



## **It's not a Diet... It's a Lifestyle**

Jumping into the health and wellness journey with my amazing patients at the Charleston Pain Relief and Wellness Center, I'm Dr. Angela Tharnish. I'm all about health, not just because it's my job, but because I live and breathe it. And guess what? I've got the knowledge, chops, and real-world experience to back it up. This book? It's my way of putting all that hard-earned wisdom into your hands. I'm talking about the real stuff – the tips and tricks that have actually worked for people. So, let's get this wellness party started. I'm here to guide you, inspire you, and maybe even make this journey a little fun along the way.

My educational path began at Metropolitan State College in Denver, CO, where my fascination with the human body's capabilities led me to major in Human Performance and Sport, with a specific emphasis on Exercise Physiology. This groundwork provided me with

a deep understanding of how physical activity influences the body and mind, setting the stage for a career dedicated to enhancing health through holistic practices.

My journey continued at Palmer College of Chiropractic, Florida, where I graduated in 2006. The rigorous program there not only deepened my appreciation for the body's innate ability to heal but also equipped me with the skills to support this process through chiropractic care. My education didn't stop with my graduation; I have continually sought to expand my expertise. A significant milestone in my professional development was completing comprehensive training from the Spine Research Institute of San Diego in whiplash and brain injury traumatology. This specialized training has been crucial in allowing me to provide exceptional care for patients recovering from auto accidents, addressing their physical needs with an informed and sensitive approach.

Over the past 16 years, I've been privileged to serve the North Charleston community, treating a diverse range of patients from infants to the elderly. My practice has always been centered around active rehabilitation and exercises, emphasizing the importance of engaging the body in its own healing process. This approach has proven especially beneficial for my weight loss patients, for whom a combination of targeted physical activity and nutritional guidance can make all the difference.

My goal has always been to help as many people as possible to achieve optimal health and wellness. By focusing on educating my patients about the fundamentals of nutrition and the benefits of active rehabilitation, I empower them to take charge of their health journey. Whether it's aiding in recovery from an injury or guiding someone on their weight loss path, my aim is to provide the tools and knowledge necessary for my patients to live healthier, more active lives.

Reflecting on my journey over the past 16 years serving the North Charleston community has been an immensely fulfilling experience. My commitment to guiding individuals toward better health through understanding nutrition and active rehabilitation remains unwavering. In this book, "It's NOT a Diet... It's a Lifestyle," I aim to share this commitment

and knowledge with a wider audience. My approach is grounded in the belief that achieving and maintaining optimal health transcends the concept of dieting; it's about adopting a lifestyle that promotes well-being. By focusing on educating my patients about the principles of nutrition and the benefits of consistent physical activity, I empower them to take control of their health journey. Whether it's aiding in recovery from an injury or navigating the path of weight management, my objective is to equip my readers with the insights and strategies necessary for a healthier, more vibrant life. Here's to embarking on this journey together, toward a future where health and happiness are not just goals, but a way of living.



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### **Fat-Burning Bedtime Drinks:**

Revitalizing Recipes for Weight Loss

In this chapter, we will delve into the world of bedtime drinks that have the potential to boost your metabolism and promote fat burning while you sleep. Discover the power of these simple, yet effective, recipes designed to support your weight loss goals. Here are 10 recipes for bedtime drinks that may aid in burning fat:

Lemon and Ginger Tea: Combine warm water, freshly squeezed lemon juice, and grated ginger to create a metabolism-boosting and detoxifying bedtime tea.

Turmeric Golden Milk: Mix unsweetened almond milk, ground turmeric, cinnamon, a dash of black pepper, and a touch of honey for a soothing and anti-inflammatory drink that aids in fat metabolism. The black pepper aids in the absorption of the turmeric, and honestly adds a lovely flavor to the drink, so don't be scared to add it!

Cucumber and Mint Infused Water: Infuse cold water with slices of cucumber and fresh mint leaves for a refreshing bedtime drink that can help stimulate metabolism and support hydration.

Green Tea and Lemon Soother: Brew a cup of green tea (decaf at bedtime), and add a squeeze of lemon for a powerful combination of antioxidants and fat-burning properties.

Chamomile and Lavender Herbal Tea: Enjoy a calming cup of chamomile tea infused with dried lavender flowers to relax your mind and body before sleep, promoting better sleep quality and weight management.



