. I hiked on the weekends for fun.

Then one day woke up with a sore spot on my foot and I thought that's weird but I just went along my day and then the next day the exact same spot on the opposite foot was sore and I think in that moment I knew what it was but it took me a few months of denial before admitting what it was and by then it had spread to both feet and my hands. I was taking high doses of ibuprofen and still working. Whatever finger couldn't bend that day, I would try to massage some of that bending the finger. The

power of denial is really strong. So for your listeners you could probably guess it was rheumatoid arthritis and at its worst.

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Within 6 months of that first spot at the bottom of my foot by that summer, I was disabled. So I went from someone who hiked for fun to someone who couldn't walk across her living room without limping. I went from someone who was a deep tissue massage therapist to someone who wasn't strong enough to lift a plate to wash it. I couldn't raise my arms over my head so washing my hair and just doing daily life activities was really hard. It actually hurt to do anything when you lie down it hurts if you have rheumatoid arthritis so sleep was really hard to come by. I woke up in the morning seriously feeling like I was 90 years old. Every joint hurt to move and I moved very slowly and that would slowly loosen up to a more manageable level throughout the day, never normal. And then every night like clockwork I would get an excruciatingly extreme flare in the joint.

I called it Russian flare roulette because you never knew where it would hit and that joint would need to be immobilized that night because I would be gasping and crying if it moved even a millimeter. So if it was my shoulder, it went to a sling. If it was my wrist, it went into a brace. If it was my knee, I couldn't stand anymore. I had to get off my feet. And if it was my jaw, I could open my mouth and I remember that was the most terrifying one for me because I think there's something really primal about that. If you can't eat, you can't survive. So that always made me feel claustrophobic in a weird way.

Robb Wolf: I bet.

Eileen Laird: So it was really a living hell and it was terrifying and then when I was diagnosed in research, the options available, the drugs which I'm sure you've talked about them a lot. It's hard--

Robb Wolf: methotrexate, immunosuppressant. It's just not a great option. It can save someone's life if they're really in dire straits. My mother ended up in the hospital with RA and lupus attacking her heart and lungs. Those immunosuppressant drugs and the methotrexate very likely saved her life at least for another 10 or so years but the collateral damage was not insignificant.

Eileen Laird: Exactly. I love how you talked about that too because I think I've been in this community now for 4 years so I talk to people with a wide variety of experiences and some people do get the paleo diet just puts them into complete remission which is the goal, then some people not so much. It

improves them dramatically so it's like as strong as a medication but sometimes they need medication on top of it. So I certainly don't want anyone to feel guilty about taking it but there's a reason we're frightened by them and they have to give you the side effects and they have to talk about them and I just remember you feel like are you kidding me? When they're listing off the side effects. This biologic medication that we want you to take can actually give you other autoimmune diseases in addition to cancer.

So that feels like a really unfair choice to ask someone to make. You have rheumatoid arthritis so like you said your joints and actually your organs are getting attacked at the same time. You're in excruciating pain. You're disabled by it so you want help and then you're told but if you do this you might get this on the side. Same with the steroids which they like to prescribe to get the flare under control and then they say said to me well it causes osteoporosis and where it usually hits is the spine and that's the one part of my body that doesn't get attacked by RA and I was like I remember thinking that's not fair. So you're asking me to sacrifice the one part of my body that's doing okay.

So I definitely wanted to seek out other answers and thankfully for you, Robb, and other people in the paleo community who got the word out about the autoimmune protocol and thank God for the internet because that's the only reason I found out about it. I think if this had happened to me 20 years ago even though I think you were learning about that at the time, it was just off my radar. I don't think I have known there was another think I could try.

Robb Wolf:

It was I think around '98 or '99 that in talking with Loren Cordain like he had written a paper on cereal grain's mankind double edge sword. In that he eluded to the idea that there was likely an intestinal permeability linkage leading to systemic inflammation and possibly some sort of molecular mimicry that manifest as autoimmune disease but really was not anything that we could hang our hats on and there wasn't even much in the way that what we see today just a ton of anecdotal chatter about this which is likely the reason why Terry Wahls research has finally been taken seriously by the multiple sclerosis powers that be.

