



# FOOD

## THE DIABESITY SOLUTION

By Dr. Mark Hyman



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# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION

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# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

One out of every two people have a deadly disease that makes them fat and sick. 90 percent of those people don't even know it. What's worse, your doctor is probably not trained on how to find it, if they are even looking for it.

This problem will cost us \$3.5 trillion over the next 10 years. It will bankrupt our economy. In 30 years, 100 percent of our federal budget will be needed to pay for Medicare and Medicaid, leaving nothing for education, defense, agriculture, roads or even social security.

I am talking about **diabesity**, the number one cause of obesity, heart disease, cancer, dementia, and of course, type 2 diabetes.

You might hear many terms used to describe this one basic phenomenon, which is a new epidemic of disordered biology and disease. It is the continuum of abnormal biology that ranges from mild insulin resistance to full-blown diabetes. We call it by many names.

## See if you recognize any of them:

- Insulin resistance
- Prediabetes
- Metabolic syndrome
- Obesity
- Syndrome X
- Adult-onset diabetes
- Type 2 diabetes

In truth, these are ALL essentially one problem with varying degrees of severity. The diagnosis and treatment of the underlying causes that drive all these conditions are actually the same. That is why I use a more comprehensive term, **diabesity**, to describe these conditions.

Diabesity describes a continuum of disease that ranges from optimal blood sugar balance to insulin sensitivity to full-blown diabetes. This biological imbalance is our modern plague. It is the leading cause of most chronic disease in this country including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, dementia, and cancer, not to mention its leading role in weight gain and obesity.

Despite this fact, there are no national recommendations from the government or key organizations to advise screening and treatment of it, and most doctors don't know how to properly diagnose it. The result is that 90 percent of the people who suffer from diabesity are left undiagnosed and untreated.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

The instances of diabetes are increasing at an astonishing rate. When I started practicing medicine, not a single state in the nation had an obesity rate over 20 percent. Today, not a single state in the nation has an obesity rate *under* 20 percent.

Type 2 diabetes has tripled in since the 1980s. There are now 27 million diabetics in the country.

The question becomes *why*? Why are we facing a diabetes pandemic? Why are our current treatment approaches failing so miserably? And why is conventional medicine floundering when it comes to diagnosing the biggest health threat of our time?

## THE PROBLEM WITH OUR APPROACH TO DIABESITY

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Modern industrial medicine treats disease with medication or surgery. That's what it is designed to do, and when it comes to emergency interventions it is still the best medicine in the world. When someone comes into the emergency room with a severed leg, conventional medicine treats the problem with incredible efficacy.

Yet when it comes to chronic illness, this approach simply doesn't work.

Why does conventional medicine tend to break down in the face of chronic illnesses like diabetes? Because most medicine today is based on clear-cut, on-or-off, yes-or-no diagnoses that often miss the underlying causes and more subtle manifestations of illness. Most conventional doctors are taught that you have a disease or you don't. You have diabetes or you don't. There are no gray areas.

Practicing medicine this way is extremely misguided because it misses one of the most fundamental laws of physiology, biology, and disease: *the continuum concept*. There is a continuum from optimal health to hidden imbalance to serious dysfunction to disease. Anywhere along that continuum, we can intervene and reverse the process. The sooner we address it, the better.

Take diabetes: Most doctors just follow blood sugar, which actually rises very late in the disease process. If your blood sugar is 90 or 110, you don't have diabetes. If it's over 126, you do have diabetes.

But these distinctions are completely arbitrary, and they do nothing to help treat impending problems. I remember one patient, Daren, who came to see me with mildly elevated blood sugar. I asked Daren if he had seen his doctor about this. He said yes. I then asked, "What did your doctor say?" Daren's doctor had told him, "We are going to wait and watch until your blood sugar is more elevated, and then we are going to treat you with medication for diabetes."

