



## Transcript of “Paleoista with Nell Stephenson”

Bulletproof Radio podcast #11



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Dave: Today's cool fact of the day is that your brain is 2% of your body weight, but it holds 25% of your body's cholesterol. Your brain needs cholesterol.

You're listening to Episode 11 of [UpRated 00:00:19] Self Radio. We have a fantastic interview with Nell Stephenson, a certified nutritionist, Iron Man athlete, and author. She follows the Paleo diet, and uses it with her clients to improve their health, performance, and mental well-being. Nell understands the importance of nutrition, not just for athletes, but for entrepreneurs and business people and everyone else, as well.

We'll also discuss Nell's new book, Paleoista, and this interview will help show you how to build a solid nutritional program to fuel your mind and your body for optimum performance.

Co-host: All right, now we are on with Nell Stephenson. Nell has a degree in exercise science from USC, and she co-wrote the Paleo Diet Cookbook with Dr. Cordain, who is really well known in the Paleo diet community, and she's about to publish a book called Paleoista, which is also about the Paleo diet. Nell is just returning from the Iron Man triathlon in Hawaii, where she just finished with a personal record that was sixth in the world, in terms of time.

Nell, welcome to the show.

Nell: Thank you for having me.

Co-host: Tell us a little bit about how you first got interested in diet and health, and how you came across the Paleo diet.

Nell: I've always been interested in diet and health, or nutrition. I grew up with a complete hippie mom, so I was fortunate to have an introduction to eating healthfully at a very young age. Although, what we thought was healthy then, I now know isn't that healthy, including things like whole grains and beans and dairy products and that sort of thing. It was healthy in terms of there was no junk food, there was no processed, refined, sugary things or anything like that in the household. To me,

eating healthfully was just a normal thing to do, and I ate that way my whole life.

I had some issues with my stomach kind of on and off growing up, but it sort of was just never to the degree that it was that troublesome, it was more sort of just annoying, and I sort of concluded that I had a sensitive stomach or a weak stomach. It wasn't until I was in my mid-twenties that I reached what I consider my gluten tipping point, where I actually contracted a parasite in a race, which was giardia.

After treatment, I still felt really, really sick every single day for months. I went to several specialists; none of them asked what I was eating. They all sort of brushed it off and said it was definitely not the cause of stomach distress. Maybe a small factor, but not the main culprit. Just beyond frustration, I started searching online to see if I could figure out anything that might be causing all this horrible distress I was having, and that's where I learned that people can have a latent allergy to gluten, which can be triggered by stress or trauma or infection, which would include a parasite infection.

I did a little bit of research, just reading up on it myself and I thought, "I have nothing to lose. I feel horrible, why don't I just try cutting gluten?" And I did, and I felt better within three or four days. I followed the gluten free thing for about a year, so that meant I was still eating probably more healthfully than the typical American diet would instruct; however, I was still doing the gluten free version of many things like gluten free bread and gluten free chips and gluten free cookies and all that kind of thing. I still felt better with regard to my GI, but I still didn't feel fantastic.

My racing was sort of pretty average and my training was average, and I was sort of healthy but not really at the height I wanted to reach. About a year or so later, I just continued to investigate, and I stumbled across the Paleo diet. It talked about how humans were not meant to be eating any grains, and legumes, or any dairy, and it just made sense to me. That's how I stumbled across it in the first place, and I started it, and I felt just amazing. There was a very brief transitional period, maybe a week or two, during which I was kind of feeling a little sluggish and

wondering if this was going to work. Gosh, I'm so glad I saw it through, because after that period of time, that was over six years ago, there's no going back. Nothing else compares to it.

Co-host: It's interesting that you mention that stress can cause those latent allergies, because I see that even in entrepreneurs and people who are maybe weekend warrior athletes, but certainly not nearly as advanced as you are. Still, they get enough stress, or they get sick, and they just don't get well, and they've triggered that latent allergy that you discovered as well.

Nell: Exactly. It doesn't really matter what the source of any extraneous stress is on the body, whether it's, like we're saying, an executive who's working a hundred hours a week or an athlete, or just somebody that tends to be more of a stressed out person. Whatever you're doing that's creating that stressed feeling on the body is suppressing the immune system, and whatever your immune system might have been able to ward off when it's in a stronger state, is, as I said, suppressed, so it's easier for you to be affected by things like that.

The bottom line is, gluten is not good for anybody. There's no redeeming properties about it. Nobody needs to be eating it, regardless of, even people that don't believe in the Paleo diet, at the very least, if they were to cut out gluten, they'd be doing themselves a huge favor.

Co-host: I totally appreciate that. Let's turn this discussion about the Paleo diet more towards performance, both for athletes or just for people in general who want to perform better. What effect does this have on performance, and do you know how that works? What's the chemistry, or what's the mechanism behind it?

Nell: In a very simple way to look at it is, if you're not putting junk in your body, you're not going to perform in a poor fashion. I use an analogy with, if you have a high performing sports car and you put 87 octane in it, it's not going to perform as well as if you put higher octane in it. It's a very simplistic analogy, but you get the point.

Unfortunately, so many of the products that are marketed towards us athletes are very high in grains and refined grains, very high in, they tend to have whey or different types of dairy products, and they usually have a lot of peanuts and that sort of legume, and soy, all of which are not good for the body. They're not clean burning fuels; they tend to be very refined, very processed, and have very negative consequences. As a result, you go into a race, you go into a training session, and you're not properly fueled. Your body's working overtime to attempt to digest things that in my opinion aren't really food, and you're just setting up the stage for a very poor performance.