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I think that she told me that over the course of 2 years the chatter on the multiple sclerosis society's forum, it shifted in such a way that there was 10 or 15 times more people talking about paleo and the autoimmune protocol and getting really remarkable results but there was more chatter in that direction than all of the other discussed protocols combined like Swank diet and vegan and what have you. And so clearly

not scientific research just getting internet chatter like people talk about reality TV quite a bit and that doesn't make it all helpful or valid or anything else.

But you know there's an interesting deeper story to that. Loren Cordain, we may be talked about this on your show. I can't remember. But part of what lead him in this direction was that he found research from an Australian physician from the 1960's who had linked intestinal permeability to multiple sclerosis and generally he was making the case all autoimmune diseases likely had some sort of etiology with intestinal permeability and he even postulated the existence of what we now call zonulin just piecing stuff together. It was almost like when physicist postulate that there's going to be another type of subatomic particle and it should have these characteristics like it was really amazing what this guy had figured out. He had a clinic in Australia and he was doing great work treating people and then the guy died and all of this information just disappeared and it was nearly 40 years before it saw the light of day again and had Loren stumbled on that to that specific research, it's possible no one would've ever dug this back up again.

But luckily to your point with the internet and with the ability to try these different protocols, it's kind of unfortunate. Political ideologies and what not you can't just try them on for 30 days and see if your life improves dramatically so there's a lot of things that we can't do. There's an equals one experimentation but simply modifying our diet and paying attention to vitamin D and stress and things like that, that is something that people can easily do within a 30-day period. The potential downsides seemed really tiny if there's anything as far as the downside and if doesn't work than we can keep looking for other options but it really seems like we're on to something powerful here.

Eileen Laird:

Yeah, I agree. And so for me that's what I decided to do is I actually wanted to give it 6 months. I promised my family that I'd go on to medication if it didn't work within 6 months for me. It was dramatic. I would say within a weeks, for the first time my inflammation started to recede instead of get worse every day so I knew I was in the right tract. It wasn't like an overnight remission but it was like sigh of relief like okay it's not getting worse and then it got better and better. So it went from let's see I was having daily flares that were excruciatingly painful every single night and then that dropped down to moderate flares a few times a week and then mild flares a few times a month and then they went away all together.

That morning stiffness where I felt like I was 90 that lasted almost all day that eventually dropped down to maybe lasting 15 minutes. Just in terms of what I could do, I was able to get back to hiking again. I can't really do maybe 10 mile hikes like I used to in the past but I can do 3 to 5 mile hikes and I feel pretty happy about being back in action with that. I was disabled and not able to work and I was able to go back to work part time at first and then full time.

Robb Wolf: So it made a huge quality of life shift?

Eileen Laird: Yeah, like huge. So it wasn't a cure for me and how I described it in my book is that RA became a whisper where it used to be a scream. I know that sounds kind of dramatic but that's the best way I can think of to describe it. It's a scary whisper and I wish it was gone altogether but it's so much better than the scream. And I don't know where I'd be now 4 years later without this intervention.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Eileen Laird: Because even with the medications what's interesting in my research in that and I know you've done your research yourself. But they have that a couple of phrases like one is called NNT, number-needed-to-treat, how many people needs to take a medication before it works and those numbers are not that great for immunosuppressant medication. And then there's what constitutes success? So what I find interesting is a drug is considered successful that it gives you 20% improvement that's the minimum threshold. Is that right? It's called an ACR20?

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Robb Wolf: I honestly don't know.

Eileen Laird: Because I looked into that and they also went higher. So they looked at ACR 20, 50 and 70 but most of the people get 20% improvement and if so that drug's considered successful. So if you think the paleo diet like a drug, I got 95% improvement. I mean that's off the chart successful. And anyone else even if you get 20% improvement that's still a huge boost to your quality of life because as we know a lot of the people on the medication still have pain and they're still having joint damages just getting slowed down a little bit.

Robb Wolf: Right. Eileen, have you explored anything in the realm of CBD oils, low dose naltrexone or any of these immunomodulant kind of alternative routes--

Eileen Laird: Yes.

Robb Wolf: That have shown some just kind of independent efficacy with interestingly both autoimmunity and cancer.

Eileen Laird: Yeah. So I did a podcast in low dose naltrexone because so many people in the community find it helpful and a lot of people I was interviewing find it helpful. I do take it. I tried to see if it would kick me into remission. It didn't. But it really helped with the morning stiffness.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

Eileen Laird: I tried that probably about 6 months into my paleo journey when I kind of hit a plateau and that was actually before full AIP. I was someone who-- So for anyone out there who thinks and we can talk more about what the AIP is even though I think your listeners are pretty educated on it.