Apple Cider Vinegar Elixir: Dilute a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in warm water and optionally add a dash of honey for a tangy and alkalizing drink that aids in digestion and fat burning.

Cinnamon and Honey Warm Milk: Heat up unsweetened almond milk, sprinkle with cinnamon, and add a small drizzle of raw honey for a comforting drink that can potentially regulate blood sugar levels and aid in weight management.

Grapefruit and Mint Infused Water: Infuse cold water with slices of grapefruit and fresh mint leaves for a refreshing and hydrating drink that may help boost metabolism and fat burning.

Peppermint and Green Tea Cooler: Brew a cup of green tea (decaf at bedtime), let it cool, and then add a few drops of peppermint extract for a chilled and refreshing beverage that can potentially stimulate fat burning.

These fat-burning bedtime drinks can offer a delightful alternative to sugary or calorie-dense beverages in the evenings. Incorporating them into your routine, along with regular exercise and a balanced diet, may contribute to your weight loss efforts and overall well-being.



**Lemon water** is often touted as a beneficial component of weight loss efforts due to several reasons:

Hydration: Staying adequately hydrated is essential for overall health and weight management. Drinking lemon water can make plain water more enticing and encourage increased water intake, which may contribute to feelings of fullness and reduce unnecessary snacking or overeating.

Low-Calorie: Lemon water is low in calories, making it a suitable alternative to higher-calorie beverages like sodas or sugary juices. By replacing these calorie-dense drinks with lemon water, you can reduce your overall calorie intake and potentially create a calorie deficit, which is necessary for weight loss.

Boosts Digestion: Lemons are rich in dietary fiber, which aids in proper digestion and helps regulate bowel movements. Improved digestion can prevent bloating and promote a healthy gut, supporting the body's natural detoxification processes.

Vitamin C Content: Lemons are a great source of vitamin C, which is an antioxidant that supports immune function and helps protect cells from oxidative damage. While it is not directly linked to weight loss, maintaining overall health and a strong immune system can support your weight loss journey by allowing you to stay active and consistent with your exercise regimen.

Alkalizing Effect: Despite being acidic in nature, lemon water has an alkalizing effect on the body after digestion. An alkaline environment can help regulate the body's pH balance, potentially boosting metabolism and improving overall health.

It's important to note that while lemon water can be a helpful addition to a weight loss plan, it is not a magical solution on its own. It should be considered as part of a holistic approach that includes a balanced diet, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, and overall healthy lifestyle habits.



**Apple cider vinegar (ACV)** has gained popularity as a natural remedy with potential health benefits. Be sure to purchase ACV “with the mother” for the greatest benefits. It will have this distinction directly on the label. Here are some benefits associated with ACV consumption and guidelines on how and when to consume it:

Improved Digestion: ACV may help improve digestion by increasing stomach acid production and aiding in the breakdown of food. It is commonly used to alleviate symptoms such as bloating, indigestion, and heartburn.

Blood Sugar Regulation: Some studies suggest that consuming ACV can improve insulin sensitivity and help regulate blood sugar levels. This can be particularly beneficial for individuals with prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, or those seeking to manage their blood sugar levels.

Appetite Control: ACV has been reported to help increase feelings of fullness, potentially reducing overall calorie intake and aiding in weight management. However, specific effects on appetite may vary among individuals.

Gut Health: ACV contains beneficial probiotics that can support a healthy gut microbiome. A balanced gut microbiome is associated with improved digestion, immunity, and overall well-being.

Antimicrobial Properties: ACV has been historically used as a natural disinfectant due to its antimicrobial properties. It may help kill harmful bacteria and fungi when applied topically or used in cleaning solutions.

### **When and How to Drink ACV:**

Before Meals: Consuming ACV before a meal may help support digestion and regulate blood sugar levels. Dilute 1-2 tablespoons of ACV in a glass of water and drink it around 15-30 minutes before eating.

Dilute and Rinse: ACV is highly acidic, so it's essential to dilute it before consuming to protect tooth enamel and the delicate lining of the throat and stomach. Mix 1-2 tablespoons of ACV in a large glass of water and consider using a straw to minimize contact with teeth. Afterward, rinse your mouth with plain water.

