



## How I Got Healthy

13 years ago, I was headed down a dark path and knew I needed to make changes. A picture is worth a thousand words. I can SEE I am healthier (and I FEEL better). I dove in and did a bunch of bloodwork to make sure I wasn't fooling myself. The bloodwork is very nerdy (my favorite) but gave me proof that I am healthier.

When I started 13 years ago, I didn't have a clue! I was not a 'fitness' person. I was very sedentary. I tried doing all kinds of things to do better. I wasted a lot of time doing REALLY stupid things. Looking back, I now realize the first 9 years were fully wasted. I was improving but still not thriving. I was frustrated with all the information I'd read about various topics. I'm a rule follower and said many times "I just want someone to tell me what to do and I'll do it." That was the problem, there are lots of people telling you what to do (and most of it contradicts).

Over the past few years, I made much better progress but still didn't have it all nailed down. During 2023 I have dialed in everything and made excellent progress on all fronts. After 13 years of trying all kinds of things, I FINALLY feel like I'm on the right path. It has been VERY frustrating at times. I'm tweaking a few small things for 2024. But I'm on a path where I'm thriving. At 51, I am the strongest and healthiest I have ever been in my life. I'll share what I've learned here. Maybe it will help you (or at least give you food for thought). I'm still learning, but I feel like I'm in the best position I've EVER been in.

## Where I Started



In 2010 I was weak, fat around the middle, inflamed, my body hurt, my joints hurt, and I regularly had headaches that would put me on my back for 24 hours. When I walked, I was winded (yes, every time). I sat at a desk all day at work. I'd drink cans of soda while I sat there. If I got up to go on a vacation where walking was required, I'd throw my back out. FROM WALKING?!?! Pathetic. I ate all kinds of processed foods (sugary drinks and fried foods). Cheeseburger, fries, and a soda were on the menu for at least half the meals I ate. I was on a very bad path. You can easily see how all this was impacting my body. Fat around the middle and inflamed (all over).

I knew I needed to make changes. I was busy with a career and a family and didn't have a clue what the right thing to do was. I started doing what mainstream recommendations are to get healthy. I figured something was better than nothing.

## My 13-Year Journey

I didn't know what to do but I knew I needed to get off my ass and start moving. So, in 2010 I got a GPS watch and started riding my bike. A little more movement each time. In 2012, I bought a road bike and started riding it, I also started running and did a complicated weightlifting program. I even did P90X religiously because those people looked fit. By 2013-14 I wondered how anybody was able to do all that. I flamed out and quit completely. 4 years...completely wasted! I bet many of you have had similar stories (most Americans do).

In 2015, I became determined to get my giant waistline under control. I got a string and wrapped it around my gut. I measured 42 inches around 'the middle' (I was 69 inches tall). YIKES! I rode my bike a ton for a couple of years and my waist size did come down. Three years later I'd gotten down to 35-ish inches. I'd later (in 2021) find out the string I was using was stretching out and I wasn't as thin as I believed I was. When I bought an actual measuring tape device, I was at 38 inches. This was better than where I started but not where I needed to be. Regardless from late 2017 to 2021, I kept my waistline under control.

All along the way of this second phase (from 2015) I experimented with different diets. Forks Over Knives came out and I researched the plant-based lifestyle. It made sense. I limited meat and dairy. I cut way back on processed foods. I even went full vegan for a while. I remember the day in 2019 when I realized I felt miserable. I was ghostly white, sweating, and completely exhausted from a lazy day of kayaking. I knew that what I was doing on the nutrition front was not working at all. I was doing pretty much everything the mainstream was telling me to do and I felt as horrible as I'd ever felt. I'd made progress but was still not anywhere near where I needed to be.