Robb Wolf: I think digging into that would be great.

Eileen Laird: But when we do, it sounds overwhelming and so just to say to you, I felt like I couldn't do it when I first heard about it, I can do paleo. Let me try that first and then if that doesn't work, I'll do AIP. So I did paleo, it helped and about 5 months later I hit a plateau so then I tried low dose naltrexone and that helped some but again didn't help quite enough. I was still flaring and then the AIP is what helped me, helped the flares go away altogether. And then I experimented going off the low dose naltrexone to see if I even needed it if I was AIP and that morning stiffness didn't come back as bad as it was but came back to a certain extent.

Robb Wolf: Got you.

Eileen Laird: So that does help me. So for our listeners, it's usually prescribed by functional medicine practitioners. The rheumatologist I have seen have been very dismissive of it which is disappointing. My understanding how it works is it blocks your endorphin receptors for a short period of time and so your body over produces them and then that sends an endorphin flood kind of through your body while you're sleeping and then when you wake up in the morning you have these extra endorphins which help with pain relief but also interact with the immune system in a way that they're just starting to understand and help regulate it to a certain extent.

Robb Wolf: That's a great recap. It's really fascinating because it's modulating the immune response and it's fascinating to me that some of that modulation

is not dissimilar when we're manufacturing vitamin D from the sun. There's actually kind of opiate or endorphin boost from that.

Eileen Laird:

That's cool.

Robb Wolf:

And when I look at it, it's actually when you-- if were to create a Venn diagram of what metabolic pathways are kind of getting tweaks either under low dose naltrexone or vitamin D. there's a hell of a lot of overlap there.

Eileen Laird:

That's wild.

Robb Wolf:

So I find it very interesting.

Eileen Laird:

And that sunshine vitamin D not bottled vitamin D.

Robb Wolf:

Sunshine vitamin D, because you go through this whole cascade of producing secosteroids from cholesterol and then cascade into vitamin D and so there's a lot of steps involved that are not replicated in the same way as just taking vitamin D. vitamin D can be helpful because it's an immune modulator in and of itself but again one of these pieces that if you can get outside and get some sun on your skin that is likely the better option and because it's not just the vitamin D. it's all the precursors. It's all the collateral activity that occurs that appears to be modulating the immune response.

Eileen Laird:

I'm so glad you mentioned that because I noticed a huge difference if I got out in the sun. I like amazing. I feel like my skin is drinking it up and saying thank you, thank you, thank you and I never feel that way from a supplement so that explains that very well.

Robb Wolf:

That's why we need to move to Nicaragua and have a coconut farm.

Eileen Laird:

That's right exactly. Let me tell a couple of success stories on LDN because mine is kind of mild. It's worth taking and it's an inexpensive drug so that's kind nice. It works out to about \$40 a month in compared to--

Robb Wolf:

And every low side effects that's kind of an interesting thing too.

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Eileen Laird:

Yeah. For me, all it did is make me dream more and that was kind of fun. I didn't really mind. But I interviewed people for that podcast and prior podcast and there's one woman for example who as Crohn's disease and

she said every morning when she wakes up, it's like she gets a fresh start which I thought was great.

So she starts out feeling awesome every morning no matter how-- If she ends up flaring by that night, the next morning it stopped by the LDN. So it didn't put her into remission, but it kind of reboots her system each day which I thought was good. And then there was another woman with RA who it literally reduced her pain by 95%. So she loves this stuff and she found it to be even more effective than the CBD oil which you also had mentioned the cannabinoids?

Robb Wolf: Cannabinoids, canabidiols.

Eileen Laird: So I did a podcast on medical marijuana too talking to people and a lot of people are really helped by that if you're in a state where it's legal and you can get a prescription. So many hoops right now. I would try CBD oil if it was legal in my state. It is not here.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

Eileen Laird: But what I love about the CBD oil is-- I mean getting high is fine, nothing wrong with that for anyone who wants to do it but I actually don't like that feeling and so I love that the CBD oil isn't psychoactive instead it's all of the-- I shouldn't say it's all of the medicinal qualities because in that interview with different people I learned that the THC has medicinal qualities also and some people find it more effective combined with CBD but the fact that you can isolate the CBD to try that and that woman I interviewed with RA where it was helpful for her it was isolated CBD oil and a little bit of honey and coconut oil and the capsules that get made for her at the California pharmacy. She's really cute because she's on her 70s and she was just like I'm a grandma and I didn't really want to go buy some pot. But she was actually-- She was suicidal because she had tried all of the medication and none of it worked and she literally was going on a tour to say goodbye to all of her friends because she wasn't going to stick around anymore. And one of her friends took her to see their physician and got her a prescription for that CBD oil and life has never been the same.