Gradual Incorporation: If you are new to ACV, start with a lower amount (e.g., 1 teaspoon) and gradually increase your intake to assess tolerance. Some individuals may experience digestive discomfort if consumed in large amounts.

Frequency: You can consume ACV 1-2 times per day, but it is best to spread out your intake to prevent potential side effects such as stomach upset or tooth enamel erosion. Start with consuming it once a day and monitor how your body responds before considering increasing the frequency.

*Remember, ACV is not a miracle cure, and individual experiences may vary. It is always advisable to consult with a healthcare professional before making any significant changes to your diet, especially if you have underlying health conditions or are taking medications.*



**Intermittent Fasting**: Here are 10 tips to help you get started and make the most out of your intermittent fasting journey:

Start Slowly: If you're new to intermittent fasting, begin with a shorter fasting period, such as 12-14 hours, and gradually increase the duration as your body

adjusts. Most people will fast through the morning hours and break their fast midday. Your schedule may vary, but the easiest way to fast is when you are asleep! Build your fasting schedule to include the hours you are asleep.

Choose the Right Method: Explore different intermittent fasting methods and choose the one that suits your lifestyle and preferences. Popular methods include:

- 16/8 protocol; 16 hours of fasting and an 8 hour eating window
- Alternate-day fasting; eating little to nothing one day, and regular, balanced meals the next
- The 5:2 diet; 5 days of a regular, balanced, healthy diet, followed by 2 days of fasting.

Stay Hydrated: Drink plenty of water during both fasting and eating windows to stay hydrated and help curb hunger. Herbal teas, black coffee, or unsweetened beverages can also be consumed during fasting periods.

Focus on Nutrient-Dense Foods: When breaking your fast, prioritize whole, unprocessed foods to ensure you're getting a wide range of nutrients. Include lean proteins, healthy fats, fiber-rich carbohydrates, and plenty of vegetables in your meals.

Listen to Your Body: Pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues. Eat until you feel satisfied, rather than overeating during your eating window. Intermittent fasting should not lead to severe restriction or emotional distress.



Stay Active: Engage in regular physical activity to support weight loss and overall well-being. Incorporate both cardiovascular exercises and strength training into your routine for optimal results. It is important to balance eating with working out if you are embarking on a fasting program. Be sure to talk with a professional on the best ways to incorporate both into your life.

Manage Stress: High stress levels can sabotage weight loss efforts. Practice stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies that relax you.

Be Mindful of Portion Sizes: While intermittent fasting is not solely about calorie counting, it's still important to be mindful of portion sizes to maintain a calorie deficit if weight loss is your goal.

Plan Ahead: Prepare your meals and snacks ahead of time to avoid making impulsive or unhealthy food choices during your eating window. Having healthy options readily available can help you stay on track.

Seek Support: Consider joining online communities or finding an accountability partner who is also practicing intermittent fasting. Sharing experiences, tips, and challenges with others can provide motivation and support.

*Remember, it's crucial to listen to your body, personalize your approach, and consult with a healthcare professional, especially if you have any underlying health conditions or concerns. Intermittent fasting may not be suitable for everyone, and individual experiences and results can vary.*





**Exercise:** Here are 10 tips to help you make the most out of your interval or HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) workouts for weight loss:

Warm up Properly: Begin each session with a dynamic warm-up to elevate your heart rate gradually and prepare your muscles for intense exercise. Incorporate movements like jogging in place, arm swings, and leg swings.

Choose the Right Exercises: Select a combination of exercises that engage multiple muscle groups simultaneously, such as burpees, mountain climbers, jump squats, or kettlebell swings. This helps maximize calorie burn and overall efficiency.

Set up Work and Rest Intervals: Alternate between periods of high-intensity work and active recovery or rest. For example, perform a specific exercise at maximum effort for 20-30 seconds, followed by a 10-20 second recovery period.

Focus on Intensity: During the high-intensity intervals, push yourself to the limit. You should feel challenged and be unable to maintain the same intensity beyond the prescribed interval.

Incorporate Progressive Overload: Regularly challenge yourself by increasing the intensity, duration, or complexity of your exercises as your fitness level improves. This helps prevent plateaus and consistently challenges your body for continued progress.