By 2020 I started exploring 'other sources' of information. I began listening to some people who recommended doing almost the exact opposite of anything you hear in the mainstream. I also started lifting weights, which was the most important change I made in my life. I, nervously, went to the gym bro section of the gym and put the empty bar on my back, and began my weightlifting journey. After a year,

I'd made some progress. I wrote about that here: <http://deanorolls.com/2020/12/13/1-year-lifting-weights-my-progress-and-what-ive-learned/>

By 2021 I was knee-deep in learning more about strength training (using the Starting Strength methodology). As I cranked up the weight training I went heavily towards carnivore. I'd sit on my patio eating steaks, eggs, and ground beef without a shirt on soaking up sunlight. Not mainstream advice. Regardless, I felt much better than I'd felt in years. I was getting stronger and my diet was supporting it.

By 2022 I'd discovered regenerative agriculture. This had nothing to do with my health (or so I thought). Learning about this topic ultimately led me down another nutrition rabbit hole. In late 2022, I dove into the teachings of Paul Saladino and 'evolutionary consistent nutrition'.

At the end of 2022, I pulled a ton of bloodwork and it confirmed for me exactly what I already knew. Despite my much-improved health and newfound strength, I was still metabolically a mess. I was as strong as I'd ever been in my life but I was still too fat around the middle. The blood work I pulled flagged my biggest issue in every metric.

I realized that all the low-carb weightlifting was not doing me any good. I was also eating too much and incorrectly while focusing ONLY on strength. I was doing a full-time dirty bulk. The only metric I cared about was adding weight to the bar. I remember the day at the gym when I hit a squat PR (240 pounds for 3x5) and Preston filmed me. I was so proud. I wondered why Preston wasn't as excited. When I watched the video, I knew. My gut hanging over my belt. YIKES!

So, I spent 2023 focused on fixing that (which would also fix my metabolic health and ward off insulin resistance). I followed a plan called The Metabolic Blowtorch Diet to get 1) my waistline-to-height ratio where it needed to be, and 2) move a ton of other bloodwork markers in the right direction. This plan had carb cycling, fasting, walking, cardio, and kept the weightlifting (but not the way I was used to). It was hard, but it worked.

This last year has been the year I think everything came together. I have the bloodwork to prove it. I also have a picture to prove it. The guy in this picture is 13 years older but in better health than the guy from 13 years ago. It is easy to see.

After 13 years, I feel like I've finally cracked it all. I've got the activity and nutrition basics to thrive. I'm currently figuring out the nutrition plan that will support getting a lot more weight back on the bar at the gym without adding the wrong kind of weight back onto me. This is all minor fine-tuning, however.

### **Bloodwork Review**

What is harder to see than a picture is bloodwork. But the bloodwork tells the entire story. In late 2022 I pulled several hundred dollars worth of bloodwork. I recently pulled everything again. I won't write all this down but I go through each metric in the attached video. I talk about why I look at that metric, what the number should be, and where my numbers were a year ago and where they are now. If you want to geek out with me give it a watch. Every number went in the direction I expected it to go (based on the changes I'd made) over the past year.

## What's Most Important

I've learned a lot over 13 years. I've wasted a lot of time doing stupid things. I've found some critically important things. I've experimented with tons of different things. If I were starting over today and didn't want to waste 13 years here are what I think would be the most important things I'd do (in order of importance):