Robb Wolf: And again the CBD oils they have this really fascinating immune modulating characteristics like they seem to have some efficacy for cancer. They have efficacy for autoimmune disease so it's kind of tackling both ends of the spectrum. It's really interesting to me because they seem to reduce systemic inflammation problems more overt autoimmune disease. It doesn't everything that we're trying to get

people to do via basic dietary change but it does have the convenience of literally just being in a capsule or pill or maybe like a chocolate that's infused with CBD oil which is clearly pretty accessible for people and again like the potential risks and downsides are essentially nonexistent. I think like 4,000 people a year die in the United States or maybe more than that but right around that number from Tylenol overdose, inadvertent Tylenol overdose and there is no documented toxicity on the CBD or cannabis product. So again from like a first do no harm standpoint, it's very difficult to create any type of drama around the use of these natural products.

It's really a stumper but again this is something that I think with the internet and just how incredibly expensive it is to try to manage these conditions with conventional modalities. The pressure is really on for some forward thinking to occur in this whole management of the cannabis scene. It's funny also like I'm the most vocal pro cannabis person you can find but yet I really don't like this stuff. It's not my cup of opiate so it's kind of funny.

Eileen Laird: That's kind of funny, yeah. I mean I'm the same way. I do think we're at a tipping point.

Robb Wolf: I agree.

Eileen Laird: So I feel like it'll be legal everywhere which would be wonderful and then the price will come down. It's interesting when we talk about price because biologics are literally so expensive. They blow my mind. I can't even wrap my mind around \$4,000 a month for a medication. But CBD oil is not that expensive but it's not really cheap right now because I think it's like a boutique industry so I think it just needs to spread farther. It's nowhere near that expensive but I think it is a good few hundred dollars a month so it's not a tiny bit.

Robb Wolf: I had a thought when you were first launching in on this and do you have any sense of a precipitating agent or a situation that kind of launched the RA into existence like some people they have like an automobile accident, they had a big life stressor, a virus or something. Can you remember any type of a precipitating agent?

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Eileen Laird: Yeah. I might be the exception that proves that rule because I didn't have one. But you're right, a lot of people trauma for sure kicks off autoimmune disease a lot of the time. And actually the more trauma you have in your past the more vulnerable you are to that. But I didn't have any real-- I had a pretty like amazing life up to age 43, I actually didn't

suffer a whole lot. I mean it wasn't like I never had my heart broken or that my parents weren't perfect. But I wasn't getting beat up. I actually had never been in a hospital. I never broke a bone. My car accidents were like fender benders with no major things. I had no major illnesses. I'm happily married, self-employed so I wasn't even stressed at work because I liked my job. I remember I was going over this in a recent interview with a functional medicine practitioner and he really wanted to find my instigator.

Robb Wolf: Precipitating moment.

Eileen Laird: I know and I was like yeah, I was just really happy. I don't know what to say about that. But I think it's interesting like with genetics versus epigenetics. The power of the paleo autoimmune protocol to reduce my symptoms that much is definitely epigenetics but maybe I just had like a really high number of RA cards stacked against me.

Robb Wolf: Have you done any like 23andMe testing to see where you play out on that?

Eileen Laird: I did and that was-- I'm actually susceptible for a wide variety of autoimmune diseases. I have a lot of those HLA genes. But then when I did the sorting to find like why this one and not that one? My vulnerability was greatest for rheumatoid arthritis among all of those. But the other thing that's interesting when you look at your genetics-- I postponed it for a long time because I didn't want to be overwhelmed by every other thing that might go wrong with my body. So you have to be kind of ready psychologically to take it with a balanced perspective but one thing that kind of helped me is I was also vulnerable to things I do not have at all so even with those vulnerabilities it doesn't mean they will manifest and if I have gone paleo ahead of time, I think about that. Could I have prevented it? I don't know.

Robb Wolf: Right. Interesting.

Eileen Laird: Have you had yours done?