Monitor Form and Technique: While maintaining intensity is important, it's crucial not to compromise proper form and technique. Pay attention to your posture, alignment, and execution to reduce the risk of injury.

Customize Work-to-Rest Ratios: Experiment with different work and rest intervals to find what works best for you. You may vary the length and ratios depending on your fitness level, goals, and the specific workout.

Include Strength Training: Combine interval training with strength exercises using weights or resistance bands. This helps build lean muscle mass, which is beneficial for boosting metabolism and sustaining weight loss.

Stay Consistent: Aim for at least 3-4 HIIT workouts per week to see noticeable results. Consistency is vital for weight loss, as it allows your body to adapt and respond to the training stimulus.

Include Active Recovery Days: Give your body adequate rest and recovery time between HIIT sessions. Incorporate low-impact activities like yoga, stretching, or light cardio on rest days to promote muscle recovery and prevent overtraining.

*Always prioritize your safety during workouts, listen to your body's cues, and modify exercises as needed. If you have any health concerns or are new to exercise, it's advisable to consult with a healthcare professional or certified fitness trainer before starting a new training program.*

## **Why Gut Health is Important for Weight Loss:**

A healthy gut plays a vital role in weight management due to several reasons:

Digestion and Nutrient Absorption: A well-functioning gut absorbs nutrients efficiently, ensuring your body receives the necessary vitamins, minerals, and energy from the foods you consume.

Regulation of Appetite and Hunger Hormones: Gut health influences the production of hormones that regulate appetite, such as ghrelin and leptin. An imbalance in these hormones can lead to increased appetite and cravings, making weight loss more challenging.

Metabolism and Energy Expenditure: The gut microbiota affects various metabolic processes, including energy regulation and fat storage. Maintaining a healthy gut can support a healthy metabolism and potentially aid in weight loss.

Inflammation and Insulin Sensitivity: An imbalance in gut bacteria can contribute to inflammation and insulin resistance, both of which are associated with weight gain and difficulties in losing weight.

*Maintaining a healthy gut is not only essential for weight management but also for overall well-being. By adopting these tips and focusing on gut health, you can support your weight loss efforts and promote optimal digestive function.*



### **10 tips for maintaining a healthy gut and why it's important for weight loss:**

Eat a Fiber-Rich Diet: Include plenty of fiber-rich foods in your diet, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts. Fiber promotes healthy digestion, supports regular bowel movements, and helps you feel fuller for longer, potentially aiding in weight management.

Stay Hydrated: Drink an adequate amount of water throughout the day to support proper digestion and prevent constipation. Sufficient hydration is crucial for the movement of food through the digestive system.

Consume Fermented Foods: Incorporate fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and kombucha in your diet. These foods contain beneficial probiotics that help maintain a healthy balance of gut bacteria.

Minimize Processed Foods: Limit your intake of processed and sugary foods. These can disrupt the gut microbiota and contribute to inflammation and weight gain. Opt for whole, unprocessed foods whenever possible.

Manage Stress Levels: Chronic stress can disrupt gut health and lead to digestive issues. Practice stress management techniques like meditation, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies to promote better gut function.

Prioritize Sleep: Aim for quality sleep of 7-9 hours each night. Inadequate sleep has been linked to imbalances in gut bacteria and increased appetite, making it harder to maintain a healthy weight.

Limit Antibiotic Use: While antibiotics can be necessary in certain situations, unnecessary or excessive use can disrupt the balance of gut bacteria. Only take antibiotics under the guidance of a healthcare professional when necessary.

Regular Exercise: Engage in regular physical activity as it can support a healthy gut by improving digestion, reducing inflammation, and aiding in weight management.



Avoid Excessive Alcohol Consumption: Excessive alcohol intake can negatively impact gut health. Limit alcohol consumption to moderate levels or avoid it altogether to maintain a healthy gut ecosystem.

Consider Probiotic Supplements: If you're unable to consume enough probiotic-rich foods, consider taking high-quality probiotic supplements. Consult with a healthcare professional to determine the appropriate strains and dosage for your specific needs.



**Here are 10 tips for reducing inflammatory foods in your diet and alternatives to consider:**

Avoid Processed and Packaged Foods: Processed foods often contain additives, preservatives, and unhealthy trans fats that can promote inflammation. Opt for whole, unprocessed foods instead.