Then you have athletes who are performing on a very high level who are eating these things and they argue, "Well, it works for me." Yes, it does, but I have to say, sort of throw the argument back and say, "Well, if you're doing X and you're eating this junk, can you imagine how much better you would be doing if you were eating real food?" Perfect example of that is when Michael Phelps won all his gold medals, and that infamous interview, he gave awhile later, when he talked about what his typical foods were. Set aside the fact that he eats thousands of calories a day, which, that doesn't really to me make a big impact, because he's a large guy and he's training hours a day, so he's going to need thousands of calories a day.

That seemed to be the more profound message that people got, was the fact that he eats 10,000 calories a day or whatever the number was, rather than what the calories were that he was coming from. I forget which sugary breakfast cereals he listed, but I think it was maybe Fruit Loops or Cocoa Puffs or something like that. It was just such an unfortunate situation, because he's got this platform, he's got millions of people listening to him, and now, the take-away for little kids who are dreaming to be an Olympic athlete at some point are going to hear that and think, "Okay, if he eats that, then that's what I need to eat for breakfast," just taking it out of context.

I just think the bottom line is, if you eat stuff that's not really food and it's all refined and processed, you're really just, you're toxifying the body. Your body's just not going to work as well as it would if you were giving it pure fuel.

Co-host: What do you think are some of the biggest nutrition mistakes you see endurance athletes or any athletes making, and how could maybe somebody like an executive, or just somebody who's working throughout the day take advantage of those same lessons, and incorporate those into their lives?

Nell: I think their biggest mistake, or the biggest ... One of the biggest issues that I hear about is athletes having the attitude of, "Well, I do Iron Man, so I can eat whatever I want, or I do X, so I can eat whatever I want," as though the fact that they're expending X number of calories per day sets the stage for them to, basically to use the analogy again, they're just filling their body as though it were a rubbish bin. Go out for a two or three mile run, and then as a reward, or I'm not sure how they're viewing it, but they think it's a good idea to go have a pancake breakfast or a burger and fries with extra cheese on a white bread bun and all that kind of thing.

The idea, which to me is backwards, because I think if your body's just provided you with the gift of the ability to go out for a three hour run, I don't know why you'd want to sabotage yourself by ingesting those types of foods. I think that's the first and foremost, one of the biggest issues, is people having the wrong idea of what the point of food is. It's not supposed to be a situation that you go out and do a run just because you can go ahead and eat a bunch of junk afterwards. I think that's one of the main issues.

The other thing is, it's not necessarily the fault of the athlete, because all these products are presented to us as things that we need. We want to believe things that we see on TV and announcements that we see in the media and in the newspaper. We want to think that, "Oh, this is a great product; I need to have this bar and this gel and this block and this mix and this and that and all these different things," and you end up with all these different combinations of different types of sugars, some of which are natural, some of which are not. Artificial dyes, artificial colors, artificial flavors, and you're putting all this stuff into your body, and then you're taxing it with all the stress of the exercise and the training, and you're just expecting it to perform, but it's not.

It's a really mixed message out there and it's very difficult, and it's become very confusing to know what to believe and what not to believe. I think if people just clear away the clutter and approach it in a really basic term, and think about eating real food as in eating fruits and vegetables and proteins and fats, during the course of the day-to-day work week, or the course of life, and then when you're getting ready to prepare for workouts or recover from workouts, you're still eating real food, but you're keeping it simple. Instead of having a lot of vegetables and fat right before you go do a track workout, for example, you might have something like a high glycemic type of food like a really ripe banana, maybe, with a soft boiled egg, or something along those lines.

Another idea is natural applesauce with some lean turkey, or something like that. Mostly carbohydrate, easily digestible, with a little bit of easily digestible protein, is really a good thing to have before a workout. Granted, if it's a really tough workout, like the track workout I just mentioned, if you're doing it first thing in the morning, you might not have to eat anything beforehand. That kind of gets into more specifics as far as what specific training somebody's doing.

The idea is, if you can focus on eating real food, and focus on not eating refined, processed food, that's the first step.

Dave: I have a question for you. You said lean turkey breast, but turkeys aren't that lean, because they have skin with fat on it and all that. Is there a reason to be lower fat when you're exercising? Most Paleo diets are not particularly low fat.

Nell: Yeah, and don't get me wrong; I do not recommend that people eat low fat diet or anything like that by a long shot. I'm just talking about specifically if you're about to go do a workout, if you wanted to have that ratio of four-to-one in favor of carbohydrate to protein, that's just one example of a time where you wouldn't want to go for a fatter type of protein because the fat's going to slow the digestion.

That's why that specific example for just before a workout, but generally speaking, you're right. I recommend definitely including the whole parts of an animal. For example, if you were going to have a roast



chicken breast, for example, not only is it more cost-effective to buy it skin-on, bone-in, the meat's more flavorful and it's good to eat that. Just on that specific point, I know we talked about this before, but sometimes people will say, "Well, I don't want to eat chicken skin because it's a very high source of heterocyclic amine," which it is.

Again, just like with everything, I'm not saying you should eat chicken skin every day, every meal, but if you have it once in a while, it's a good part of a diet, and you can cut down on the HCA's by actually rubbing flax seed oil or vitamin E oil on the skin. That helps to counter the HCA content.

Dave: I think that's really good advice; in fact, we're in the middle of formulating a product that will come out that you can rub on any kind of meat while you cook it in order to reduce the formation of that type of toxins, because that's a bigger issue for Paleo people than for other people. A lot of the people who follow this podcast are either eating Paleo or they're eating the lower toxin version of Paleo, called the Bulletproof diet that we've got posted on the site.

Nell: Oh, cool.

Co-host: Now, let's say that you're an athlete and you believe you're performing really well on Pop Tarts and other junk foods. Are there other reasons that you might want to consider eating Paleo? This also goes for people who aren't necessarily full-time athletes, but why should people go Paleo that doesn't have to do with performance?