Robb Wolf: I did. So I was like 300% more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than the average person which not surprising both parents develop type 2 diabetes. I'm not super carb tolerant, never have, always do better at the low carb side of things. I was markedly more likely to develop celiac disease. I was not particularly high on like RA or some other autoimmune conditions but definitely the celiac disease was one of these things that flag very high.

Eileen Laird: It is interesting to look at it for sure.

Robb Wolf: It's a little bit of a gut check though because they have a thing for Alzheimer's potential and Parkinson's potential and like are you sure you want to know?

Eileen Laird: I know.

Robb Wolf: I'm like I got to do it now. And luckily all that stuff was actually quite low like I'm APOE 3/3 so I'm not greater than average risk with that type or genotype.

Eileen Laird: I wish I could say the same. I'm a 3/4 so I think that makes me three times more vulnerable but I'm not the 14 times vulnerable that's the 4/4. So I took comfort in that and that was one of the reasons I wanted to postpone it. I mean just to share something personal. My father has dementia and he started kind of showing signs of that in his 60s a little bit just where his mind went in interesting direction and then now it's pretty severe. He's in his 80s. And so I was like do I really want to think that way? But I really feel empowered at this point in my life about how I'm living and so it's less scary to look at that because I feel like I'm doing everything I can to work my genes to my advantage whereas prior to RA hitting my life like a wrecking ball. It wasn't that I was-- I mean I wasn't someone who was smoking, drinking, doing drugs, living a hard life but I also wasn't really paying attention to food as medicine. And if I wanted to pull an all-nighter I didn't really think twice about that. so I know that every choice I make every day can either impact my health positively or negatively so I try and put as many chips in the positive column as I can.

Robb Wolf: Smart. I can't argue with that at all. So Eileen, I know people have heard about the autoimmune paleo protocol. There are number of people now advocating this approach. What exactly is it? What are the knots and bolts of the protocol?

Eileen Laird: It feels really funny for me to be saying this to you but I know we're saying it to the listeners just because you were one of the first people to write about it. So basically it's a diet and lifestyle protocol that's designed to calm down an overactive immune system, reduce inflammation body wide and just give yourselves optimal nutrition for healing and when I say nutrition that does include sleep nutrition and movement nutrition and all those other things too. So the diet is the primary piece. You start with the paleo diet but then you have removed a lot of other foods that are

known to be inflammation triggers sometimes for people with autoimmune disease so for at least 30 days.

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I know in the paleo community some people eat some quality dairy still. All dairy is out on the autoimmune protocol. Eggs are out because that's a very common food allergen and the nightshades are out and those are potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, chili powder, eggplant. And then nuts and seeds are out and then there's a few other small items that if people research it further they could find like nuts and seed based oils and spices and some small things but those are the big categories and you remove them for at least 30 days maybe longer if it takes you longer to see improvement and then once you start feeling better in terms of your autoimmune systems, you go through the reintroduction process and you very slowly, very carefully reintroduce one of these foods at a time, see how your body responds and that's how you learn which of these are inflammation triggers for you personally.

So I think that's the really cool part of it is you learn to communicate in your body in a way that's very clear by the end of that elimination phase. It's not all murky where the symptoms are all blurred together instead like for me when I reintroduced nightshades I just put some chili powder in and I made taco burgers and a little bit of chili powder and a couple of pounds of meat and you would've thought I had just shot myself with an inflammation dart. By the next day, I was back to 90-year-old Eileen and it lasted for 2 weeks and so I don't touch nightshades with a 10 foot pole now.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

Eileen Laird: But I can eat eggs every day and there's nothing like no problem at all. And then someone else might have the exact opposite experience. So that's where you figure that out and it's really cool to figure that out I think.

Robb Wolf: Right. It's funny or it's not funny. It's super frustrating like when the paleo concept kind of gets vilified out in the greater interweb scene I will see folks that they're like I'm having a full gluten pizza with cheese and extra tomato sauce and tomatoes and peppers on it and they're like here's you autoimmune protocol. God loves these people they're not sick but it's so frustrating to me because I've known people who die from autoimmune complications. My wife's mother died 3 months before I met Nicki and Candy ended up dying from complications from fusion surgery for her ankle because she had had both shoulders replaced, a knee replaced. They were going to fuse her ankle so she was on this pretty long drawn

out process with this whole thing and she was incredibly motivated to do anything that would help her. They were messing around with the vegan diet at the time which didn't help her at all. But I mean she would've done anything to get better and she ended up dying as a consequence of just some medical mishandling.