Limit Added Sugar: Excessive sugar intake contributes to chronic inflammation. Avoid sugary drinks, sweets, and processed snacks. Choose natural sources of sweetness like fresh fruits or use alternatives like stevia or monk fruit.

Choose Whole Grains: Swap refined grains (white bread, white rice) for whole grains like quinoa, brown rice, whole wheat bread, or oats. Whole grains have higher fiber and nutrient content, which can help reduce inflammation.

Opt for Healthy Fats: Choose heart-healthy fats like avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil, and wild caught fatty fish (salmon, mackerel). Avoid farm raised fish. These foods provide omega-3 fatty acids, which have anti-inflammatory properties. Avoid seed oils and processed oils. The eight industrial toxic seed oils are Canola, Corn, Cottonseed, Soy, Sunflower, Safflower, Grapeseed, and Rice bran. Industrial seed oils are the highly processed oils extracted from soybeans, corn, rapeseed (canola), cottonseed and sunflower and safflower seeds

Incorporate Anti-Inflammatory Spices: Use spices like turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, and garlic in your cooking. These spices have natural anti-inflammatory properties and can add great flavor to your meals.

Reduce Red Meat Consumption: Red meat, especially processed meats like sausages or hot dogs, can promote inflammation. Try to limit consumption and opt for lean protein sources like poultry, fish, eggs, or plant-based proteins. Always opt for wild caught, free range, and organic when you can.

Increase Omega-3 Intake: Include more omega-3 fatty acid-rich foods in your diet, like wild caught fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), chia seeds, flaxseeds, and walnuts. Omega-3s help reduce inflammation in the body.

Minimize Saturated and Trans Fats: Cut down on foods high in saturated and trans fats like fried foods, fast food, processed snacks, and fatty cuts of meat. These fats can promote inflammation and negatively impact health.

Focus on Colorful, Plant-Based Foods: Emphasize a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables in your diet. These foods are rich in antioxidants and phytonutrients that help combat inflammation and promote overall health. Avoid the nightshade family however; tomatoes, eggplant, peppers.

Drink Herbal Tea: Replace sugary or caffeinated beverages with herbal teas like green tea, chamomile, or ginger tea. These teas have anti-inflammatory properties and can be a healthier choice.

*Remember, these tips are general guidelines, and individual needs and tolerances may vary. It's always a good idea to consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian before making significant changes to your diet, especially if you have specific health concerns or dietary restrictions.*





**Here are 10 nutrient-dense foods that you can incorporate into your diet and the reasons why they are beneficial:**

Spinach: Spinach is packed with essential nutrients like vitamins A, C, K, folate, iron, and calcium. It supports bone health, boosts immunity, aids digestion, and provides antioxidants that help protect against chronic diseases.

Kale: Kale is extremely nutrient-dense, containing vitamins A, C, K, and minerals like potassium and calcium. It promotes heart health, provides antioxidants, supports eye health, and offers anti-inflammatory properties.

Salmon: Salmon is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, high-quality protein, vitamin D, and B vitamins. It supports brain health, reduces inflammation, promotes heart health, and supports healthy skin. Always opt for wild caught.

**Blueberries:** Blueberries are rich in antioxidants, vitamins C and K, fiber, and phytonutrients. They support brain health, promote heart health, improve insulin sensitivity, and aid in digestion.

**Quinoa:** Quinoa is a complete protein source and contains fiber, iron, magnesium, and various other nutrients. It provides sustained energy, supports muscle growth and repair, aids in digestion, and regulates blood sugar levels.

**Sweet Potatoes:** Sweet potatoes are packed with vitamins A, C, and B6, fiber, and potassium. They support immune function, promote eye health, aid in digestion, and provide natural sweetness without spiking blood sugar.

**Greek Yogurt:** Greek yogurt is high in protein, calcium, probiotics, and vitamin B12. It supports gut health, aids in digestion, promotes muscle growth and repair, and helps maintain bone health.

**Almonds:** Almonds are a great source of healthy fats, fiber, vitamin E, magnesium, and antioxidants. They support heart health, aid in weight management, provide satiety, and contribute to better skin health.

**Lentils:** Lentils are a versatile legume rich in protein, fiber, iron, folate, and other minerals. They support heart health, aid in digestion, stabilize blood sugar levels, and provide sustained energy. Consume in moderation as they are legumes and can contribute to intestinal inflammation.

