



Live Better, Longer: The Science Behind How Diet and Exercise Support Your Healthspan with Dr. Andrew Abraham (ep – 59)

[00:00:00] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Healthspan is all about quality of your life, not just the quantity of the years. So, and I don't think it's enough to simply live longer. We want to live better. We, we, and that's what my passion, what my curiosity is all about is extending those healthy years of life. And I personally, I'm not looking to live or I don't want to live to a hundred, but I want to know that if, if I'm 75, 80 years old, can I pick up my grandkids? Can I, when I get on a flight, am I going to need assistance to put the carry on over my head or can I do it myself? When I go grocery shopping, can I carry in the groceries? Can I take a few flights of stairs? Essentially, healthspan says you're full of vitality and independence, and that's really healthspans.

[00:00:42] **Ginger Hultin** What if living a long life wasn't just about adding years, but adding life to your years. Imagine feeling strong, energized, and vibrant well into the future. Healthspan isn't just a buzzword. It's a fascinating area of science that explores how our daily choices shape how we age. And while nutrition is a major player, it's only part of the story. From movement and mindset to sleep and community, many factors work together to support lasting wellness. In today's episode, we're diving into the first two key pillars of healthspan, nutrition and exercise. Before you think you've heard it all, I encourage you to stick around. We go beyond the basics, exploring the science behind healthy aging and what we can learn from some of the longest living communities around the world. Before we dive into today's conversation, I want to introduce you to a new part of the podcast. Each episode, I'll be bringing you fresh insights through a selection of short but informative rotating segments. And today, we're kicking things off with a little nutrition news. As we know, the connection between diet and longevity is well established, and new research continues to strengthen that link. Take, for example, a recent landmark study published in Nature Medicine that followed over 105,000 individuals for 30 years. We found that participants who consistently followed

a healthier diet, such as higher in fruits, veggies, whole grains, unsaturated fats, nuts, legumes, and low-fat dairy products, increased their chances of aging well by 45 to 86 percent. In this study, healthy aging was defined as reaching age 70 without major chronic diseases while maintaining good cognitive, physical, and mental health. Hi there, Andrew. Welcome to the podcast. I'm so excited to have you. And importantly, for anyone that doesn't know, Andrew is a physician and the founder of Oregon. So I'm really excited to you here today.

[00:02:48] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Thank you so much. I'm excited to be with you.

[00:02:50] **Ginger Hultin** I'd love to hear a little bit more about your background, but your journey is really, really important to the story. Your journey with health, as far as I understand it, began at a young age when you were diagnosed with a type of muscular cancer. And then this is so interesting to me because I'm a board certified specialist in oncology nutrition. And I was sort of on the other side of it working in a cancer center where there wasn't products that my patients wanted to use. There was no quality product. So you had cancer, and I believe that's a big part of why you developed this product and I have been working in cancer care for a long time having people say where are the quality products, and I'm so grateful that you developed something like Orgain that is so valuable for so many people.

[00:03:31] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, thank you. It was one of those kind of moments in life where it was obviously one of the most difficult times of my life, but some good came out of it for sure. And nutrition is what I came out and learning and immersing myself in. And to your point on oncology nutrition, there weren't many options or any options really that were truly good for your actually nutritious. So that's what kind of has become my life's work.

[00:03:56] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, it's an incredible way to take a really challenging situation and just turn it into something so positive that helps so many people. And what was happening to me when I was working in oncology in an oncology center is the only real option that I felt that I had was like make your own shakes, which is not possible when you're going to chemo all day and you have all these appointments. So one really cool thing about the grab and go shakes that Orgain has is you can like take them with you. They're already made and it just creates so much less barrier to getting good nutrition on the go.

[00:04:27] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, and I was forced to do the same thing. So, you know, when I realized the nutrition shakes on the market were not good for you, we started blending our own organic shakes at home. When I say we, it was my mom and I. And they took a lot of work and we would do it six times a day and it was really involved. And I thought there's gotta be an easier way to do this in a way that's convenient for patients so they could get all of the nutrition they need, but in a convenient form.