Nell: There's so many reasons why people should go Paleo. For one thing, for athletes, not even necessarily specifically for athletes, but one of the nice features about the Paleo diet is that it's a very alkaline diet. The body wants to be alkaline, or basic. It doesn't want to be acidic. As a result of exercise that we endurance athletes conduct ourselves, it does get a bit acidic. The body can also get acidic from other things that people have in their, people that are not Paleo, would find their body becoming acidic from things like heavy smoking, heavy drinking, dairy consumption actually is a very acidic rendering thing to do. Eating refined grains is very acidic and so on.

If you're eating a large portion of fresh vegetables and fresh fruit and following the Paloe diet, the body becomes a lot more basic, which is how it wants to be, and when the body is basic, it's far less likely to be inflamed. If the body is inflamed, it' sets the stage for a host of I call it system failure, when you have an inflamed body and a leaky gut. It sets the stage for, really, every system in the body is at risk for not functioning properly. After X number of years or a certain amount of a time, [inaudible 00:15:15] for everybody just failing.

That's definitely one really important thing, is getting the PH back to where it wants to be, on a more basic PH. The reasons to go Paleo, I could talk about them for hours. Did you have ... Is that kind of where you were going with that question?

Co-host: Yeah, the idea is that there are a lot of people who are saying, "Well, I'm doing okay now, I don't really need to do this for my health." I think you answered the question, it helps to alkalize the body and people generally will be healthier across the board. Their immune function should be better, as well. Have you seen specific effects both with athletes or any other people in your practice, around just immune function, getting sick less, things like that?

Nell: Oh, absolutely. Not just with myself and my husband, but with clients. I've got clients all over the world with all different sorts of reasons for having done Paleo. To your point before, what you just said about people saying, "I feel okay, I don't really need to do something as 'radical' as the Paleo diet," and I will say that most of the clients that I've had, they don't just do Paleo because they just decide on a whim they want to try it. I have found that most people wait until there's something wrong. In other words, they've tried everything else, which, by the way, is kind of a backwards approach, in my opinion.

Something might be wrong and they go to the doctor and they get a prescription, and then something else is wrong because they've got now side effects from whatever pill they were taking, rather than looking at what they're eating as the first step. I think it makes sense. I was the same myself, just sort of ambling along, feeling okay but not great, just sort of accepting and almost sidling up, "Yeah, I just have a weak

stomach." It wasn't until things got really bad that I thought, "I need to make a change." I think that definitely tends to be more of a common scenario, is people feeling like they're desperate, and then they go ahead and try it.

I've seen ... I've got one client who is, she's in Seattle, and before she found Paleo, she had, I think she suffered from migraines for, I want to say, twenty-five or thirty years. She also has been diagnosed with MS, and that was about fifteen years ago, and she's been Paleo for about five. Interesting to note in her particular case, that when she was first diagnosed with MS she did a lot of research herself and came across a diet that, I don't know what the name of it was, but it was telling her, it basically talked about vegetarian diets for people with autoimmune disease.

She tried it, because she had just been diagnosed, and she wanted to do anything she could to keep it from progressing at however fast of a rate it might've progressed otherwise. She had the MRI's as the diagnostic tool when she was first diagnosed, and after five years of being vegetarian, the sclerotic plaques in her brain had multiplied exponentially, at which point she thought, "Okay, I've got to make another change."

She switched to Paleo, and she's been Paleo now, I want to say, maybe over five years, and she has been back to her neurologist and the number of sclerotic plaques have not changed in the whole time that she's been Paleo. It's really interesting, and just the fact that she got so much worse when she was following the vegetarian diet, and she's stayed the same, if not, is much better after being Paleo. That's just one example of many of how it supports health.

Dave: It sort of makes me sad when I see people with a chronic disease try and cure it with the vegetarian thing. Even Steve Jobs, when he first got his pancreatic cancer, his first thing to do was go on the Dean Ornish diet, which is that extreme low fat, extreme high carb thing, and he did that for about eight months. The whole time, he was a pescatarian or mostly vegetarian, and I just think it's really sad when we lose people, both famous people like Steve Jobs, but just all over the country, people who

are really trying to help their health, going on these really bizarre, high carb, low fat, low protein, high processed food, soy containing diets and expecting to get better when it seems like all the science out there, the things that you've seen, the things I've seen, it just doesn't support that. I'm just really glad that you just were able to share the story of the person with MS.

Nell: Yeah, I completely agree. It's really, really sad. I say that from personal point of view, and I get being vegetarian; I was actually vegan myself for two years, if you can believe it, about a decade ago. I was vegan for ethical reasons, so it was definitely a transition for me to go from being vegan to where I am now, and as I've already explained, it didn't happen overnight. The way that I rationalized it was it was kind of a realization that I do believe that we humans are at the top of the food chain, and I do believe that we need to be eating animal protein for our health; however, I am definitely an animal lover.

I'm not a fan of saving a penny in order, in buying factory farmed meat or hens that are coming from battery cages, or anything like that. I do think it's worth every penny to spend more in making sure that the animals are coming from an ethical, humane source. Wild meats and wild fish and free range poultry and all that kind of thing, yes, they're more expensive. I think, for the interest of the animals and the planet, I think it's really important to focus on that. That, to me, is how I found a balance with eating the way I eat now compared to how I ate about a decade ago.

Dave: Good for you. Good for you, Nell. I was also a vegetarian for about a year a while back, and same thing, I have a whole blog post about sort of the ethical decisions to eat Paleo and how it's better for the top soil and I honestly believe that by eating Paleo, people can do more for the planet than they can by eating processed foods.

Nell: Absolutely.