Avocado: Avocados are packed with healthy fats, fiber, vitamins K, C, and E, and potassium. They support heart health, aid in nutrient absorption, reduce inflammation, and support healthy skin and hair.

*Incorporating these nutrient-dense foods into your diet can provide a wide range of essential nutrients that support overall health, aid in weight management, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Remember to balance your diet with a variety of nutrient-rich foods and listen to your body's needs.*



***Here are 10 healthy eating habits to incorporate into your lifestyle for improved well-being:***

Practice Mindful Eating: Pay attention to your food choices, eat slowly, and savor each bite. This helps you become more in tune with your hunger and fullness cues, preventing overeating and promoting enjoyment of meals.

Include a Variety of Whole Foods: Aim to consume a diverse range of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. This ensures that you receive a wide array of nutrients, vitamins, and minerals necessary for optimal health.

Control Portion Sizes: Be mindful of portion sizes to avoid overeating. Use smaller plates, measure your food, and pay attention to serving sizes recommended on packaging. This helps maintain a healthy balance of calories and nutrients. When judging portion sizes, use the palm of your hand as a guide; 1 serving of protein = the size of your palm

Practice Balanced Meals: Aim to include a combination of proteins, healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and fiber in each meal. This balanced macronutrient profile helps stabilize blood sugar levels, provide sustained energy, and promote satiety.

Plan and Prepare Meals: Plan your meals ahead of time and prepare them at home using fresh, whole ingredients. This allows you to have better control over the quality and quantity of the food you consume.

Limit Processed Foods: Minimize consumption of processed and packaged foods that are often high in added sugars, unhealthy fats, and preservatives. Instead, opt for whole, unprocessed foods to maximize nutritional value.

Stay Hydrated: Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated. Water is essential for digestion, nutrient absorption, and overall bodily functions. Carry a refillable water bottle with you as a reminder to drink regularly.

Snack Smartly: Choose nutrient-dense snacks like fresh fruits, vegetables with hummus, Greek yogurt, or a handful of nuts. These snacks provide essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber, and help curb unhealthy cravings.

Limit Added Sugars: Be mindful of your sugar intake and read food labels to identify hidden sugars. Opt for natural sources of sweetness like fresh fruits instead of sugary drinks, sweets, and processed snacks.

Listen to Your Body: Tune in to your body's hunger and fullness signals. Eat when you're hungry and stop when you're comfortably satisfied. Recognize emotional or stress-related eating patterns and find alternative ways to manage these feelings.

*Remember, healthy eating habits should be sustainable and personalized to your individual needs and preferences. It's important to find a balance that works for you and consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian for personalized recommendations based on your specific goals and health conditions.*





- Practice mindful eating by slowing down and savoring each bite.
- Limit sugary beverages and switch to healthier options like water or herbal tea.
- Incorporate at least 15 minutes of high to moderate-intensity exercise into the daily routine.
- Control portion sizes by using smaller plates and bowls.
- Prepare healthy, homemade meals and snacks instead of relying on processed foods or eating out.
- Encourage social support by joining a weight loss community or finding an accountability partner.
- Limit late-night snacking and establish a cut-off time for eating in the evening.
- Get at least 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night.
- Practice stress management techniques like meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga.
- Set specific and realistic weight loss goals.
- Avoid skipping meals and prioritize regular, balanced meals throughout the day.
- Opt for lean protein sources like poultry, fish, tofu, or legumes.
- Incorporate resistance training into the exercise routine to build muscle mass.
- Reduce processed food consumption and focus on whole, unprocessed foods.
- Practice positive affirmations and self-compassion to maintain motivation and emotional well-being.
- Limit eating out and focus on home-cooked meals to have better control over ingredients and portions.
- Seek professional guidance from a registered dietitian or healthcare provider for personalized advice and support.

*By selecting seven items from this list, weight loss patients can establish a starting point for their journey and gradually incorporate additional aspects as they progress. Remember, everyone's weight loss journey is unique, and it's essential to choose strategies that align with personal goals, preferences, and health conditions.*

**My list of items that are perceived as beneficial, but really can be pitfalls to any diet:  
Circle and text (2) that surprised you**

Fruit Juice: While natural fruit juices contain some nutrients, they are often high in sugar and lack the fiber found in whole fruits. Opt for whole fruits instead.