This attitude is absurd and harmful in the face of what we know about the problems that occur even in the absence of full-blown diabetes. Science is now showing us that many people with pre-diabetes never get diabetes, but they are at severe risk just the same. Pre-diabetes actually isn't pre-anything; it's a serious health condition and needs to be treated as early as possible.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

More to the point, this approach completely ignores more subtle clues from symptoms and signs of disease, which may highlight underlying metabolic imbalances (especially when complemented by further testing).

These imbalances may be remedied by the appropriate treatment—treatment not just focused on some disease, but instead that works to remove those things that alter or damage our functioning, and provides those things that enhance, optimize, and normalize our functioning by balancing the system rather than treating the symptom.

We need to treat the system, not the symptom, and the patient, not the disease.

Consider the man in the emergency room with the severed leg. For that person, identifying what severed the leg isn't likely to make the difference between life and death. The symptom—the severed leg—must be treated if he is going to survive.

But that paradigm simply doesn't hold true for health conditions like diabetes. This mechanistic model can be applied in some health crises, but it doesn't work when it comes to chronic disease.

## IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF DIABESITY

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To effectively treat diabetes, we must shift our focus away from the *symptoms or risk factors* of the disease and begin taking a hard look at the *causes*. All of our attention is on treatments that lower blood sugar (diabetes drugs and insulin), lower high blood pressure (anti-hypertensive drugs), improve cholesterol (statins), and thin the blood (aspirin).

But we never ever ask the most important question: *Why is your blood sugar, blood pressure, or blood cholesterol too high, and why is your blood too sticky and likely to clot?*

Put another way: *what are the root causes of diabetes?* Answering that question must be the focus of our diagnosis and treatment of the disease if we are going to solve this global epidemic.

The good news is that the answer is shockingly simple.

The entire spectrum of diabetes including all of its complications—diabetes, elevated blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol—are simply downstream symptoms that result from *problems with diet, lifestyle, and environmental toxins interacting with our unique genetic susceptibilities*.

Those are the real causes of diabetes.

And the reason these dietary and lifestyle factors lead to diabetes is because they create a condition known as *insulin resistance*. Contrary to what most people think, type 2 diabetes is a disease of too much, not too little, insulin. Insulin is the real driver of problems with diabetes.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

When your diet is filled with empty calories and an abundance of quickly absorbed sugars, liquid calories,<sup>1</sup> and carbohydrates like bread, pasta, rice, and potatoes, your cells slowly become resistant to the effects of insulin and need more and more to do the same job of keeping your blood sugar even. Thus you develop **insulin resistance**.

A high insulin level is the first sign of a problem. The higher your insulin levels are, the worse your insulin resistance. Your body starts to age and deteriorate. In fact, insulin resistance is the single most important phenomenon that leads to rapid and premature aging and all its resultant diseases, including heart disease, stroke, dementia, and cancer.<sup>2,3</sup>

As your insulin levels increase, it leads to an appetite that is out of control, increasing weight gain around the belly, more inflammation and oxidative stress, and myriad downstream effects including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, low HDL, high triglycerides,<sup>4</sup> weight gain around the middle, thickening of the blood, and increased risk of cancer, Alzheimer's, and depression.

These are all a result of insulin resistance and too much insulin. Elevated blood sugar is *not* the source of the problem.

Because insulin resistance and diabesity are a direct outcome of diet and lifestyle, the condition is **100 percent reversible** in the vast majority of cases. Most people just need to eliminate the things that are sending their biology out of balance and include what's needed to help the body rebalance itself. For most, the interventions required are extremely simple and extraordinarily effective.

## HOW TO HEAL DIABESITY

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Most people believe diabetes is not reversible. That's unfortunate, considering its numerous complications including kidney failure, amputation, stroke, and dementia. I've also heard experts claim obesity is difficult to treat and maintaining long-term weight loss is almost impossible.

I wholeheartedly disagree. Science shows diabetes and obesity *are* preventable and reversible with aggressive nutrition and lifestyle modifications.

