



**The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast
Episode 1 Transcription**

The Role of Nutrition in Immunity and Inflammation with Dr. Andrew Abraham, CEO and Founder of Orgain, LLC

Mary Purdy:

Welcome to the first episode of *The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast* where healthcare professionals and health minded consumers are provided with practical and helpful nutrition information on current and trending topics from subject matter experts. My name is Mary Purdy, and I'm an integrative eco-dietitian nutritionist based in Seattle, Washington.

I have to tell you, I was thrilled when Orgain asked me to host this podcast and lead important conversations on a variety of nutrition related topics to support both healthcare professionals and consumers. And this series is just another one of Orgain's ongoing efforts towards providing educational outlets and resources which I really appreciate as a healthcare professional, especially with so much learning being done remotely these days.

Speaking of clean nutrition, a colleague recently asked me, "Hey, what does clean nutrition mean?" And I think that's an important topic considering that it's defined in different ways and can sometimes be somewhat of a divisive term.

So, in my mind, clean nutrition is about eating a diverse range of whole nutrient dense foods that are in their least processed form and free from a ton of extra additives and chemicals that just may not be as supportive to health. It's not meant to be a judgment, it's not meant to indicate that not eating these kinds of foods somehow means that the foods are dirty, but rather embraces a back to nature approach of foods in their whole form. So, we'll likely touch on that later.

We thought a great way to kick off our first episode was on the timely topic of the role of nutrition in immunity and inflammation with the CEO and Founder of Orgain, Dr. Andrew Abraham. Not only because of his connection with Orgain but because he, himself, is an integrative medicine physician, a cancer survivor, and a self-proclaimed kitchen chemist. In addition to having an incredible passion for nutrition, health, and wellness and an impressive resume, I might add, he's also a husband and the father of two young boys. Thank you so much for joining us, Dr. Andrew Abraham.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Thank you so much for having me, and please it's fine to just call me Andrew.

Mary Purdy:



We also understand that your wife is a physician's assistant, yes, and a holistic nutritionist?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:
That's right, yes she is.

Mary Purdy:
Well, it must be great to have her around and offer support?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:
It's a huge help, yes.

Mary Purdy:
So welcome to the Good, Clean Nutrition podcast. And actually, on that note, before we dive into the questions on today's topic, that phrase, "clean nutrition" can really mean different things to different people. But in my mind, when I think of that term, I think of food and nutrition that is not ultra-processed and is as much in its whole and original form as possible, and devoid of chemicals and additives.

It's not about being the opposite of dirty, I think in our mind, it's just about being not processed. And so, Andrew, I would love to hear your perspective on why you chose to frame Orgain's mission as delivering what's known as good, clean nutrition. What does clean mean to you and to Orgain as a company?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:
Well, I think you gave wonderful definitions. And I think for myself, and Orgain as a company, being clean really goes beyond just not having artificial sweeteners and colors, we really push ourselves to relentlessly pursue the cleanest ingredients in the world.

So just like if you were going to make dinner at home, the difference between a mediocre meal and an outstanding meal really comes down to the quality of the ingredients, right? And so not only are you leaving the bad out, but you're really choosing the absolute purest and most nutritious ingredients and, just like you said, as minimally processed as possible.

And you can take a lot of examples, I mean, seafood, for example. You have a white fish like tilapia, it provides protein and all of that stuff and it's inexpensive, but it's farmed, and it has a fraction of the omega-3s you'd want from fish and more organic pollutants and antibiotics.

So, contrast that to wild salmon, super high in omega-3s, has a much better purity profile and is wild caught. So clean for us is holding ourselves to the highest standards, so not just providing protein, but providing the cleanest nutrition and protein possible.



Mary Purdy:

And that's great that you say that about the nutrient value too because I have found, as a dietitian, that when people eat food that is more nutrient dense, they tend to need less food and feel more satiated and, ultimately, more energized; so great to know your perspective. And for those who don't know you, can you give us a brief overview of who you are and a bit about your background?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

So, I come from a family of physicians, so I grew up with the clear path that I would be following in my father's footsteps. He was a pediatrician and taking over his medical practice that he had built for well over 30 years. He was an incredible man, super patient, kind, truly loved what he was doing on a daily basis, so I felt really honored to be going into the medical field and taking over his practice.