[00:04:50] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, absolutely. It is one of my highest recommendations now, and I'm really grateful for it. So we are lucky to have you today talking about healthspan. And I'd love to hear a little bit more from you about what that means, but you also presented the concept in this very interesting four pillars. So I want to start by defining healthspan and then diving into the four pillars

[00:05:14] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Sure, and it's a great question. And healthspan is a little bit different than longevity, right? And it's, it's really important distinction, I think. And longevity as we know it and as we think about it is the number of years that we live, right. So the number years, if you're going to live to be 84, you're going to have to be a hundred, that's your longevity, your lifespan. Healthspan, on the other hand, is about how many of those years you spend in good health. Like you're free from chronic disease, free from functional decline and the limitations that really often come with aging. What's interesting in the US, the average life expectancy in the US is 77 and a half years, according to the CDC. So call it 78 years or so is the average lifespan. The healthspan in the United States is about 65 years old or so. So we spend about 13 years in debilitating decline. So we're not really functional. We're not living well at all. So in other words, I'd say healthspan is all about kind of the quality of your life, not just the quantity of the years. So, and I don't think it's enough to simply live longer. We want to live better. We, we, and that's what my passion, what my curiosity is all about is extending those healthy years of life. And I personally, I'm not looking to live or I don't want to live to a hundred, but I want to know that if, if I'm 75, 80 years old, can I pick up my grandkids? Can I, when I get on a flight? Am I going to need assistance to put the carry-on over my head or can I do it myself? When I go grocery shopping, can I carry in the groceries? Can I take a few flights of stairs? Essentially healthspan says you're full of vitality and independence and that's really healthspan.

[00:06:51] **Ginger Hultin** I feel like this concept and the words that you're using are relatively newer. I feel we've been using lifespan for so long. I think where I started hearing about it was from Dr. Lee Hood, who has the term the welderly, so older people that are living well. When do you think healthspan, welderley, when did this really start gaining traction?

[00:07:16] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** I think the term has probably been around for a few decades, but I'd say over the last 10, 15 years, it's really gained a lot of mainstream traction, to your point, especially I think as we're starting to realize the old model of healthcare just doesn't work. And I was a physician and I saw it firsthand, whether it was in my residency training or seeing patients. The model of health care today is broken. We wait until disease appears and then we treat it and it's just not enough. So, we now have advances in aging science and personalized medicine supplements. Public awareness around even chronic illness, and it's helped shift the conversation. We're seeing more people interested in preventative or proactive strategies to help extend their healthspan, not just delayed death. And today, a lot of it is cookbook medicine. You come in, your cholesterol's high. Here's the medication. Let's check your blood work, hope it comes down. If it's not down, we'll give you more. And it's really reactive, not proactive. And what we can do today to have a proactive approach to health. Has a profound difference on the quality of the years that we live.

[00:08:18] **Ginger Hultin** I'm so excited to talk about this and I think you and me are a good pair because dietitians, I feel like have been really leading the way on like, let's talk about preventative care. Let's prescribe diet and lifestyle. I mean, we, that's what we really excel at. But sometimes I know that dietitians feel like we work out there in a silo. And I think there's such an amazing opportunity to be partnering more with physicians and people that are prescribing medications and treatments because we can't prescribe. And so we can prescribe food and we need to have more partnership and be really working as a team of health care providers towards a healthspan.

[00:08:54] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, I would say that prescription of food is going to matter more than the prescription of medicine. I think if we're able to take care of ourselves through food, through nutrition, through exercise and some of the things that are most important, you actually don't ever need medicine, right? And I think that's the beauty of this is There's this shift towards healthspan. And I think it's happening now because we're seeing our parents, we're seeing our grandparents suffer. They're going through things

like whether it's heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, or just being frail, right? We're seeing frailty as kind of a big deal. So nobody really wants to live their final decades dealing with pain and dependency or disease. And that's really sparking the question for you and I, as professionals in the industry. How can I avoid that? And this is the shift to healthspan because I think it reflects a broader mindset. People don't just want to exist longer, they want to thrive longer. And I think for me, that's my hope is I want to be thriving for as long as possible.

[00:09:51] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, I have the exact same goals. I'm excited to learn today how you define each pillar, what each pillar means. There's so much cool research in this area. So why don't you start by telling me about the four pillars and then we'll dive into each one specifically.

[00:10:06] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** So I always talk about this. I give a biohack every month to our company here at Orgain, and I always talk about the four pillars or the four foundational pillars of health. And they're the ones that have the most evidence base behind them. And I break them down into exercise. So not just movement, but the right kind of movement, the resistance training, cardiovascular conditioning, functional fitness, that's exercise. And that's one key pillar. The next is what you and I just talked about nutrition, right? Whole food anti-inflammatory, nutrient dense diet paired with smart supplementation. That's another key pillar and one of the most important pillars, I would say. Sleep which quite frankly for me was I was not always good. I'm getting a little bit better, but it's it's an area of focus for me but restorative sleep Wildly essential for the regulation of hormones immune function and cognitive health and finally the fourth pillar is stress management. We're all subjected to stress today. I mean, just turn on the news and you're subjected to a tremendous amount of stress. And chronic stress really accelerates aging at the cellular level. So managing it effectively and really slowing down your biological aging through that is critically important. Within stress, in that pillar, it also says your community. You may have heard that the five people you spend the most time with is who you are, so choose wisely. So having your community, those that are around you, lift you up, not bring you down, I think is critical and part of that stress pillar. And having a positive outlook, a positive perspective, laughing often, I thinks is really important. So the four pillars boil down to exercise, nutrition, sleep, and stress management slash community.