They are caused by the 152 pounds of sugar and 146 pounds of flour a year eaten on average by every American—that is a toxic dose of diabetes-causing food.

*In Food: What the Heck Should I Eat?*, I devote a whole chapter to sugar. That might initially seem odd. I mean, other chapters focus on real foods like vegetables, fruits, and meat. So why sugar?

If it weren't for the fact that we eat so much of it, sugar might not even deserve its own chapter in this book. It's not something you need, and I hesitate to call it food. If it were a brand-new product, the government would treat it like a dangerous substance to be controlled and regulated, not something that should be given to babies and added to nearly three-fourths of all packaged foods in supermarkets.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE PROBLEM

The food industry adds sugar to seemingly everything. It's not only in the obvious places, like drinks and snacks, but in surprising places, like chicken soup, spaghetti sauce, multigrain crackers, bacon, smoked salmon, even most salad dressings. Why do we need sugar on our lettuce?

## DIABESITY AND GRAINS

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Chief among these hidden sugars are grains. It isn't just the added sugar in many commercial wheat breads; it is also that all grains convert to sugar in your body.

Nearly all the grains we consume today have been processed to death, so the good stuff they once contained is lost. I talk more about this in *Food*.

Only by cutting way back on grain-based foods could we ever hope to reverse the trend of metabolic diseases that they cause.

If you are diabetic, you shouldn't eat more than 25 to 50 grams of carbs a day (less than two slices of bread). If we limited ourselves to moderate amounts of whole grains—*certain* whole grains, I should say—we might be okay.

But most whole grains aren't much fun to eat, at least not compared to the foods we make by refining and processing them until they are deliciously unrecognizable, which of course is when all the trouble begins. They cease to become food and enter the realm of food-like substances. Edible, but not entirely qualified to join the ranks of real whole foods.



# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

You have the power to reverse or prevent diabetes, and it all begins at the end of your fork. I've seen dramatic improvements in my practice when patients incorporate these dietary and lifestyle modifications into their lives.

## THE 10-DAY DETOX DIET

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The first step to curb inflammation, reverse diabetes, and feel better, is to eliminate the junk. It's simple. First, you stop eating certain addictive and inflammatory foods for 10 days, and then, after 10 days, you'll have the opportunity to add some of these foods back in to see how your body responds.

Eliminating inflammatory and toxic foods is just part of the 10-Day Detox Diet. The other part involves adding in the good stuff—real, whole foods that nourish your body with every single bite. We all know that food can harm us, but we should all take advantage of the fact that food can heal us, too.

**Here are some ways you will automatically improve your blood sugar just by following The 10-Day Detox Diet:**

- **Eat a plant-based diet**, rich in low-sugar fruits like berries and avocados, vegetables, nuts and seeds high in fiber, healthy fats, and nutrients. Ideally about three-fourths of your plate should be leafy and cruciferous veggies.
- **Don't eat carbohydrates alone.** Combine protein, fat, and carbohydrates in every meal.
- **Pull the sugar.** A diet full of empty calories and quickly absorbed sugar, liquid sugar calories, and refined carbohydrates—all of which convert to sugar—creates high insulin levels, eventually leading to insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Chronically high insulin levels lead to many problems, including inflammation, high blood pressure, poor sex drive, increased risk for cancer, and depression. The most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity or reverse their impact is to eliminate or dramatically reduce sugar in all its many disguises.
- **Eat fat.** Use ONLY good, healthy fats and clean (grass-fed or sustainably raised) animal foods. You should include fat at each meal. The best sources are avocados, extra-virgin olive oil, nuts and seeds, extra-virgin coconut butter, organic full-fat coconut milk, whole organic eggs, fatty fish (sardines, wild salmon, mackerel, or herring), grass-fed lamb, bison, or beef, or organic poultry.
- **Stock up on real foods.** Whole, unprocessed real foods balance your blood sugar, reduce inflammation and oxidative stress, and improve your liver detoxification to prevent or reverse insulin resistance and diabetes. Whole, real foods turn on all the right gene messages, promote a healthy metabolism, reverse insulin resistance and diabetes, and prevent aging and age-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease.
- **Eat about 4 to 6 ounces of protein with each meal.** If you make a fist, that's approximately the portion size we're talking about per meal.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