Co-host: Yeah, I was wondering, Nell, you were talking about how a lot of these products, like these processed bars and protein mixes and all these what I think you and I would call junk foods are forced upon athletes by

a lot of these companies and a lot of the magazines. Do you ever get frustrated with the nutrition advice coming from Runner's World and Triathlete, and do you think there might be a slight bias there against something like the Paleo diet?

Nell: Oh, absolutely. I get ... It's funny, because I continue to subscribe to those publications, and every time I renew, I'm kind of at a little battle with myself, like, "Why am I buying this stuff?" But it's just kind of keep up-to-date on what they're telling, what they're teaching, and it does. It drives me nuts, because they're always grain heavy, dairy heavy, "Make sure you drink your milk for healthy bones," and, "Here's a great recovery idea," and it's got milk and grains and this and that, and, "Make sure you eat your oatmeal and your bagels."

Just like you said, it's really frustrating. I think, and the thing that's also equally as frustrating is, I read several accounts of athletes having tried Paleo, and some of them say that they've tried it and it just didn't work, or it worked, but it didn't work for when they went long course. I can't speak for all of them, because I haven't spoken with all of them obviously, but I've spoken with a handful of athletes who have written about the fact that they didn't feel Paleo worked for them. Upon further investigation or questioning, what they were doing wasn't Paleo.

One woman that I spoke with who races professionally had been counseled by a nutritionist in her area who said that he thought she would be suited for the Paleo diet, so he gave her what he thought was the Paleo diet, which was very restrictive in calories and included grains. I don't exactly know how he thought that was Paleo, but not surprisingly, she had a horrible season and she had no energy and she wasn't recovering properly, she kept getting ill.

Of course, if you're racing half Iron Man and you're not eating properly, not eating enough calories, and you're eating grains, that's not going to work. By the way, that's not Paleo. I feel, I hope there's a growing community of athletes that are Paleo.

I seem to think that, being contacted more through my blog and newsletter by people that are kind of spouting up here and there, saying,

"I'm Paleo," and I'm Paleo here and I'm Paleo there. I hope it's a growing trend, and I'm certainly always doing what I can to promote it.

Co-host: I get comments from readers on the blog who aren't necessarily athletes, but they have this whole, "Oh, well, I'm really tired, my brain doesn't work very well, and I go to work and ..." for breakfast they're having a hundred calories, and then for lunch they're munching on some carrots and celeries, and completely malnourished all throughout the day. Not enough calories, not enough food, no fat, and low protein, and yet, they're completely convinced they're being healthy. It's bizarre. Do people not recognize hunger, and do they not know you should eat when you're hungry? What's your take on the feelings of hunger? What should people do about that?

Nell: I completely think that's ridiculous, too. It's such an antiquated way of looking at diet. I mentioned that I had always been interested in fitness and nutrition. I remember when I was in high school in the early nineties, when the whole low fat thing just kind of boomed, and we had things like the Entenmann's fat free cakes, Snackwell cookies, and that kind of thing. The rule of thumb was, "Don't eat anything that has more than two grams of fat per serving."

I was only sixteen at the time, and I hadn't really educated myself or taken many classes, so I was believing what I was reading at the time. The unfortunate thing is, so many people took that to the hilt and thought that low fat or fat free meant eat as much as you want, which I have to say, is a trend that I think it kins of going along today with the gluten free thing. I think people are kind of adapting that and thinking, "Gluten free, I can eat as much as I want!" Which is not the case.

The idea of, if people just really took an objective view and looked at it and thought, "Okay, when people eat low fat and diet foods like diet cookies or diet potato chips or whatever the other junk might be out there, when they eat things things and they don't eat enough calories, over time, they get more overweight and more fat and less healthy and have less energy." It seems like it should kind of, people should be seeing this and kind of getting it, but unfortunately, that's not the case;

it's almost as though people are banging their head against the wall and saying, "Ouch," and then banging their head against the wall again.

Something's got to change. I think people are just so ... They've been so conditioned to think, "Low fat, low fat, low fat," that the idea of eating fat is frightening to people. "I don't want to eat fat because then I'll get fat," but actually, eating fat in and of itself is not going to make somebody fat. Yes, eating tons of fat and not moving and eating tons of too many calories will help somebody become overweight, but adding fat to a healthy meal from a healthy source, like avocado or olive oil or coconut oil or something, or some animal fat, that's not going to make somebody fat.

The people that are obese have not gotten there because they had too much avocado.

Co-host: I actually wanted to make sure that our readers heard a very important sentence that you said in there. It sounded to me like you were saying that if you don't eat enough, it can contribute to obesity. Did you say that?

Nell: Absolutely. If you don't eat enough, if you start the day ... This is a little factoid that I thought was kind of interesting, and I always sort of share this with clients who tell me that they don't eat breakfast. An important part of the diet of a sumo wrestler, so I'm told, is to skip breakfast, because that will make the person so hungry, sort of mid to late morning, that they're more ravenous, and they're more inclined to eat far too much and from the wrong sources.

If somebody had the goal of looking like a sumo wrestler, they should in fact skip breakfast, and not eat in the morning. Just a little tidbit, and it's kind of a joke, but it's to the point. You're supposed to eat, and you're not supposed to starve, and you're supposed to eat in balance.

There is a school of thought, I will say, of people who are really keen on the Paleo diet that say hunter-gatherers probably didn't eat several times a day; they probably ate once a day or twice a day. There's that school of thought that strongly believes in intermittent fasting, and I'm

not here to say they're wrong; it's just a different approach from mine. Mine is, I strongly believe in eating balanced meals frequently throughout the day.