1. **Think For Yourself / Trust No One** – Don't listen to mainstream experts about anything (including your doctor or the government...especially the government). Experts are probably funded (or captured) by entities that don't care if you are fat, unhealthy, and sick. GASP Deano!?! Yes, I just said this. You are going to have to learn some things that you don't know today. You are going to have to work hard at learning. Getting your body healthy is going to start by getting that brain working. Don't rely on someone to spoon-feed you information. There is a crap ton of information out there on health, nutrition, and exercise. Most of it is garbage! You are going to have to figure out what works (and why). You are going to have to do this, unfortunately, on your own. Stop trying to take pills to fix a problem and, instead, try to fix the problem. The less you deal with the "healthcare" system the better. It is a "sick care" system. Let them help with the acute stuff (broken bones, accidents, etc.) otherwise fix yourself. Fix the problems and you won't need them nearly as often. Everything about your life will get better when you decide YOU will do this. I've listened to hundreds of hours of podcasts and videos. I've read tons of articles. I've read books. I don't have all the answers, but I've learned things. Then I try them. I see what works and what doesn't work. Rinse, repeat. You will have to do this too. No one is coming to save you!
2. **Waist/Height Ratio = .5** – Buy a tape measure. Put it around the fattest part of your gut. Make sure that the number (in inches) is half your height. Fix this ONE health measure and the rest of your problems will likely get fixed. This simple measure that anyone can do will fix your metabolic health and help decrease inflammation. This is why you are sick. If whatever you are doing is not making this number improve (and keeping it there) then you are not doing the right thing. The measurement is easy, making it go (and stay) where you want it to go is harder. Just make sure your string doesn't stretch out over time like my dumb@\$ did.
3. **Eliminate Seed Oils** – I'm not going to explain all that goes into this. There are people far more qualified than I that can explain why PUTAs are bad for humans. I've listened to them, however, and I believe them. By the way, good luck with this one! Seed oils are in just about everything these days. It doesn't matter. Don't eat them. Ever. No more fried foods. No more food from a factory. Seed oils are messing you up in all kinds of ways. You have to find them and eliminate them. I'm not all the way there. I still have certain things that I eat that contain them. I am weak at times. But they are down hugely in my diet (and I'm working on eliminating them). You cannot be healthy while these are in your diet.
4. **Lift Weights** – This is way more important than 'doing cardio'. Strength is a persistent adaptation. Cardio is not. If you want to improve your health you have to be doing weight training (not exercise...training). Just like with nutrition, there are tons of recommendations on how to go about this. I'm a student of Starting Strength. The big four compound lifts (done correctly according to their programming) combined with working to always put more weight on the bar will make you stronger. Strong people are harder to kill. This is a fact. Not to mention your life will be much better if you are stronger. Everything you will do will be better. It is the hardest

thing I do regularly. Doing hard things is extremely important. I have been going to the gym 3-4 times a week and lifting weights that I'd rather not lift for several years. It is the best thing I've ever done.

5. **Eat Real Food** – I've researched all kinds of nutrition plans over the years. They all recommend different things but many wind up 'allowing' consistent things. I've wound up keeping the good stuff and eliminating the common bad ones (devil foods). I've learned that 'real' food is the way to go. Try not to eat things that come from a factory (including a factory farm or industrial agriculture). No high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, or processed foods. Eat nutritionally dense whole foods. Don't be a vegan. Meat (especially red meat) is the most important food you can eat. It is the most bioavailable food available for humans. Most plants don't want to be eaten and have defense chemicals that make them less desirable. Regardless, don't be a carnivore. We need carbs to perform optimally. The right kind of carbs are important, however. Our guts have a hard time processing certain types of carbs while others digest easily. Eat certified organic as much as possible. Eat regeneratively grown produced foods as much as possible. As close to nature and as close to our ancestral evolution is likely the way to go when it comes to eating.
6. **Get Sleep/Rest/Recovery** – Get enough sleep. I never focused on this in my life too much. When I started lifting weights, I had to in order to recover properly. Once I started getting enough sleep I didn't realize how messed up my brain was all those years running on too little sleep. I prioritize sleep now way more than I ever have. Whatever it is...it can wait!
7. **Stay Hydrated** – I'm not one of these people who say you need 9 gallons of water a day. I drink based on thirst, but I make sure I get enough hydration. When I don't I feel bad. The only time I get headaches anymore is if I get busy and don't stay hydrated. Preston came up with a homemade version of a hydration drink that we use. He calls it Taterade. Lemon juice, honey, salt (and I add apple cider vinegar to mine). The key is the salt, however. I also drink a pot of coffee a day. I know some will say this is bad. They are stupid, it is the lifeblood of champions.
8. **Walk / Move Often** – I think (know) that a lot of people waste a lot of time doing 'cardio'. I used to do this when I was biking back in the day. I'd have been much better off focusing on strength training and less on cardio. Cardio, walking, and moving aren't bad for you. I'm not saying that. They should just be a lower priority. Everyone will agree that being sedentary is not a good option. A great way to not be sedentary is to walk. I do a lot of walking. Most days I try to get 10,000 steps in (and most days I succeed). I also do light cardio on days I'm not in the gym (bike rides, hikes in the woods, etc.). This helps with recovery and is also fun/relaxing. The priority is strength training, however. Besides, if you want some cardio put 225 on the bar and squat it 5 times. I can promise you some cardio!
9. **Give Blood** – This is a win-win. You give blood which the Red Cross needs. You get to lower your iron levels in the process. My Ferritin level drops about 30 points with each donation. I believe keeping my iron level low is very important to ward off all kinds of bad things.
10. **Manage Hormones** – Everything in our environment is trying to kill us. Plastics, forever chemicals in commercial products, chemicals in our water, fragrances, personal care products loaded with harmful chemicals, pesticides, dyes, molds, and estrogen mimickers. I try to eliminate using these as much as possible in my everyday life. I wrote a whole post about this: <https://deanorolls.com/2022/07/04/10-more-things-im-changing-to-better-manage-my-hormones/>