- **Avoid all gluten and dairy.**
- **Avoid all processed junk food**, including sodas, juices, and diet drinks, which impact sugar and lipid metabolism. Liquid sugar calories are the biggest contributors to obesity and diabetes and heart disease.
- **Eliminate all hydrogenated fat**, which is found in margarine, shortening, and processed oils, as well as many baked goods and processed foods.
- **Eat only fat, protein, and veggies for breakfast.** You can choose from a variety of protein shakes or delicious egg recipes (omega-3 eggs are ideal) to wake up your metabolism first thing in the morning.
- **Include flaxseeds** by adding two to four tablespoons of ground flaxseeds every day to your food to stabilize blood sugar levels. Flax is tasty in shakes or sprinkled on salads.
- **Avoid beans and grains:** Both can spike your blood sugar.
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** Drinking too much alcohol can increase blood sugar levels and interfere with good health. Alcohol also impacts triglycerides. For men, limit alcohol to no more than two drinks per day. For women, limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day. (One drink is defined as a 12-ounce beer, a 5-ounce glass of wine, or a 1.5-ounce shot of liquor.)
- **Drink a minimum of 8 glasses of pure, clean water** throughout the day.
- **Eat the rainbow.** Eat at least eight to 10 servings of vegetables every day, which contain disease-fighting vitamins, minerals, fiber, phytonutrients, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory molecules.
- **Use Himalayan or sea salt**, because when you cut down carbs your body needs more of these clean types of salt.
- **Try not to eat three hours before bed.**

The 10-Day Detox Diet is naturally anti-inflammatory and balances blood sugar levels because it removes these foods that create harm and increases all of the wonderful anti-inflammatory nutrients your body needs using whole foods.

I've provided more details about the 10-Day Detox Diet and how to re-introduce foods to maintain that plan for life in *Food: What the Heck Do I Eat?*

This book is founded on the principle that food is medicine. It is information. Food literally controls almost every function of your body and mind. And it connects almost everything that matters in our lives.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

Food connects us to one another and to our bodies; it can reinvigorate our health, bring families together, restore vibrant communities, improve the economy and the environment, reduce pollution, and even help our kids get better grades and avoid eating disorders, obesity, and drug abuse. Food can even reduce poverty, violence, homicide, and suicide.

I wrote *Food* as a roadmap, based on the best and latest science of what to eat, to dispel the confusion and contention that keeps you overweight, sick, and unhappy.

What you put on your fork is the most important thing you do every day. It influences your capacity to live a rich, energetic, connected, soulful life—a life in which you have the energy to care for yourself, to love your friends and family, to help your neighbor, to fully show up for your work in the world, and to live your dreams.

If you enjoy real, whole, fresh foods that you cook using real ingredients, you are positively effecting everything around you.

## SUPPLEMENTS

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The plan for diabetes and supporting healthy blood sugar includes all of the same supplementation as the basic version of program. The unique combination of supplements in this kit is designed to provide a foundation for cellular sensitivity to insulin as well as sustain the metabolism of fats and sugars. This bolsters healthy metabolism, blood sugar balance, cholesterol levels, and more.

The basic nutrient plan is the [PureLean Pure Pack](#), which offers support for healthy glucose metabolism, lipid utilization, and weight management as part of a healthy lifestyle with a reduced calorie diet and regular exercise.