Flavored Yogurt: Flavored yogurts often contain added sugars and artificial ingredients. Choose plain Greek yogurt and add fresh fruits or a drizzle of honey for natural sweetness.

Processed Gluten-Free Foods: Many gluten-free packaged foods are heavily processed and may contain added sugars or unhealthy fats. Focus on whole, naturally gluten-free foods like fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and gluten-free whole grains.

Granola Bars: Commercial granola bars can be packed with added sugars and unhealthy fats. Look for ones with minimal ingredients or opt for homemade versions with whole ingredients.



Energy Drinks: Energy drinks may provide a temporary energy boost, but they are often loaded with caffeine, sugar, and artificial additives. Choose natural sources of energy like green tea, water, or fresh fruits.

Protein Bars: Some protein bars can be highly processed and contain added sugars or unhealthy additives. Look for bars with minimal ingredients and natural sources of protein, or opt for whole food protein sources like eggs or lean meats.

Diet Soda: Despite being low in calories, diet sodas contain artificial sweeteners, which may have negative health effects and can still contribute to cravings for sweet foods.

Margarine: Margarine often contains trans fats, which are unhealthy for the heart. Choose healthier options like avocado, nut butters, or butter in moderation.

Processed Veggie Burgers: Pre-made veggie burgers can be high in sodium, processed soy, and unhealthy additives. Choose homemade versions with whole, plant-based ingredients or opt for whole food sources of plant protein.

Reduced-Fat Peanut Butter: Reduced-fat peanut butter often contains added sugars or unhealthy additives to compensate for the reduced fat content. Choose natural peanut butter with minimal added ingredients or opt for other nut butters without added sugars.

Packaged Smoothies: Store-bought smoothies can be high in added sugars and lack the fiber found in whole fruits and vegetables. Make your own smoothies using fresh ingredients or opt for ones with minimal added sugars.

**Pre-packaged Salads with Dressing:** Pre-packaged salads may contain unhealthy dressings high in added sugars and unhealthy fats. Opt for homemade dressings using healthier options like olive oil, vinegar, or lemon juice.

**Rice Cakes:** Rice cakes are often low in nutrients and can spike blood sugar levels. Choose whole grain alternatives like quinoa or whole wheat crackers for added nutrients and fiber.

**Sports Drinks:** Unless engaged in intense physical activity or endurance training, sports drinks are unnecessary and often contain added sugars. Choose coconut water, or make your own natural electrolyte drink.

**Fruit Snacks/Fruit Roll-ups:** While they may be labeled as "fruit," these snacks are often made with minimal fruit content and predominantly consist of added sugars and artificial ingredients. Opt for fresh fruits instead.

**Non-Dairy Creamers:** Non-dairy creamers can contain artificial ingredients, unhealthy oils, and added sugars. Opt for healthier alternatives like coconut milk, almond milk, or oat milk.

**Cereal Bars:** Similar to granola bars, cereal bars can be high in added sugars and unhealthy additives. Choose bars with minimal added sugars or opt for whole food snacks like nuts, seeds, or fresh fruits.

**Agave Syrup:** Despite its perception as a healthier alternative to sugar, agave syrup is high in fructose and can impact blood sugar levels. Use in moderation or opt for natural sweeteners like honey or maple syrup.

Instant Oatmeal Packets: Flavored instant oatmeal packets can contain added sugars and artificial flavors. Opt for plain oats and add natural sweeteners like fruits, nuts, or honey.

Processed Gluten-Free Baked Goods: Processed gluten-free baked goods are often high in unhealthy fats, sugars, and refined flours. Enjoy gluten-free treats in moderation or opt for homemade versions using healthier ingredients.

*While these items may not be inherently unhealthy, it's crucial to be mindful of portion sizes, quality, and overall balance within a varied and nutritious diet. Individuals should tailor their food choices to fit their own health goals, preferences, and dietary needs.*

**Here are 20 items and a few replacement options for each: Text us (5) that you will try!**

Fruit Juice:

Replace with whole fruits or infused water.

Flavored Yogurt:

Choose plain Greek yogurt and add fresh fruits or a drizzle of honey.