11. **Be A Hippie** – Let Mother Earth help you live right. The sun and the ground are our friends. I work hard to get sun. In a busy life, it is sometimes hard to make time to get out into the sunlight enough. But there are tons of benefits associated with direct sunlight in the morning (to help set your circadian rhythm) and during solar noon (to absorb the most sunlight the fastest). I've also done a good amount of research into grounding/earthing and believe there is something to that. I try to keep bare feet in contact with the ground as much as possible. PEACE OUT!
12. **Low/No Carbs Isn't Optimal** – Balance is important in a diet. Few. Mainstream will tell you a high-fat diet is bad for you. I don't believe that. Mainstream will tell you animal fats are bad for you. I don't believe that. A lot of non-mainstream people will tell you carbs are bad for you. I don't believe that. I'm spending most of my current learning time on this topic right now. But for optimal health (especially if you are training hard or living a stressful lifestyle) you need to have carbs, fat, and protein. You can survive on low carbs and low fat but it is not an optimal method. Of course, all carbs are not created equal and the ones we need (and the ones I eat) are things like fruits, fruit juices, honey, and certain root vegetables.
13. **Fasting Isn't Optimal** – I've fasted a lot over the years. I did 16/8 regularly and for prolonged periods (and combined it with carnivore while training hard). Bad! I used fasting to help me stop snacking at night when I used to be in the cabinet into the night. Good! I used fasting to get used to being hungry (which helped me see that I wouldn't die without food every 2 hours). Good! I got up to where I was doing 21+ hour fasts regularly when I was trimming body fat this year. Good! That said, fasting is not optimal. I've used it to help me but it still isn't optimal. Just like the above item balance is key. I've used fasting to change my relationship with food and to learn how to use it (and when). I'm not planning to use it on a long-term basis going forward, however.

### **Things That Helped Me Greatly In My Journey**

- **The Barbell Prescription (book)** – This book changed my life and made me think about why incorporating weight training into one's life is critical. I was not a "weightlifting person" before reading this book. Now it is the highest priority activity I do.
- **Dumping Iron (book)** – This is why I believe giving blood is so important. I wrote a whole post about this: <https://deanorolls.com/2021/12/10/dumping-iron-p-d-mangan/>
- **Starting Strength (books, videos, and podcasts)** – Mark Rippetoe's "Blue Bible" will teach you how to get strong and how to do the lifts correctly, so you don't get hurt (or sore). I've watched hundreds of their videos and listened to hundreds of their podcasts. The best podcast episodes that will give you the basics are: <https://deanorolls.com/2022/06/30/starting-strength/>
- **Paul Saladino** – Unquestionably my favorite nutrition guru. When I found him and started doing what he said I felt like I finally had found the right answer. The best podcast episode to start with is "Animal-based diet 101: 2023 edition" It is the best synopsis of his ideas in a short podcast. Do exactly what he says in this episode.