### Each pack contains:

- 3 PureLean® Nutrients vegetable capsules (tan)
- 1 EPA/DHA with lemon softgel capsule (golden)
- 1 Alpha Lipoic Acid w/ GlucoPhenol vegetable capsule (red tint)
- 1 Magnesium Glycinate vegetable capsule (white)
- 1 Taurine 1,000 mg vegetable capsule (white)

### Recommended Use:

Take 1 packet per day (7 capsules) with a meal or as directed by your healthcare practitioner.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

For advanced blood sugar balance, consider the [10-Day Detox Combo Pack](#), which includes all of the healthy foundational vitamins and nutrients needed for healthy blood sugar support in the basic plan kit as well as four special herbs that have been used to enhance insulin sensitivity and balance blood sugar for centuries.

I also recommend [PGX](#) fiber to control blood sugar levels. Take 3-6 capsules or 2.5 to 5 grams of powder before each meal with a cold glass of water <http://store.drhyman.com/Store/Show/SearchResults/839/PGX-Daily-Singles>.

## EXERCISE

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I encourage 30 to 45 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least six times a week.

You may try interval training (also known as wind sprints and described in [The Blood Sugar Solution](#) if you are feeling stronger. I also encourage strength training to build muscle and reduce body fat composition.

Exercise is a necessity, not a luxury, in preventing almost all chronic disease, from heart disease to cancer, from dementia to diabetes, from osteoporosis to osteoarthritis. You cannot age successfully without it. It is how we are designed.

## STRESS REDUCTION

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Finding ways to manage stress, to relax, and to find the pause button is essential for dealing with nearly all chronic health conditions, including diabetes.

Learn to reduce stress by doing regular relaxation exercises such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, breathing, guided imagery, or whatever it takes to engage the relaxation nervous system, which can reduce your overall level of inflammation and blood sugar and increase metabolism and help with your overall health.

Try classes, buy CD's (you can try my [UltraCalm audio program](#)), try therapy, or just go out and have fun. But you must do something to switch daily out of the alarm response to maintain your health.

## SLEEP

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I used to think that "MD" stood for "medical deity" and meant I didn't have to follow the same sleep rules as every other human being. I stayed up late working long shifts in the emergency room, ignoring the demands of my body to rest. It wasn't until I learned that shift work (like I did in when I worked in the emergency room) leads to a shortened life expectancy, that I quit.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

Unfortunately, our lives are infiltrated with stimuli—and we keep stimulated until the moment we get into bed. This is not the way to get restful sleep. Frankly, it's no wonder we can't sleep well when we eat late dinners, answer emails, surf the Internet, or do work, and then get right into bed and watch the evening news about all the disaster, pain, and suffering in the world.

Instead we must take a little "holiday" in the two hours before bed. Creating a sleep ritual—a special set of little things you do before bed to help ready your system physically and psychologically for sleep—can guide your body into a deep, healing sleep.

We all live with a little bit of post-traumatic stress syndrome (or, I should say, traumatic stress syndrome, because for many of us there is nothing "post" about it). Much research has been done on the affects of stress and traumatic experiences and images on sleep. If you follow my guidelines for restoring normal sleep below, your posttraumatic stress may become a thing of the past.

**Here's how to restore your natural sleep rhythm. It may take weeks or months, but using these tools in a coordinated way will eventually reset your biological rhythms:**

- **Practice the regular rhythms of sleep** – go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- **Use your bed for sleep and romance only** – not reading or television.
- **Create an aesthetic environment that encourages sleep** – use serene and restful colors and eliminate clutter and distraction.
- **Create total darkness and quiet** – consider using eyeshades and earplugs.
- **Avoid caffeine** – it may seem to help you stay awake but actually makes your sleep worse.
- **Avoid alcohol** – it helps you get to sleep but causes interruptions in sleep and poor-quality sleep.
- **Get regular exposure to daylight for at least 20 minutes daily** – the light from the sun enters your eyes and triggers your brain to release specific chemicals and hormones like melatonin that are vital to healthy sleep, mood, and aging.
- **Eat no later than three hours before bed** – eating a heavy meal prior to bed will lead to a bad night's sleep.
- **Don't exercise vigorously after dinner** – it excites the body and makes it more difficult to get to sleep.
- **Write your worries down** – one hour before bed, write down the things that are causing you anxiety and make plans for what you might have to do the next day to reduce your worry. It will free up your mind and energy to move into deep and restful sleep.