Processed Gluten-Free Foods:

Opt for whole, naturally gluten-free foods like fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and gluten-free whole grains.

Granola Bars:

Look for bars with minimal ingredients or make homemade versions with whole ingredients.

#### Energy Drinks:

Choose natural sources of energy like green tea, water, or fresh fruits.

#### Protein Bars:

Look for bars with minimal ingredients and natural sources of protein, or opt for whole food protein sources like eggs or lean meats.

#### Diet Soda:

Replace with infused water, herbal tea, or sparkling water with a splash of fruit juice.

#### Margarine:

Substitute with avocado, nut butters, or butter in moderation.

#### Processed Veggie Burgers:

Make homemade versions with whole, plant-based ingredients or choose whole food sources of plant protein.

#### Reduced-Fat Peanut Butter:

Opt for natural peanut butter with minimal added ingredients or try other nut butters without added sugars.

#### Packaged Smoothies:

Make your own smoothies using fresh ingredients or choose ones with minimal added sugars and natural ingredients.

#### Pre-packaged Salads with Dressing:

Make your own salads with homemade dressings using healthier options like olive oil, vinegar, or lemon juice.

#### Rice Cakes:

Choose whole grain alternatives like quinoa or whole wheat crackers for added nutrients and fiber.

#### Sports Drinks:

Only use during intense physical activity or endurance training; choose water for hydration or make your own natural electrolyte drink.

#### Fruit Snacks/Fruit Roll-ups:

Opt for fresh fruits or homemade dried fruit alternatives.

#### Non-Dairy Creamers:

Use healthier alternatives like coconut milk, almond milk, or oat milk.

#### Cereal Bars:

Choose bars with minimal added sugars or opt for whole food snacks like nuts, seeds, or fresh fruits.

#### Agave Syrup:

Use in moderation or choose natural sweeteners like honey or maple syrup.

#### Instant Oatmeal Packets:

Choose plain oats and add natural sweeteners like fruits, nuts, or honey.

#### Processed Gluten-Free Baked Goods:

Enjoy gluten-free treats in moderation or make homemade versions using healthier ingredients.

*Remember, these replacements should be tailored based on individual dietary preferences and needs. It's important to carefully read labels, choose whole food alternatives, and source high-quality ingredients for optimal nutrition.*

As this book draws to a close, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the chance to share my passion and insights into health and wellness with you. My journey as both a healthcare provider and a mother has enriched my life immeasurably, especially witnessing my daughters, now 14 and 11, thrive under the guidance of the nutritional wisdom I've been able to share. Their growth into vibrant, healthy individuals reinforces my conviction in the power of informed, mindful choices regarding our health.

The journey of nurturing my family with a focus on nutrition and overall well-being has brought me unparalleled joy and fulfillment, further solidifying my belief in the profound impact of a well-rounded approach to health.

It is my sincere hope that the strategies and insights shared throughout this book have inspired you to take steps toward prioritizing your health and that of your loved ones. Whether you're a parent, a healthcare professional, or someone on a personal quest for better health, I hope my journey and the knowledge I've shared can illuminate your path to wellness.

For those of you embarking on the 90-day Get Started Program at Charleston Pain Relief and Wellness Center, I'm excited to offer an extension of this book's guidance into your daily lives. Over the next 12 weeks, I'll share themed tips, a few select recipes, and activities designed to help you integrate the principles of this book into your routine.

For example, in Week 1, we'll focus on "Hydration and Its Impact on Health," exploring not just the importance of water but how to deliciously infuse your hydration routine with variety, including recipes for cucumber mint water and herbal teas. Week 4 will delve into "Incorporating Movement into Your Everyday Life," where we'll look at simple yet effective exercises that can be seamlessly integrated into your day, and suggest activities like family walks, yoga sessions, or dance parties in your living room.

Each week will build upon the last, offering a comprehensive approach to embracing a lifestyle that nourishes and sustains your body and spirit. By the end of the 12 weeks, you'll have not only a wealth of knowledge but also practical experience in applying these principles for a healthier, happier life.

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your journey towards health and wellness. May this book, and the steps you take after, inspire you to embrace a life filled with vibrant health and joy. Here's to a future where we prioritize our well-being, celebrate our progress, and enjoy every moment of our journey to optimum health.