[00:11:47] **Ginger Hultin** I really like your messaging around each person has a different thing to work on, right? Like maybe you're really good at exercise, but you struggle with sleep. That's my personal situation. And so maybe you need to focus on all of them, but maybe there's one or two where you need to put more focus on or as life changes, you have more or less time to focus on one or the other. So I'm excited to dive in and it sounds like you and me have some similarities and we really need to focus on sleep. So we'll do that today too.

[00:12:13] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, and the good news is whatever one or two or three or four that you need to focus on, they're all malleable, they are all adjustable, and if you're willing to commit yourself, you can make a dramatic difference in each. To your point about sleep, that's been my toughest one. I work around the clock, I have a lot of stress and pressure, so sleep in my mind would always ruminate and go. But since I've been focusing on it, even in the last few weeks I've really, really tried, I've made tremendous progress on it and it just takes a little bit of a jump.

[00:12:42] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, I talk to my patients a lot about how priorities and values and focus need to shift if you really want to see a change. It doesn't have to be like life altering, but I'm really proud I've been more like consistent in my sleep for the past few weeks and like that's a huge deal for me. So it just depends on like where you're willing to put the work, I think, and the attention.

[00:13:03] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, and I think you said it best, little changes make a dramatic difference. Even if you're having trouble sleeping, if you commit to just saying, I'm going to be in bed by 10 PM every night, just that, that will with time have a dramatic difference on your sleep score and sleep quality. So it's just small changes.

[00:13:20] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, exactly. And I do the same thing with exercise, and I actually want to dive in there first. I'm totally obsessed with exercise. And it's one of my favorite things to talk about, especially some of the research that you're talking about, like living healthier longer. It's not about like lifting tons of weight in the gym. It's like, can I put my bag up in the airplane? Can I walk up my stairs? Can I carry my groceries, like pick up my grandkids? These things are critical. Patients are forever telling me like, well, I don't have two hours to go to the gym or I can only walk one block. And I'm like, okay, five minutes at the gym is better than no minutes at a gym. One block is better than no block. So we really need to think about it that way to make forward progress.

[00:14:00] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** That's really it, and there's different types of exercise, but I think it's little changes. Like more recently, any phone call that I have that's not requiring me to be on video, I'll take the phone call and just walk out the door. And I don't realize like in 30 minutes, 40 minutes, I've walked more than 5,000 steps. So it's little changes like that. Even under my desk right now, I have a little pedal thing that I sit and I'm not moving much, but if I'm able to just move and get blood flow, the small changes in exercise make a dramatic impact. And the one that has resonated the most in exercise or the one that really sticks out is called zone two cardiovascular training. And that one is probably the most effective in boosting your healthspan. And it doesn't take much. It's not like I need you to go on sprints every day. It's, it's, lower resistance to exercise. It's walking fast or walking slightly uphill. Those are the ones that kind of stick out resistance training because we want to maintain muscle mass, metabolic health, bone density, and mobility, like flexibility work, something that I'm struggling with and sitting on a desk all day. What can you do to improve like functional movements through like yoga to prevent injury and maintain that independence? So each type of exercise, whether it's zone two, cardiovascular training, resistance training, mobility, flexibility training, each one addresses a different aging mechanism, I guess, if you will. So whether it is insulin sensitivity to sarcopenia, which means we lose muscle, they all work together to keep us strong, agile and energized as we age.

[00:15:33] **Ginger Hultin** I get asked a lot, like, which one's most important, but I'm hearing from you, the three are critically important and they work together.

[00:15:39] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** I think that's, I think it's important to look at them together as a package deal. So you, you can't, it doesn't make any sense for you to be really strong and not have cardiovascular health. Doesn't make sense for me to have cardiovascular health and not be able to bend down to pick something up. So I would say it's mobility, flexibility, that resistance training to maintain your muscle and your most important muscle, your heart, you need that. You got to make sure you maintain that. So a little bit in each and with in moderation. That, I think, is the holy grail of exercise.