I think of food as an IV. Sorry, I think of it as a drug, because once it's in the body, it is a drug. If you think about somebody in the hospital who is very ill, and they're receiving morphine, they're receiving a morphine drip. Why? Because they want a steady surge of the drug. Say they're on their death bed or something, a sad situation like that, but the idea is, think about the IV drip. If you think about food, you want that chemical, because food is a chemical or a drug once it gets in your body, really. You want that slow, steady influx of calories throughout the day, and that might be wake up in the morning and have some left over broccoli, steak with a little olive oil.

Maybe a couple hours later, it's spinach and some wild salmon, a little bit of berries, and some avocado. Then maybe a few hours later it's wild greens, a little bit of chicken, maybe some coconut oil, maybe you cook the chicken with coconut oil, and so you have that trend. It's a very simple way of looking at it. You start each meal with vegetables, add some protein, then add some fat and maybe add a little bit of fruit, and that's how you make a meal.

Dave: I think that's good advice. It's interesting about sumo wrestlers, too, that their diet is extremely high carb, just like, say, gluten free cereal is extremely high carb.

Co-host: I will say from an intermittent fasting perspective that, for instance, one of the guys that I'm coaching just lost seventy-five pounds in seventy-five days, and we did use some intermittent fasting as part of that. Even then, we modified it by adding some fat during the fast to keep the hunger feelings from getting so bad and causing the cravings and causing the weirdness. It appears to me that using that Bulletproof fasting technique that we developed, that people can get the benefits of intermittent fasting without having the down side. They get the [auto fagi 00:29:21] and the improvements in muscle and the leanness that come from it, but without maybe damaging their body the way that you could with a normal fast for someone who's not very healthy.



Nell: Yeah, I think that makes sense, and I like the inclusion of fat. As I'm sure you know, when you eat fat and protein, it stimulates the body to release glucagon, which is the antagonistic hormone to insulin. When you're releasing glucagon, you're telling the body it can burn fat and hold on to the carbohydrate for the next time you need it in sort of a quick fight-or-flight response versus when you start the day with a high carbohydrate meal and not much protein and not much fat, you start the stage for insulin responses, which is a series of peaks and valleys throughout the day, and blood sugar crashes, and not having energy.

Also, by the way, telling the body, "I don't know what's going on, but you've got to hold on to this fat." Again, another example of what you should do if you'd like to remain overweight, over fat, is keep starting the day with a nice, carb-y breakfast, and not fat and protein, and then you'll be able to hang on to those extra pounds.

Dave: I love it.

Co-host: What supplements do you take? Do you take any of them?

Nell: I take a fish oil supplement. I like a company called Nordic Naturals. I'm not endorsed by them, I just feel their product is of a very high quality. I learned about them through my [naturopath 00:30:37], actually. They are third party tested, molecularly distilled, and from what I'm told, they're the lowest containing ... They contain the lowest levels of mercury of any other fish oil on the market.

I take fish oil, and I do take a multi-vitamin, and that's only because if you read the Paleo Diet for Athletes, they talk about what the conditions that we're living in today are not the same conditions that cavemen lived in, as far as the toxicity in the air as a result of the ozone depletion, and so on and so forth. I do take a multi-vitamin; I view it kind of as an insurance policy, just to fill in any teeny little holes that might be in the diet and also because I like the antioxidant content.

I don't feel that, I don't think I actually need the vitamin that I take, because I do have such a huge variety of fresh vegetables and fruit, but I take it, like I said, just for a little bit of an insurance policy, and just

because I am training the way that I train, I don't feel it does any harm. I will say to any listeners out there, if you're taking a vitamin right now, make sure you read it, because I took a vitamin for years even after going Paleo, and I didn't realize until probably two years later that it actually had soy in it just as a filler, or rice powder. Just make sure you check your vitamins, because that can often be a hidden source of non-Paleo foods.

Co-host: It's amazing what you'll find in a typical multi-vitamin. It's really common to have yeast extracts and to have even some things like sodium sulfate, which, oh selenium, which unfortunately, that's a toxic form of selenium. I'm very careful on the blog when I talk about vitamins to say, "This is the brand," and almost all of them, I don't have a relationship there. I'm just like, "This is what I take, because I've done the research and I know the guy who formulated it through my anti-aging nonprofit work."

From a personal performance perspective, the difference between a crappy expensive vitamin and a high quality expensive vitamin, it matters. It's an immune function, it's athletic performance, it's cognitive performance. A lot of people just sort of take their one-a-day from the drugstore, and they think they're getting it, and they're not.

Nell: It always comes back to cost, doesn't it? On the opposite side of the spectrum, too, from the manufacturer, it comes down to cost. Why do you think they use all these fillers? You can take ... If you have, for a very simple example, I use the example of the food that I give our dogs, and they're Paleo, too, by the way. If I were to buy a pound of grass fed chuck steak for the dogs, it will cost X, and it will give them enough food for one meal, versus if I buy them a bag of Kibble, it'll cost maybe, I don't know, \$17 or something, for a bag of Kibble that'll last them for a week, just for an example, versus, if I buy them fresh meat and [inaudible 00:33:33] that they need to digest, and some vegetables, it's going to be a lot more pricey, but I don't want to give my dogs junk.

I want them to eat real food and I want them to be healthy. In fact, they're twelve years old, and they're often mistaken for being about seven, because they are so healthy and they eat a Paleo diet and they're

athletes. It just comes down to getting a pure product. You're still getting the same amount of product, if you compare the pure product to the one with fillers. It's just the filler one has all these other bad additives in it, and you're toxifying your body with them.

**Co-host:** Does a Paleo diet have to be low carb, and in what ways do you adapt a Paleo diet for endurance training? Do you make any race day compromises like gels or any of these other products during the race itself?