So it's super frustrating to me when people make light of this stuff to look at epidemiological information or just say well in India and Mexico they eat lots of the stuff and the autoimmune disease isn't that high and it's kind of I don't know what I say to that. It's like well they were vaginally born, they were breastfed, they lived in a non-sterile environment. They probably didn't have tons of antibiotics throughout their child-- There's just all these variables that are never going to get completely sorted out in a randomized controlled trial but if people are sick and they give this thing a shot and it dramatically changed their life then is that enough? Can we be okay with that? Can we celebrate that? But apparently not at least is in some circles.

Eileen Laird: I got to say I don't understand anyone who is taking time to criticize paleo if they're not doing it themselves. I just figure what's it got to do with you? Usually it's weird I'll be on Facebook and one of my friends who I will soon unfriend if they do this will just do like an anti-paleo tirade. I remember it's happened twice and I just remember going it saved my life and you've never tried it so why do you care? Why are you taking my Facebook time with this? But people are very defensive about their food and it's weird when they feel attacked by your own personal choices. I don't know what that's about but it seems to--

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Robb Wolf: Right. It only swings one direction like if you drink Big Gulps and eat bags of Doritos, there's no issue with that.

Eileen Laird: Right. Oh no, then it's everything in moderation, Robb.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Eileen Laird: This isn't going to hurt me. But you know what you are saying about the nightshades which is interesting. So my background is Irish ancestry. Potato is huge with that whole history. And when I was doing some research, Ireland has the twice the rate of RA as the rest of the developed world.

Robb Wolf: Interesting.

Eileen Laird: So thought that was interesting because that's pretty high.

Robb Wolf: Interesting. I was not aware of that. And you know people always relate the potatoes with Ireland and everything but potatoes are new world cultivar.

Eileen Laird: That's right.

Robb Wolf: They weren't there for maybe a couple hundred years but not several thousand years and clearly there's all kinds of variation within that but that's super interesting.

Where are you on the ketosis spectrum? Because I know some of the autoimmune protocols that are advocated will recommend either an outright nutritional ketosis or they'll recommend say like MCT oil or coconut oil to get you into a transient level of ketosis. Definitely some of my more recent research with autoimmune disease has been pointing towards some mitochondrial dysfunction within autoimmune disease which looks really similar to mitochondrial dysfunction and cancer. It just seems to manifest in a different way. Are you playing with that at all?

Eileen Laird: I am not. I'm someone who does well on a low starch but when I tried to remove starch completely. I feel like my adrenals shut down overnight. So apparently I need some for energy. But if I eat too much starch I get more joint pain and it's a different kind of joint pain. So nightshades, if I get exposed to that within 24 hours, it's extreme and it feels every much like an autoimmune reaction whereas the starch it feels more cumulative like it's a gut microbiome reaction. So I can have for example I can fry up some tostones and plantains once a month and it's not going to bother me and if I start doing it once a week I'll have just barely enough stiffness that maybe no else would notice but I would and if I start having that kind of stuff a few days a week, I will kick up a notch in my rheumatoid arthritis pain.

Robb Wolf: So you're not ketotic? Probably safe to say you're probably more fat fueled than carb fueled at this point?

Eileen Laird: Yeah. I'd say if I were to look at my pie chart, I'm probably 50 to 55% fat and then maybe 20% protein and 30% carb. And prior to paleo I was more 50 to 60% carb and was one of those uneducated people trying to do a low fat diet and so I wasn't getting as many nutrients as I should. That might have been part of my instigating factor. I would skip the dressing on my salad thinking then I could have a cookie at night because that's the same calories as the olive oil not caring about nutrition.

Robb Wolf: Right. And the fact that it's actually stealing nutrition out of your body to deal with that cookie versus actually giving you nutrition.

Eileen Laird: Yeah. But in terms of the ketogenic and autoimmunity it's controversial, isn't it? So Terry does really well on a ketogenic protocol. Terry Wahls I know. But she said the last time I interviewed her that she compared her regular Wahls protocol where that's not ketogenic with one that is and results were the same for the people with 0:38:42] [Indiscernible] So it wasn't like ketogenic gave them an edge which is what she expected. So it's probably an N equals 1 situation. I know for you, you feel best mentally when you're ketogenic.