[00:16:10] **Ginger Hultin** I find that people tend to be more drawn towards one or the other. And there's usually a place where people do need to focus. And it's usually on what they're not as good at or enjoy as much, but it's really important to find that balance. And the research that I usually cite is for

resistance training. We really need to be doing twice a week, hitting most of the major muscles of, of the body. Is that how you.

[00:16:31] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, that's the way I would think about it. And resistance training, I think, is gaining even more momentum. Like I use resistance training three to four times a week. I think twice a week is great foundationally, hitting all the major muscle groups and the compound movements that matter the most, whether that's like a deadlift, a pull-up, and you don't have to do heavy weights or you could use them assisted. The idea is you want to just engage all of those muscles and keep them growing and keep active because the number one risk for a hip fracture is muscle loss. So whatever we can do to improve that, I think, helps a lot. And they're simple movements. In one of the blue zones in Japan, they have the lowest incidences of hip fracture, and that's because when we get together, we all sit on a chair and talk to one another. In Japan, they sit on the floor. So they're forced to get up from the floor position to stand up. And every time they do that, they're strengthening their core muscles, accessory muscles, and they prevent hip fracture. So whatever could do to mimic things like that, I think is critical.

[00:17:29] **Ginger Hultin** I know that the ability to get up and down off the floor is like an absolutely critical one for aging. I see a lot of training for older adults focused on that specifically. So that's interesting about the blue zones.

[00:17:41] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** And there are simple exercises, a lot of them, like one of the most important things to determine your aging and where you're headed is the balance test, like standing on one foot, are you balanced? If you're not balanced, you need to make sure you're working those muscles appropriately. A dead hang, like hanging from a pull-up bar, just hanging, not doing anything to assess grip strength. That's another measure of longevity now that's profound. And it doesn't have to be long. And if you could only hang for two seconds, that's okay. Hang for four seconds the two weeks after. Hang for six seconds. And as you gain grip strength, it actually improves your cardiovascular fitness. It improves your longevity metrics. So really small changes and small things. And I got to tell you yoga and mobility exercises for me, like I look like I'm sweating and shaking and it looks like I am running a marathon and I've gotten better, but that's an area of focus for me. I need to do better and I have improved quite a bit.

[00:18:33] **Ginger Hultin** I really wanna get back to yoga myself. I think there's such benefit to the mind-body connection and the intentionality that yoga has, but the balance combined with strength and flexibility is really incredible. There's nothing else like it.

[00:18:46] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** It's really one of the best exercise modalities possible, and it's relaxing and your muscles are stretched and you're able to improve your posture and you are able to get a workout out of it. I think it's incredible and really it's as easy as popping in a YouTube video now and they have excellent trainers and you can spend, they have five minutes, 10 minutes, 20 minutes. There are people that have had, that were going to go into surgery and decided instead to hold off, and they went through an extensive yoga program. And they were able to rebuild and repair some of these muscles to prevent or delay surgery, which is incredible and it tells you about the exercise.

[00:19:22] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, yeah, all right. Getting back to yoga is now officially on my list, definitely.

[00:19:27] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Mine too, mine too.

[00:19:30] **Ginger Hultin** This episode is brought to you by Orgain. Balancing convenience and nutrition is always a positive and Orgain's organic nutrition shakes make it easier than ever. With 16 grams of organic grass-fed protein, a blend of organic fruits and veggies, and 20 essential vitamins and minerals like B12, zinc, and vitamin D, these shakes keep you fueled and satisfied. Whether you're at work, at the gym, or on the go, they make nutrition that extra little bit easier. Dr. Abraham's cancer journey inspired him to create this shake, and it was the first protein shake he brought to the market. It remains one of Orgain's top sellers. I wanna hear a little bit more about the cardio though, and especially the zone too. I don't really think about it in those terms, but I'm intrigued. Can you talk me a little more about like how someone can know what zone they're working out in, like how they get there?