**Nell:** Yes. I think ... First of all, to clarify, I'm glad that you called Paleo a "low carb diet." I know you know that it's not a no carb diet, but a lot of people think, they think Paleo is the same as Atkins, and they'll say things to me like, "How do you do Iron Man when you don't eat any carbs?" I always say, "I eat carbs all day long. What do you think kale is? What do you think bananas are? What do you think apples are?" And they'll say, "Oh, I didn't know those were carbs, I thought they were just kale."

It's like, if it's a food, it has to be one of the three macro-nutrients. I think it's just important to know it's certainly not a no carb diet. It's not even a low carb diet, it's just lower than what the American Dietetic Association recommends. Yes, you're right, endurance athletes need to add starch. If you're not an endurance athlete, or you're not training for a big event, you don't need to have starch in your diet. The idea of having starch at every meal is also antiquated and ridiculous.

I don't have starch at my meals if I'm not getting ready for a workout, and you don't need starch at your meal if you're going to be sitting doing on your computer. To get ready for a long workout or a race, I will add yam or sweet potato in small portions to my otherwise completely Paleo meals. Yam and sweet potato are Paleo, it's just, to specify, to clarify what I said before, specifically for athletes. I'll add a little bit of yam or sweet potato to my meals for a couple of days, to get ready for a race.

Yes, to answer your question about during the race, that is when I currently use the one non-Paleo food in my diet is, I use a carbohydrate gel when I'm racing and training. That's only because I'm out there for

such a long time. So much blood is diverted from the GI tract to the working skeletal muscles that it makes it really difficult to digest solid foods, so that's why I opt for the carbohydrate gel.

If I'm out there for nine or ten hours or something like that, I need fuel, because I'm working at a really high level, and it's a non-Paleo food only because I am not aware of a Paleo gel that's on the market. That's one of the projects I plan on working on next year, though, on my, talking with a food scientist to see if we can organize the production of a Paleo-sourced gel, whether it's from yam, or beet, or something like that. That's how I approach the training.

Dave: What should people who are not athletes do if they want to perform better? Now I've got a nine or ten hour meeting. At hour five, can I have a carbohydrate gel?

Nell: That's a great question. Again, if you're not putting extreme amounts of stress on your body in the form of long vascular exercise, you want to keep that example that I used before about keeping the blood sugar level. If your blood sugar's even throughout the day, you're going to be able to focus a lot more clearly and concentrate on what you're doing and work more productively. That's when the small meals balanced, and roughly the Paleo macro-nutrient ratio is about 40-30-30 in favor of carbohydrate.

If you do that, you have some vegetables, and some nice fat, and some protein, and maybe some low glycemic food like berries. If you have those in small portions through the day, it might be every two hours, you might be every three hours, that's going to keep your energy level even. You're not going to have a blood sugar spike and a blood sugar crash where you feel like you need to rush to the coffee shop and have a milkshake and cake, otherwise known as a crappuccino and a muffin, and just keep everything on an even keel, you'll have so much more of a productive day than you would if you're peaking and crashing and heaving these sugar spikes and so on.

Dave: It might even give you enough energy at the end of the day to go out and exercise and become a better athlete, as well, which is the goal that a ton

of people that I talk with just on a daily basis. They have a job, but they also like to exercise and they want to do both and have enough energy for both, and I think that your recommendations make sense.

Nell: Exactly, and that's a really important thing to say. People will say, they'll comment to me, "Oh, well, you don't have kids so you can do X, or you don't have this, or you work at home, so you can do that," and yes, I definitely realize that I may be an anomaly in those scenarios, but I've worked with enough people that are ridiculously busy, far more so than I, that are able to do this diet, and do it properly and be very healthy.

I've got one client who's a single mom in South Carolina with three kids, and just working her tail off to make it work, but she's doing it. When I see something like that, and then I have another client who says, "I don't have time," yet she doesn't work and she has two nannies, one for each of her kids, it's kind of like, "Well, you're choosing to not make it work."

Co-host: Yeah, I hear that a ton from people saying, "Oh, how can you possibly do this when you travel?" I just did a trip where I flew to Singapore and back in three days and I had twelve hours of meetings and three presentations on stage. I ate a healthy diet the entire time, because frankly, there's no way you can fly for forty hours in three days and not get really sick if you're not eating a Paleo diet, or in my case, the Bulletproof diet, which is the lower toxin flavor.

It's actually such a performance enhancer that I think you'd be crazy not to, because it gives you more energy and time to take care of your kids or to walk your dog or do whatever you want to do. Go run a triathlon, whatever's on your list of fun stuff.

Nell: Exactly. I could not agree with you more. What you put in the body and your own health has to be the foundation of what you're doing across the board. It doesn't matter if you're an athlete or a mom or a dad or an executive, or whatever you are. Your health has to come first because it makes you ... This sounds really corny, but it makes you the best you that you can be, and so then you can be better for everybody else that's in your life and your family and your work.

It's a choice. It always comes down to choice.

Dave: It does. I hope people feel sort of empowered by hearing that. You're certainly a powerful person and athlete and someone who's really studied exercise science and all this, this coming from you as an entrepreneur and someone who's been a biohacker for a long time the facts are out there, and this is the way it is. If you do this one thing right, you get more time and energy for everything else throughout your day.

It's just so important that people pick that up, because they'll feel better.

Nell: Right, totally.

Co-host: Nell, since we're talking about how a Paleo diet is important for performance, how has the Paleo diet improved your performance in Iron Man triathlons, and even in your work? I know you're a busy person, you're working on all these new books and these projects. Has the Paleo diet enabled you to do more of what you enjoy, how has it done that, and also, how did your race at Kona go this year? Did you notice any differences from the last, from before when you were doing Iron Mans when you weren't eating Paleo?