# THE DIABESITY SOLUTION: THE SOLUTION

- **Take a hot salt/soda aromatherapy bath** – raising your body temperature before bed helps to induce sleep. A hot bath also relaxes your muscles and reduces tension physically and psychically. By adding one-and-a-half to one cup of Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) and one-and-a-half to one cup of baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) to your bath, you will gain the benefits of magnesium absorbed through your skin and the alkaline-balancing effects of the baking soda, both of which help with sleep.
- **Get a massage or stretch before bed** – this helps relax the body making it easier to fall asleep.
- **Warm your middle** – this raises your core temperature and helps trigger the proper chemistry for sleep. Either a hot water bottle, heating pad, or warm body can do the trick.
- **Avoid medications that interfere with sleep** – these include sedatives (these are used to treat insomnia, but ultimately lead to dependence and disruption of normal sleep rhythms and architecture), antihistamines, stimulants, cold medication, steroids, and headache medication that contains caffeine (such as Fioricet).
- **Use herbal therapies** – try passionflower, or 320 mg to 480 mg of valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) root extract, standardized to 0.2 percent valerenic acid, one hour before bed.
- **Take 200 to 400 mg of magnesium citrate or glycinate before bed** – this relaxes the nervous system and muscles.
- **Other supplements and herbs can be helpful in getting some shuteye** – try calcium, theanine (an amino acid from green tea), GABA, 5-HTP, melatonin, and magnolia.
- **Try one to three mg of melatonin at night** – melatonin helps stabilize your sleep rhythms.
- **Get a relaxation, meditation or guided imagery CD** – any of these may help you get to sleep.

If you are still having trouble sleeping, you should be evaluated by your doctor for other problems that can interfere with sleep, including food sensitivities, thyroid problems, menopause, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, heavy metal toxicity, and, of course, stress and depression. Also, consider getting tested for a sleep disorder.

## CONCLUSION

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I recently had a patient lose 45 pounds and get off 54 units of insulin and all his diabetes medication with the strategies I've discussed in this book. In fact, every day I am able to help patients prevent, treat, and reverse diabetes without drugs and surgery.

Because insulin resistance (and diabetes) are a direct outcome of diet and lifestyle, the condition is **100 percent reversible** in the vast majority of cases.

Most people just need to eliminate the things that are sending their biology out of balance and include what's needed to help the body re-balance itself. For most, the interventions I've described here are extremely simple and extraordinarily effective.

Even armed with these strategies, finding the right foods to normalize blood sugar levels can sometimes feel confusing. That's why I wrote *Food: What the Heck Should I Eat?*, to help you undo all the beliefs about food that are making you fat and sick and replace them with a new understanding that will lead to health and longevity.

I believe that cultivating and consuming real, whole food is the answer to many of our world's problems. How we grow it, produce it, and eat it affects almost every aspect of our lives and our society. *Food* is an honest how-to guide designed to answer the question, "What the heck should I eat?"

Food is the doorway to living well and loving well—and to fixing much of what's wrong with our world. You have the power to heal high blood sugar and reverse diabetes, starting with your very next meal.

I also hope you'll read [The Blood Sugar Solution](#), which goes into much more depth about how to prevent or reverse diabetes.

In [The Blood Sugar Solution](#), I outline all of the social, economic, biological, and medical underpinnings of this health epidemic and provide an 8-week, step-by-step system that will allow you to dig deep into your own biology and heal even the most severe cases of diabetes.

Also, please take a look at [The Blood Sugar Solution Cookbook](#), where I show you how you can delight your palate and your senses with fabulously tasty food and heal your body at the same time.

As I've said many times before, the most powerful medicine is at the end of your fork, not at the bottom of your pill bottle. Food is medicine!

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