[00:20:26] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** There's a variety of heart zones, and a heart zone basically tells you how intensely you're working out. And it's usually a percentage of your maximal heart rate. So your maximal rate is you take the number 220, subtract your age, that's your maximal heart rate, and then there

are five zones. Zone one is very light activity. So if you were to go for a very casual stroll, walking very slowly, that is very light activity, that 50 percent to 60 percent of your heart rate max. Zone two, and this is where the magic happens, because it improves your mitochondria, which is the energy powerhouse of the cell, it improves longevity. A lot of Olympic athletes, or the most elite athletes in the world actually, spend a lot of their training in zone two, which says a lot. That's 60 to 70 percent of your maximal heart rate, and it's great not only for fat burning, but more importantly, and why I do it, is for mitochondrial function. It's a little boring, you're not doing sprints, you are not doing anything like that, I walk on an incline on my treadmill at level speed three. And on an incline, and that's all it takes. And I stay in zone two for 45 minutes plus a few times a week. And that's what I call your foundation of exercise. And then, of course, zone three to five, that's that higher intensity training that improves a metric called VO_2 max and your cardiovascular power. But for me, I would say, and for most people, zone two is the sweet spot for longevity. And then I would add in a little bit of HIIT training or high interval training. Only to improve that VO_2 max which is another marker a key marker for longevity and now I've just read some recent studies might be one of the most important markers for longevity.

[00:22:01] **Ginger Hultin** I love how much research is coming out about exercise and longevity, and it's very specific. So I feel like we're getting closer to know like exactly what do I do? I do zone two. I do yoga. I do weight training. I'm interested though in like the science behind exercise and healthspan. Like what is it about exercise that helps slow the aging process?

[00:22:21] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** I recently gave a biohack on exercise. And the fact that it affects literally everything in the body, every system in our body, whether it's brain health, muscle health, kidney health, every single system. Like if I was to put exercise in a pill, I would be the most successful person in the world, right? Because there is literally zero downside to it and only tremendous upside. You feel better. You delay incidence of disease. You live longer. Your energy is higher. Your cholesterol is lower. Every single metric in health is affected by exercise. So it's it's a miracle. Like if we're able to just dedicate the time and commit ourselves, we put it in our calendar the same way we have meetings and just commit ourselves. What you benefit from it is endless. And people that do it, they hate it for the first two weeks. It's very tough for the first month. And then it becomes a way of life. When they don't do it, they feel off. I always like to say you don't know how good you're supposed to feel, and exercise allows you to get very close to that.

[00:23:24] **Ginger Hultin** I have some patients that love exercising, and it's a natural part of their day and they do miss it if they're not doing it, but I have others where it can be really painful to start, and you have to start really slow and that's hard mentally and emotionally for them, but I think you're right, a huge takeaway here is like, even if you're at the very beginning, your body will adapt, and it will get easier. I like what you're saying within two weeks, it truly will.

[00:23:47] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** My mom is tough when I'm trying to convince her to do exercise, but I told her even after dinner, if you were to after dinner, walk outside for five to seven minutes, just five to seven every day and do that consistently. That's all it takes. And I try to tell her exercise and I try and explain it in simple terms, but really it activates dozens of cellular pathways that impact aging. So we're talking about increasing your mitochondrial density, reduces inflammation, improves insulin sensitivity, so it prevents diabetes, triggers something called autophagy, which basically like the body's internal cleanup system, it protects brain function, neuroplasticity, and at the molecular level, it actually preserves your telomere length, which slows what we call epigenetic aging. So it's a miracle. And even if it's very hard, if you could just do a little bit of it and build upon that, I think it has a dramatic difference in your healthspan.

[00:24:42] **Ginger Hultin** I think a huge takeaway here is one block is a great start, five minutes is a great start. And I really hope that this inspires people to feel that way. And then for all our athletes listening and people that are already active, what would you suggest for really taking longevity focused fitness to the next level? Like where should people focus?

[00:25:02] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, for those that are looking to go a little bit more on it, it's that zone two training I mentioned. Then it doesn't have to mean like you're pounding the pavement. You can get the same benefit from risk walking, cycling, indoor, outdoor, rowing, swimming. The key is for those who are really going to get after it, is a steady pace for 45 to 60 minutes, three to four times a week. If you're able to do that, 45 to 60 minutes, 3 to 4 times a you are going to get that zone to benefit. You're also, if you do the HIIT training, you're going to get the VO₂ max. And I think that puts you the upper class of what you're going to be doing for exercise and the benefits that you're going to to be getting. And then mobility and recovery. Like if you're able to do cold exposure, sauna, that kind of thing, stretching for mobility. I think, that's critical. And then of course, weightlifting, as we talked about those compound

lifts really over isolation exercises, in addition to that zone two cardio. I think if you're able to do those three things, you're going to have the best outcome by far.

[00:26:01] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, you're inspiring me. I feel like I need to do my calculations, but I'm pretty sure that I'm doing zone two, but I am like 30 minutes. And I think the next step is to go to 45, because I know there's some good research there.