Nell: Oh, my gosh, I can't even tell you how huge the improvement is. I started racing Iron Man in 2001, and I started ... Let's see, the transition to Paleo started around 2005. Back then, I would call myself a really average, middle-of-the-pack age group athlete. My first Iron Man was, I want to say, over fifteen hours.

My goal was to complete it, so I was happy I completed it, and I should back up and say that for the first five or six, or even seven years, when I was racing triathlon, I was sick every single race, with stomach issues. I was at the point where I thought, "This just happens." I saw so many friends and other athletes who would have stomach issues during a race that I thought that's just normal, you just have a stomachache in a race, period.

I would see people who didn't get ill, and it was just a mystery. How on earth could they do that and not have a stomachache and not have to

make an emergency stop in the port-o-potty? Since becoming Paleo, and no longer starting the race with a belly full of pasta and a bagel, which not surprisingly sets the stage for huge gastric upset, A, just to have a race go by and not have stomach issues was a huge gift.

Following the Paleo diet, I also notice, as a nice little side effect, that I went from ... Again, I wasn't overweight, I was about 135-ish pounds and 5'6" and about 16% body fat, which I always stayed at, which was fine, but I always kind of wanted to be a bit more lean and I couldn't figure out how to do it without restricting calories and starving and all the other diets that I had tried like the Zone and I also tried, as I said, being vegan.

Nothing really made me feel better. I kind of always felt the same, but when I started Paleo, everything, it was like ... It's not like I'm selling a pill or anything, but it's almost as if by magic, just all these things just kind of converged into this beautiful harmony of everything being in sync and everything working, and sleeping better and training better and losing weight. Not that I was, that wasn't the main thing, but over the course of about a year and a half I went from where I was to where I've been at now for about for years, which is 7% body fat and about 115.

I eat all day long; I'm not starving myself. I obviously am not starving myself or I wouldn't be able to perform the way that I do. I think that in conjunction with having an amazingly supportive husband, a fantastic coach, sleeping properly, and doing regular body work, has set the stage for just year upon year of better and better performances.

I had a great race this year at Kona, thank you for asking. I [inaudible 00:43:49] by twenty-two minutes and missed the podium by fifty-seven seconds, but I was really happy with my time of 10:17, and promoting Paleo all the way. I even had my new brand name, which is Paleoista.

Dave: I think it's truly awesome. One of the things that we have on the website is [striking 00:44:09] Be Superhuman, and there are specific steps you can take around making yourself just more resilient and more powerful. Like you said, this isn't the only pill. You talk about sleep, you talk about

other things, but it's one of the probably top three things that I recommend people do just to be better at whatever it is they do.

It's just eating the right foods; it's so fundamental to just being a human rather than being an athlete or being a mom or a dad. It really just comes down to doing everything you do better.

Nell: Exactly.

Co-host: We're coming down to the end of the interview. Tell us about your new book, Paleoista. When does it come out? What other books or nutrition plans do you offer? Give yourself a good plug here. Tell our readers how to find you. Of course, we'll have notes on the blog, as well.

Nell: My new URL is [paleoista.com](http://paleoista.com), p-a-l-e-o-i-s-t-a. The site is still under construction, so it's going to redirect you to the current site, which is [nellstephenson.com](http://nellstephenson.com), and there you can find about me, a link to my blog, an online training program that I sell. I do custom nutritional counseling, but I also sell a series of pre-written download plans, which are more budget friendly. It's basically [click here](#), here's your six weeks of how to eat for endurance training, or whatever the case may be.

The new book, Paleoista, it focuses on, it is targeted more toward the female audience, because right now, the current books out there tend to be ... The ones that I'm aware of are all written by men, and so I wanted to address the female market and kind of just bring Paleo into a modern-day, easy-to-follow guide of just tell me what to eat, what not to eat.

It's written from an entertaining perspective, because I wanted it to be something that people actually enjoy reading versus, "This is a tomb of knowledge and it's very valuable, but I'm bored and I don't understand the scientific vernacular," so it's just a fun book to read. My hope is that not only women read it, but men, too, whether it's a guy picking up his mom's or his girlfriend's or his daughter's copy. It just should be a fun read.





- Dave: I'm excited to read it as soon as it comes out, let us know. Thank you for writing more for the female audience. My wife and I have a book for women who either are pregnant or want to get pregnant that's coming out next year as well, and it's the same idea, that Paleo isn't just for big muscular guys, it's for humans.
- Nell: Exactly. It's just for mammals. The idea that I mentioned before about for the dogs, it's just, pretty much if you're living on the, walking around, and you're a mammal, you should probably eat Paleo. That'll sum it up.
- Dave: It's very well said, and my two dachshunds are Paleo as well, and I can afford to feed them grass fed chuck, because they only weigh eight pounds apiece.
- Nell: Perfect!
- Dave: On that note, Nell, thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with our listeners. It's very, very much appreciated, and I appreciate all the work you're doing.
- Nell: Thank you so much, it was lovely to speak with both of you.
- Co-host: Thank you so much, Nell.
- Nell: Thank you.
- Co-host: Bye.
- Co-host: If you enjoy this show, you could really help us by leaving a positive rating on iTunes to help other people find the show, and we're always so thankful for "Likes" on facebook or re-tweets or Google+ mentions, because when you do that, you're helping other people to find the show and to find the blog, and to basically understand that it's there, and other people respect it so that it's worth considering as they're looking at what to do for their own health. We're thankful when you support us and support the show, and help other people find the show.