Robb Wolf: When I'm ketogenic. But you know I've found a spot which interestingly I'm probably about 60% fat, about 20% protein and carbs or thereabout and I'm running pretty well on that

Eileen Laird: Cool. So you're just a little bit lower than me.

Robb Wolf: Yeah.

Eileen Laird: Hey, last time I talked to you I wanted to ask you this because you had been doing some work on your microbiome with Grace Liu and you and I were saying well maybe we just aren't fixable and this is just what works for us and maybe that's okay. so I'm wondering did anything work out for you there or you just like I know what my diet it and that's fine?

Robb Wolf: I'm still digging around on it. It's a little better-- interesting I've been putting in a modest dose of different types of legumes ironically and historically things like black beans gave me acid reflux and I kind of have some problem but I've just been really keeping the dose moderate but recently consistent like maybe 3 to 5 times a week like one meal a day, one meal every other day or something and I notice my digestion is pretty good on that and then I do feel like I've got kind of euglycemia like good blood glucose maintenance in the interim.

[0:40:04]

So I'm still fiddling around with that like nothing really comes back crystal clear on any of the stuff that I've done as far as uBiome and all that types of stuff. The gut flora otherwise looks pretty good. It was negative for SIBO and stuff like that. It's still a little bit of a mystery for me but I have noticed that I would say I've been feeling better actually titrating in a little bit of legumes and I've played around with refried beans. I feel terrible from them and I think that that's because they're blended and like it's just wax that carb load directly into my system and I don't handle it well but if they're like whole black bean, pinto beans, some white

beans like I seem to do okay on that. It is interesting because I remember historically like black beans would give me acid reflux. If I had a small bowl by the time I was finished with the small bowl I had acid reflux cooking.

Eileen Laird: How small serving do you eat now?

Robb Wolf: It's maybe like a cup, cup and a half cooked maybe a little bit longer.

Eileen Laird: That's not tiny. I mean that's like a normal amount. That's the whole N equals 1 thing again which I think is really cool. I tried to-- I reintroduced some sprouted lentils to see how I would do and I had like a depression descend on me for 72 hours before it lifted and I'm not someone who's prone to depression so it felt very external which was really weird to just be walking around this could that I felt like I ate that could. I guess 72 hours later, it had lifted a cast from my body. I think it's so unique and individual and I think with the microbiome research, it's really exciting but it's really new so when people start acting like they absolutely know and very suspicious anyway and a lot of it is just we got to experiment at this point.

Robb Wolf: Yeah. I can't agree more. I was really hoping that we would have some concrete stuff and even just today and I haven't dug into it at all but there was a retraction in like a major diabetes journal where the study that seem to claim taking the gut biome from an obese mouse and put it in a skinny mouse made the skinny mouse obese. There was a retraction that that information was just fraudulent. The researchers just said we faked it all. We apologize. They should probably do jail time over this stuff but I don't-- I think easily their academic or research careers are done. But that was a pretty good hammer blow because that was one of these things we're like oh wow! We've got something to sink our teeth into here and then it appears that they just completely fraudulently produced this information kind of driving the boat that way.

I listed to a Peter Attia interview recently and it was really interesting because he's like clearly the gut is important but it is such black box currently. We don't know what the inputs really do to it. We can manage things on a clinical basis of like is your blood glucose normalized? Are your markers or systemic inflammation normalize? You don't want one protocol versus another and that's really at the end of the day what matters. There was that study that came out of Israel the personal glycemic response where those guys are claiming inability to look at your gut microbiota, your genetics, your blood work and then kind of based of that recommend what glycemic load and types of carbohydrate sources

will work for you and there seems to be some pretty interesting data around that but I completely agree. There are definitely some folks that are like very strongly saying if we do XYZ were going to get the ABC then we get XYZ result. I think that that is ridiculous currently. I really wish it wasn't the case. But if it works, it was more by accident than by design.

Eileen Laird: I mean it's certainly my hope that at some point in our future that they'll be able to do with that fantasy of personalized microbiome prescriptions and I think actually that'll happen but I have no idea how many years we're talking like if it's in my lifetime or now but it's a hopeful idea. What's interesting too about the stool test like I think some of the stool test are really helpful because if you've got parasites or yeast or gut dysbiosis that's really good to know. But I think it's interesting that they test for "beneficial bacteria" and if you don't have those specific ones that you're supposed to somehow get them because the Hadza don't have the ones that we test for. So I think what if that person's feeling fine without them or what if they take them and they have an inflammatory response to them. It is interesting.