[00:26:12] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** There is. And honestly, if you go from 30 to 35 minutes, that's a huge step in the right direction and you won't feel it. And then once you feel like that's easy, go up to 40. They're baby steps, right? And the first time I did this incline thing of walking my zone two, it was hard. It wasn't easy actually. And now I do it without thinking, and it's not as bad. And now, I use a weighted vest to get into zone two. And I'm the furthest from being like an athlete, but I will tell you that small changes day after day, your body has an incredible ability to adapt and grow. And if you're able to just put in the time, it'll give you all of those benefits as a reward.

[00:26:55] **Ginger Hultin** I think that you set a very powerful example of someone who's extremely busy and balancing a huge amount of responsibilities and still making exercise a priority, like it sounds like you really make it fit in. It's a non-negotiable is what I'm hearing.

[00:27:09] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** It's important and I try my best, even when I get home, I get home sometimes six 37 o'clock at night. I'll have dinner with the family, spend time with them, and then I'll just get on the treadmill. And before I sit down to work again, I'll get on the treadmill and make sure that I get that in. So, and I feel better. I sleep better. My HRV, which is a measure of your recovery or my heart rate variability has improved dramatically since I've been doing it consistently. So I'm encouraged by seeing all the metrics.

[00:27:35] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, absolutely. It is inspirational. I'm really excited to hear your story, and I have some ideas for myself. But I want to pivot over to my other obsession, which is nutrition, of course. And I actually hear from a lot of my patients that one of their biggest concerns is trying to figure out how to use nutrition to be anti-inflammatory, slow cognitive decline. Like, there's tons

of information about that right now. I'm interested in your opinion on the evidence behind how certain diets are playing a role in aging.

[00:28:06] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, I think the evidence is exceedingly clear now, right? So those even that live in blue zones, one thing is consistent, they eat similar foods, right. And as soon as we, as soon as some of those blue zones adapt the Western diet, all of their health goes down the drain essentially. So nutrition and diet I think is a cornerstone. What we put in our bodies is what we're going to get out in terms of our energy, how we feel, how we delay disease. So for me, I think it's probably the most critical in terms of all of these antioxidants we put on our bodies. There are armor to protect us against disease as if we monitor what kind of fats go in, putting the right fats instead of the wrong fats, all of these have a profound impact on driving these biological processes that drive aging.

[00:28:52] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, 100 percent. And you exercise like a few times a week, and hopefully at the right pace and everything, but you eat three to five times every single day, like, it's this constant like hardly anything else is.

[00:29:05] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, and it's a decision you make, right? I mean, I went to a school that was in one of the blue zones, and the diet clearly had a tremendous benefit to those that did that on a consistent basis. So things like these anti-inflammatory compounds like a high quality olive oil, nuts, seeds, I mean if those are kind of part of your diet and you're not including things like fast food, hamburgers, all the pro-inflammatories things or minimizing them as much as possible, the difference between the, the different people was pretty profound. And even when I was practicing as a doctor, I knew without seeing the patient, if I just saw their blood work, what their diet looked like.

[00:29:45] **Ginger Hultin** Oh, interesting. Are you, were you in the Loma Linda area?

[00:29:49] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** That's right. Yeah. I was in the Loma Linda area for schooling and they obviously follow a, their Seventh Day Adventist is a religion there, and their diet is plant based, and they have a wonderful community and they live among the highest ages with the best healthspan in the world, even though they have the worst air quality and worst water quality

in the United States. So it tells you something about nutrition, exercise, community, how they also prioritize sleep and the results speak for themselves. I had my professor that was 86 years old that biked the class. So gives you an idea.

[00:30:20] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah. I have had a wonderful opportunity to work with a lot of people from that area and Seventh Day Adventists in my plant-based work in nutrition, and a lot of people don't realize that there is a blue zone in the United States and it's in the Loma Linda area because of the lifestyle of Seventh-Day Adventists. And because of that, there's amazing research that has come out of that community on plant-based vegan and vegetarian diets. So a lot of what we know comes out of that amazing community.

[00:30:46] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, incredible research, and even though I was in school there, I was more fascinated by the people and how they operated. And this professor, I would always ask him after class, he thought I would have a question about the class and it was more about him, like, what do you do on a daily basis? And he would wake up and hike to the sunrise and would start his day with these different mixture of nuts and all these kinds of things. And he was 86 and thriving. He looked like he was 65.

[00:31:13] **Ginger Hultin** Wow. That's incredible. Another thing in my understanding of that community is that they take like a Sabbath, they take a day off every week on a weekend and like really unplug and it's for time with friends and family. And I know that that has had some great research about the connection between community, taking time off and longevity.