## What We Cover

1. How Nell first got interested in diet and health, and how she came across the paleo diet.
2. How athletes can improve their performance by eating paleo.
3. The biggest nutrition mistakes made by endurance athletes.
4. The health reasons everyone should eat paleo.
5. Why you don't just "burn off" junk food.
6. Why you don't have to balance your diet with grains, legumes, and dairy.
7. How to make the paleo diet palatable.
8. The hardest part about going paleo.
9. Why the paleo diet is NOT a low-carb diet.
10. Nell's personal nutrition plan before a half ironman or ironman triathlon.
11. How to stay paleo while traveling to races.
12. How switching to a paleo diet will improve your performance in sports and at work.
13. The supplements Nell takes to stay healthy.
14. How to eat paleo during an Ironman triathlon.
15. Proof that eating a paleo diet will supercharge your sports performance.
16. Where you can learn more about Nell, her book, and her services.

## Links From The Show

### Featured

[NellStephenson.com](http://NellStephenson.com)

[Paleoista](#) by Nell Stephenson

### Food & Supplements

[Nordic Naturals Omega-3 Fish Oil](#)

[Bulletproof® Upgraded™ Coffee Beans](#)

[Piracetam](#)

[Aniracetam](#)

[Kerrygold Grass-Fed Butter](#)

[Extra Virgin Coconut Oil](#)

[Lindt 99% Dark Chocolate](#)

[Grass-Fed Meat](#)



MCT oil  
Pink Himalayan Salt  
Natural Calm Magnesium  
GABA  
L-Theanine  
Raw Honey  
Hydrolyzed Collagen Protein  
Upgraded™ Glutathione  
N-Acetyl-Cysteine  
Vitamin C  
Vitamin D3

## **Gear**

Glass Food Containers (BPA and plastic free)  
Blue Light Blocker Glasses  
Amber Light LED Bulbs  
F.lux Web App  
~~Zeo Personal Sleep Monitor~~ Sleep Cycle  
Pzizz. PRO Sleep Sound Track Generator  
I3 Mindware IQ Upgrade Software  
Earthing Mat  
Heart Math emWave 2

## **Books**

The Better Baby Book  
Smart Drugs & Nutrients by Steven Fowkes

## Listener Q & A

1. Do bioidentical hormones halt fat loss?
2. How many calories should women eat to maintain their weight?
3. What smart drugs should you consider trying?
4. How do you eat 50% of your diet from fat?
5. What do you do when you can't fall asleep?
6. Is chard really good for you?
7. Does being a biohacker mean you have to shun all rationality?
8. Are there any kinds of safe alcohol?

## Biohacker Report

(A review of the latest studies and research.)

“Effects of FTO Genotype on Weight Loss and Metabolic Risk Factors in Response to Calorie Restriction Among Japanese Women.”

“Modified egg composition to reduce low-density lipoprotein oxidizability: high monounsaturated fatty acids and antioxidants versus regular high n-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids.”

“Is there a role for carbohydrate restriction in the treatment and prevention of cancer?”

## Updates

The official “[Powered By Butter](#)” T-shirts are now available. Get yours by clicking [here](#).

We are about to release our specialty blend of [Bulletproof Coffee and whey protein](#). Click [here](#) to be taken to UpgradedSelf.com where you can join our mailing list to be notified when it's available.

## Questions for the podcast?

Leave your questions and responses in comments section below.

You can also ask your questions via...

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## Listener Questions

Lianne

Hi Dave,

I am very interested in trying this diet. I am 49 yr old female and I am in menopause and have a low thyroid. Currently I am taking bioidentical hormones and find it hard to loose weight. Will this diet enable me to balance my hormones?

I am anxious to add more fat to my diet as I am already estrogen dominant and afraid it will make it harder for me to loose weight. How many calories per day does your wife take in and is she able to manage her weight well? Thank you sincerely.

John

Great stuff please keep it up. I would like more info on smart drugs. I've been trying 800mg of piracetam 3 to 4 times per day with not much difference. Are there any other smart drugs you suggest trying?

thejokerexodus (Co-Host)

Hey Dave, your diet looks excellent, simple and cheap. I'm fine with eating 20% of my diet from good meat and fish and 50% of my diet from fat, but I have no idea how to get this. Do I get this from butter? Do I put the butter on something or do I just eat it from a spoon? What is the easiest way to get 50% of my calories from fat

Joelle

Could you answer my question about how to get quality sleep? I'm trying everything; no electronics in my bedroom, pitch black room, sleep with eye mask, no T.V. or computer right before bed, etc. So what's your secret?

Sincerely,  
Joelle

Bill

Howdy Dave – First I'd like to thank you for sharing your knowledge. I've been enjoying bulletproof coffee for a few weeks now and it keeps me going strong all morning. I'm about to dive into the bulletproof diet. I noticed a lack of any mention

of chard. I recognize it doesn't seem feasible to list the 23 or so different greens I can think of, but just wanted to make sure. Is chard okay to eat?

I also picked up an emWave 2 and I have been blown away by the difference it makes. I was skeptical, but man it's really brought out my A game.

Thanks again,  
Bill Schuller

Richard

Hi Dave,

I'm struggling to resolve a contradiction between my belief in self-experimentation and "personal science", and my belief in reason and rationality. Obviously they're not mutually exclusive, but I feel like I'm moving away from a staunchly pro-science/medicine/conventional position, towards being more open-minded, where "maybe that crazy person might just be onto something".

I don't want to become a crazy person who shuns medicine and science in favor of radical, "unproven" results of a few people, whose methodology often lacks the rigor of scientists. But at the same time I think a lot of conventional wisdom is bullshit.

It's a little scary: I sort of feel like I'm getting sucked into a cult.

Have you experienced this feeling?

Regards,

Rich.

John Wilson

I'm going to try the diet. I do like to have alcohol at times. Is that completely out? Or is there an acceptable/preferred way to integrate some?

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