But life had another plan in mind because when I was midway through my senior year of high school, at the age of 17, I was diagnosed with a very aggressive muscle cancer called rhabdomyosarcoma. So, I went from a senior in high school playing varsity sports, to being in a hospital bed for almost 12 months. So, I underwent chemotherapy, surgery, radiation, and was forced to grow up really, really quickly.

And it was a very tough year, of course, on myself, my family and my body because I lost a lot of the strength and weight with every round of chemotherapy, and this was in-patient chemo, so it was really intensive.

Mary Purdy:

Wow.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah. And only a few months in, I lost a tremendous amount of weight because I was basically not eating. A doctor handed me a sample of a conventional nutritional shake that everyone is familiar with, a stack of coupons and, basically, my mom went out and purchased 12 cases in every flavor, so we were just trying to get any nutrition in.

But it was interesting, during this time I took it upon myself to self-educate and learn what I could do to help me survive. And I had a lot of time on my hands because I was immunocompromised, so my immune system was very, very suppressed, so I read many books on health and wellness with a real focus on food. And everything I read really kind of came back to one central theme, and that theme was the incredibly profound impact that the role of nutrition plays on one's body.

So, whether you're perfectly healthy, have diabetes, or you were dealing with stage three cancer like I was, nutrition gave me a lot of hope, and I needed any little bit of hope I could get. So that's when I



realized the ingredients that were in these conventional shakes, and we talked about clean earlier, these ingredients that I saw didn't really fit that criteria according to every book that I read and I wanted to change that for myself.

So, I stopped drinking those shakes, started blending my own organic shakes at home, and that literally changed my life. I felt better, had more energy and strength, regained 15 to 20 pounds after getting down to a hundred pounds, and that was it. I was sold on the power of clean nutrition and later went on to college, medical school, and did my residency in family medicine with a focus on integrative medicine and started Orgain as the world's first organic ready to drink nutrition shake.

Mary Purdy:

That's amazing. Sounds like food, ultimately, was what healed you as, as a cancer patient and it's just amazing to hear that success story. I think our topic probably really resonates with you today on both a personal level but, obviously, as a physician on a professional level. Immune function and immunity is really top of mind for consumers these days with the pandemic and, of course, healthcare professionals are always educating their patients on how to support a healthy immune system. What's your sense of that really critical role that nutrition plays specifically in immunity? And what have you learned, both as a patient and as a healthcare professional, around that.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

I mean, I think for myself personally, I have a weakened immune system due to suppressed bone marrow production as a result of radiation, so I take immunity very seriously. And the way I look at immunity is really kind of it's composed of the innate and adaptive divisions, which are essentially our army, right? They're our army to fight off infections, manage inflammation, and help keep us as healthy as possible.

And in order to keep the army healthy, there's several pillars and they're all equally important, but proper nutrition is probably one of the most, if not the most, important things that we could do today. So, there's a saying that, "We, as a society are digging our graves with our forks." We're also compromising our immune systems, so there's honestly a lot of truth to that.

It's extremely important what you eat and what you avoid eating keeps your immune army healthy and strong, or it can leave them crippled. So, the decisions you make every day in what you're putting in your body really has a profound impact.

And the four pillars: there's nutrition, there's also exercise. When I talk about exercise, I'm not talking about the extreme running marathon and over-training or anything like that, I'm talking about just going for a daily walk, zone 2 training, moderate weightlifting, sleep, stress management. These are kind of



the four pillars in my mind that make sure that your immune system is built on a very strong foundation and, of course, nutrition plays a critical role.

Mary Purdy:

I'm so glad you mentioned sleep and stress as well, because I think we often neglect those things in our lives when we think about supporting immune function, and we know that those can really suppress and compromise immunity in such a significant way, and so it's wonderful to hear a physician actually really emphasize how important those are. And you mentioned you have a suppressed immune system because of radiation, chemotherapy, what do you personally do every day to support your own immune system?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah, I mean, I think so those four pillars I mentioned I think are top of mind for me every day. So, it's nutrition, it's exercise for me. We talked about sleep, but making sure that I'm trying to get as much deep sleep, restorative sleep as possible. Stress management, I mean we're all, as you mentioned, bombarded by stress every day, especially today, right? Work, the news, family life, all of it, so we have stress coming from every which way and there's no shortage of it.