[00:31:31] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, I mean, how much do we panic if we forget our cell phones at home or we leave it somewhere for 30 minutes, we have to dart back and pick it up because we feel what they do is they disconnect and are just with each other laughing, enjoying each other's company. And I think that has a lot to do with it. I think today more than ever, we're connected. We're more connected than ever and the most disconnected we've ever been.

[00:31:54] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, it's that's a great point. You and I are talking all back and forth about blue zones. It's something I'm very interested in. But I think we should define it. Can you just give a quick definition of like what the

Blue Zones are, how we know about them and some of the research done in that area?

[00:32:09] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, the Blue Zones are, I believe, six areas in the world where people essentially have the best healthspan and longevity metrics, and a lot of them don't have access to the technology and all of the science and the research. They just live a consistent life rooted in these four pillars that we talked about. A lot of, even in Okinawa, Japan, we talked Loma Linda, in Italy, Greece, there's all of these places that essentially follow, they're different, they are very different, but very similar. In the sense that they're always together, they're also enjoying each other's company, their diet is excellent, it's largely plant-based. They focus on high quality olive oils, nuts, seeds, salads, vegetables. In Japan, a lot of it is sweet potato, a purple sweet potato that they are attributing to a lot their health. They're active, but they're active not necessarily going to the gym. They don't have memberships to the gyms, but they are gardening outside. They're walking to one another's homes. They're doing zone two without knowing that zone two is good for them. Right? And I think for me, I've been fascinated by it. I've read all the books on Blue Zones and how the people live there. And it's really intriguing. And it just taking some of the learnings there and applying it to our everyday life, I think is really important.

[00:33:25] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, I love reading about it to Costa Rica is another one.

[00:33:28] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Costa Rica, yes. Yes.

[00:33:30] **Ginger Hultin** It's so interesting because the Blue Zones are literally all around the world, and they're all like they have a lot of different cultural foods, but they are, like you said, plant based whole foods. Like they don't have a lot of processed foods. And then what I read once was that a common food that all of them have is beans like they all include some sort of beans. And that's like a big commonality. So I'm a huge bean fan.

[00:33:54] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, beans are great, super high in fiber, they have protein, there's a lot of antioxidants in beans, they're a little underrated, so I agree with you. Beans should rise to the top.

[00:34:03] **Ginger Hultin** I think so too. One thing that I focus on a lot in my practice, and I have a book that I wrote about anti-inflammatory diet, and i

know that that is specifically linked to health and longevity. Is that the link or is it just part of the picture?

[00:34:18] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** I mean, inflammation is the root cause of nearly every single disease, right? So as we think about the root or kind of the ending, itis, arthritis, colitis, gastritis, all of that, it's really, it means fire. And fire is the root cause of literally every single we have, whether it's heart disease, cancer, everything. So whatever we could do to put out the fire as much as possible through nutrition, we're essentially de-aging or increasing our healthspan, because of an anti-inflammatory approach. And nutrition is the most powerful way to modulate it. So anti-inflammatory foods like fatty fish, berries, I'm a huge proponent of blueberries, right? And the different kinds of spectrum of berries, raspberries, so forth, leafy greens, olive oil. Every morning I start with a tablespoon of a really high quality olive oil, right. It's not super pleasant, but I've gotten used to it. And that's what I do because, and I take it because of its anti-inflammatory effects, turmeric to help reduce that internal fire. We see this, like in India, for example, they have one of the lowest rates of gastric cancer in the world, or they attribute it to the high levels of turmeric and curcumin that is in their diet. So it gives you an idea, and I like to always say in my practice, if you have this rainbow diet where if it's orange, turmeric, green, broccoli, yellow, all of the spectrum of colors every day, think of it as a way to protect yourself in every way.

[00:35:42] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, we say eat the rainbow, but there's very specific reasons for that.

[00:35:45] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** That's right.

[00:35:46] **Ginger Hultin** And all those foods that you mentioned, I mean, they exist on evidence-based diets for health plant-based, Mediterranean, the mind diet, the blue zones approach. Do you recommend any single diet or how to approach that with people?

[00:36:00] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, I mean, I personally don't think it's one size fits all, but I will tell you, leaning towards a Mediterranean-style diet, which is also a part of the Blue Zone diet. So whole, unprocessed foods, healthy fats, plenty of fiber from beans, as you mentioned, and other great foods like that, minimal sugar. That's really anti-inflammatory, heart-healthy, rich in longevity-supporting nutrients. But again, it's personalization matters. There's no one-size-fits-all. Some people thrive on plant-based eating. Others

with more animal protein. And if it's animal protein are using like grass fed grass finished beef. But what's universal and what I found is all about quality and balance, right? And I think if you have quality balance moderation, I think that's the most important thing. And I think sticking with those four pillars, like, it's good that the Blue Zones have plant forward diets community movement and they also have purpose. So it's I think it's one pillar But it's one that if you pay attention to, I think can really help your health in a very significant fashion.