I've written other things over the years about all of this. If you'd like to read more about my experiences, you can see that at [www.deanorolls.com/fitness/](http://www.deanorolls.com/fitness/)

Of course, if you would like to talk about any of this give me a shout. -- DEANO

Date	Weight	Height (inches)	Waist (inches)	Ratio	Bodyfat	Pulse	VO2 Max
3/8/2019	186	69				62	
12/3/2021	185	69	38.5	0.56	24.7%	60	
12/19/2022	190	69	38.375	0.56	25.1%	66	Fair = 38 mL/Kg/min
11/17/2023	174	69	34.5	0.50	21.4%	55	Superior = 49 mL/Kg/min

TARGETS	175		34.5	0.5	<20%	<71	>43.4
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Date	COMP METABOLIC PANEL (CMP)	CBC WITH DIFFERENTIAL	Hemoglobin	Hemoglobin A1c	Fasting Blood Glucose	Fasting Insulin	Blood Pressure
3/8/2019				5.30%			121/67
12/3/2021			13.7gm/dL				118/70
12/19/2022	All OK	All OK	16.7gm/dL	5.40%	108	6.0	110/70
11/17/2023	A/G Ratio High	NA	NA	5.40%	85	1.9	124/82

TARGETS			<17.5	<5.6%	<100	<4.0	<120 and <80
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Date	MetS Z-Score Body Mass Index	MetS Percentile Body Mass Index	MetS Z-Score Waistline	MetS Percentile Waistline	HOMA-IR	Coronary Risk Ratio	CRP - C React. Prot. High Sens.
3/8/2019							
12/3/2021							
12/19/2022	-0.732	23.19%	-0.731	23.23%	1.6	3.85	2.5
11/17/2023	-1.253	10.52%	-1.301	9.67%	0.4	NA	NA

TARGETS	<0	<25%	<0	<25%	<1.9	<4.97	<3.0
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Date	Coronary Calcium Score	Cholesterol Total	Non-HDL	LDL	Triglyceride	HDL	Triglyceride /HDL Ratio
3/8/2019		141		87	80	38	2.1
12/3/2021							
12/19/2022		212	157	143	50	55	0.9
11/17/2023	0.56	213	NA	146	42	60	0.7

TARGETS	<100	210-249	<130	<100	<149	39-60	<2
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Date	Ferritin	Testosterone	Testosterone SHBG	Testosterone Free-Calc	Free Testosterone	Bioavailable Testosterone	PSA
3/8/2019							
12/3/2021	251	458	28	104.1	10.2 ng/dL = 2.22 %	249 ng/dL = 54.4 %	
12/19/2022	43	396	24	95.5	9.32 ng/dL = 2.35 %	228 ng/dL = 57.6 %	
11/17/2023	152	594	39	115.9	10.6 ng/dL = 1.79 %	294 ng/dL = 49.4 %	0.4

TARGETS	50-70	>700	<70	>47.0	25.0 ng/dL or 3%	500	<4
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Date	TSH (Thyroid Stim. Horm.)	T4 free (direct)	Cologuard	Albumin	Globulin	A/G Ratio
3/8/2019	1.04					
12/3/2021						
12/19/2022	2.00			4.5	2.5	1.8
11/17/2023	1.18	1.46	Negative	5.1	2.2	2.3

TARGETS	<1.5	.8 to 1.8	Negative	3.8-4.9 3.5-5.2 3.4-5.4	1.5-4.5 1.7-4.3 2.0-3.5	1.2-2.2 0.9-2.8 1.1-2.5	RR This Test RR Last Test Google "Norm. RR"
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