[0:45:02]

Robb Wolf: Yeah, it's super interesting. And I actually did several rounds of alternating different types of fibers and then everything and I can't say that it did anything for me other than make me really bloated and kind of worsen my glycemic response and theoretically that stuff is supposed to be the bizniz so I don't know.

Eileen Laird: Yeah. It's not to discourage everyone what I think Robb and I agree on and tell me if I'm wrong but I just think experimenting with food makes more sense.

Robb Wolf: Right.

Eileen Laird: That's just the way I feel than experimenting with probiotics or fiber and then trust your body to tell you more than a test whether you're doing okay.

Robb Wolf: I do notice that I feel great when I'm consistently making homemade sauerkraut and kimchi. I definitely feel better from this. My digestion is better. So that has been pretty consistent.

Eileen Laird: Mine too. My body loves the fermented foods. But it's funny with the pills, the probiotic pills it's either nothing like I took nothing or once I had a negative reaction because it was a colonizing probiotic that apparently my body didn't like and so it took a while to get over the inflammation from that.

Robb Wolf: Very interesting. Eileen, we could go on and on but I know we're getting close on time here. Where can folks track you down on the interwebs?

Eileen Laird: I'm at phoenixhelix.com that's P-H-O-E-N-I-X H-E-L-I-X. And can I tell them why I named it that.

Robb Wolf: I was actually going to ask you because the backstory is really great.

Eileen Laird: The phoenix won't surprise people would guess. I mean the whole idea of rising from the ashes and I think when you have autoimmune disease and certainly my experience is I got knocked down so hard I really didn't know how to get up again and I needed a symbol of hope to believe I could and I actually felt I was on fire from within that's how RA pain feels. It's very hot feeling. And so the phoenix was a symbol of hope for me and the paleo diet and lifestyle is what allowed me to rise above. So that's why I started with that and then the helix is our DNA and that we are more than our DNA so that's really to symbolize our power to affect our epigenetics.

Robb Wolf: Awesome.

Eileen Laird: so that's why I did that. But you can find everything there so like Robb said I have a podcast by the same name. you can look it up in iTunes or Stitcher and on the blog I alternate each week articles related to autoimmune healing with podcast and then every week if you are ready to try autoimmune protocol one thing that's overwhelming to people our recipes because if you can't use the ones you're used to, you wonder what you eat so I host a recipe round table on my blog every week where bloggers just link up new recipes so you're never in a food rut. There's always something to try.

Robb Wolf: Awesome.

Eileen Laird: So there's that. And then my book is called *A Simple Guide to the Paleo Autoimmune Protocol* and Robb was kind enough to do a testimonial for that. I appreciate that, Robb.

Robb Wolf: My pleasure. I'm just shocked that you scraped the bottom of the barrel to get somebody to comment on it but I'm always glad to bring down property values on anything. My pleasure.

Eileen Laird: Well I appreciate that. And for people to-- What my goal with the book is really I wrote it like a conversation between friends. I kept brain fog in

mind because when you have that much inflammation it's hitting your brain too and it's just hard to grasp a lot of information. I think it's 146 pages. You can read in a few hours. It's not intimidating or overwhelming and it just provides you with all the information you need to feel empowered to get started.

Robb Wolf: Awesome. Well, Eileen, you're doing fantastic work and again really thank you for having me on your podcast and it was a huge treat having you on this one. I'd love to have you back in the future whenever you want to come back on or any new projects you have cooking let's get you back on here.

Eileen Laird: Thank you. It's been fun. I'd love to have you back on mine too.

Robb Wolf: Great. We will have links in the show notes to the Simple Guide to the Paleo Autoimmune Protocol as well as your website and podcast. And I look forward to talking to you. Are you going to be at Paleo FX? Are you getting out there?

Eileen Laird: I am. This is going to be my first time being there so I'll get to meet you in person.

Robb Wolf: Very cool. I'll do my best to track down some nightshade free barbecue and we'll share that together.

Eileen Laird: That'll be awesome.

Robb Wolf: Okay. Cool. Well take care and Eileen, I'll talk to you soon.

Eileen Laird: Thank you.

Robb Wolf: Bye-bye.

[0:49:12] End of Audio