[00:37:01] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, I also practice to be really personalized. Like, I don't have one thing that I tell everyone to do. It's like, who are you? What do you like? Like, when do you feel the best? So I totally agree with that. You also mentioned supplementation. I have a special interest in supplements. How do you approach that with longevity?

[00:37:21] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, I think supplements can play a supportive role, but they should never ever replace a solid foundation of nutrition and lifestyle, right? I take a lot of supplements. I won't go through all of my supplements today, but some of the most evidence-based supplements for me are vitamin D. Make sure your vitamin D levels are optimized. I think that's a universal truth. Now more than ever for immune and bone health and other things. I think omega-3s, not only for their heart and brain health, but I will tell you, and I've self-experimented with this, little bit higher doses of omega-3s reduces my inflammatory levels fairly dramatically in the body. So I think that's another key one. And creatine, which is interesting. Creatine is one that typically has been reserved for those in the world of sports nutrition and those guys going to the gym to build as much muscle as possible. That's not true anymore. Creatine and the studies, there's 66,000 studies and growing now, not only on muscle health, but brain health and mind health, memory, cognitive health. Men and women and ages are now expanding all the way for creatine, so I think that's another important one. And another one that I think is critically important now is magnesium. Magnesium that I use that in a variety of forms for sleep, muscle, and metabolic function. So I think the key is really targeted evidence-informed supplementation and not necessarily the kitchen sink approach.

[00:38:38] **Ginger Hultin** Yeah, absolutely. And people will come to me and be like, well, what about this one and this one and this? And I'm like, Well, there's a lot of good research and a lot of supplements, but we need to prioritize and personalize. I forever get people coming to me and saying, how much vitamin

D should I take? And, I say, I don't know what your blood levels are. So, like, we have got to figure that out first, and then personalize, but I live here in the Pacific Northwest and a lotta people are walking around deficient and don't even know it.

[00:39:02] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Yeah, and vitamin D is an easy one to replace, right, and the further you are from the equator, the lower the levels of vitamin D, and that's now been associated with things like multiple sclerosis and others. The further you're from the Equator, the higher the incidence of multiple sclerosis, and it's such an easy fix that taking 5,000 or 10,000 IU depending on where your blood levels are is something everyone should look into.

[00:39:24] **Ginger Hultin** If there was one dietary change today that you think most people should make, what would it be?

[00:39:32] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** I would say, I know it's one, but I'm going to have to say two. First, I would plants and fiber to your plate, I think is important. Simple change, more vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds. That alone can, I think, shift your microbiome, you're reducing inflammation, support metabolic health. So it's a small habit, huge payoff. The other thing is, I think, a little bit more protein and less carbs and sugar. Shifting that scale a little towards more high quality protein, I think, helps with lean muscle mass, helps keep you full longer. I think the studies are very clear now that it's safe. So I think those are the two things that I've made changes in my diet and I've noticed a very big difference. So just increasing that protein content, like in the morning, if you're going to have two eggs and an avocado, it's better for you than cereal or a bagel, right? I think. So that shift towards cereal or protein smoothie, I think all of that makes a little bit more of a difference.

[00:40:27] **Ginger Hultin** And it's easy to do. Like it's not like you have to all of a sudden start becoming this massive culinary person, like small, easy changes, whip up a healthy protein shake. And that's a benefit. Throw some creatine in.

[00:40:39] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** That's right.

[00:40:40] **Ginger Hultin** Well, thanks for breaking all that down. And in our next segment, we are going to tackle my biggest challenge. And it sounds like yours too. We got sleep and stress management up next.

[00:40:50] **Dr. Andrew Abraham** Looking forward to it.

[00:40:53] **Ginger Hultin** Wow, what a deep dive. What I loved most from our conversation is that our biggest takeaway was actually very simple. Start small. Overhauling your diet or suddenly trying to hit the gym five times a week can feel overwhelming. But like anything meaningful, it's a small consistent habits that truly add up and add years to your healthspan. As Andrew shared, even something as simple as taking a walk during a phone call can be a meaningful shift. These habits are yours to build and it's never too late to start. But the conversation doesn't end here. We've got two more pillars of healthspan to explore, sleep and stress management. So be sure to join us on the next episode as we dive into these topics.

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