So, it's really kind of how we respond. So, for me, it's nutrition, it's am I deep breathing, do I try to see the positive, did I have any social connections? All of these things are extremely important for me. And then from there, if those four pillars are strong, then I could layer on supplements and do more.

Taking supplements blindly without addressing those four pillars is kind of like building a house without a foundation, so any wind or any small earthquake, it falls apart. So, for me, it's diet. The number one thing for me is my nutrition. So, it's a diet of colors, a rainbow diet.

My smoothie in the morning is, every single morning has bright, vibrant berries. So, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries. I add our 50 super-foods and immunity powder, so that has a full spectrum of super-foods. Ginger, lemon, plant-based protein powder, cocoa nibs, which are very high in polyphenols. So, this is a smoothie that I put everything in there and it starts my day right. It starts with plant protein, immune enhancing polyphenols, anthocyanins, which is that rich, dark pigment you see in berries, fiber, anti-inflammatory foods.

And that really sets the stage for me, personally, for the rest of the day, and I try my best to get greens throughout the day. I'm a big proponent of teas, so I have a variety of teas with a special focus on white tea and green tea for myself, plant-based proteins, wild salmon. All of these things play a key role, I think, in supporting the immune system.



And of course, it's not just what you eat, but what you avoid. Right? So, trying to minimize refined grains much as possible, sugar, any kind of hydrogenated oils, artificial sweeteners, fast food. All of those things really kind of put the brake on the immune system, and what I try to do is try to support the immune system as much as possible.

I mean I think the gut health is, today, more than ever proving to be extremely important for the immune system. And as we talk about and think about exercise, even my patients would tell me like, "I don't want to run." And I say, "You don't have to run, just walk after dinner, wake up and take a walk in the morning. Even if it's outdoors, even if it's 15 minutes, 20 minutes, just try to do something consistently."

And now more than ever, we're seeing research about zone 2 training where your heart rate isn't really high at all; call it 60, 70% of your maximum heart rate. It's optimizing your mitochondria, it's one of the best exercises for longevity, so you really don't have to push it. I think that the studies are showing more and more it's just consistent mild to moderate exercise has really huge impact on your immune system and on your overall health.

Mary Purdy:

Yeah. I've had patients ask me, "What's the best exercise?" And my answer is almost always, "The one you actually will do, or the one you enjoy." And I love the sound of your smoothie, Andrew, it sounds like a smoothie that I often make as well.

And one thing that I love about green tea, because some people say, "You know, I don't really like the taste of green tea." And so I'll recommend, "Well make green tea the base of your smoothie and then get it in that way; really, really easy."

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

That's smart.

Mary Purdy:

We know that there's that connection between inflammation, which is a real buzzword these days and immune function and, obviously, inflammation is this hallmark of so many of the diseases that we are dealing with these days. And so, based on your experience as an integrative medicine physician, what are some non-pharmacological therapies specifically that one can do to reduce inflammation in the body?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah. So, there are several. I mean, first I think it's important to understand the difference ... I mean, we need some inflammation, right?



Mary Purdy:
Of course.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

So accidentally cut yourself and the body has this miraculous ability to heal itself, and most of us take that for granted, we don't realize what's happening. But that acute inflammation, that redness, that swelling, that heat, pain that's all necessary and needed for the healing process. So, the-

Mary Purdy:

That's your army coming in, right? Those are your soldiers.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

That's your army coming in and you need it. So, think of an ingrown toenail, an appendicitis, acute bronchitis; that's all acute inflammation and necessary. We need that acute inflammatory response to help us heal.

Now the root of nearly all diseases, though, is chronic inflammation. So, anything that ends in itis, which is the Greek origin for fire or hot, right? So, arthritis, gastritis, colitis, MS even, insulin resistance, cancer; these are all related to chronic inflammation.

So again, this comes back to your diet. Are you feeding the fire with foods that you should avoid at all costs or are you putting the fire out with everything that you're putting in your mouth? So, in my practice, I would typically advise patients to kind of get an idea ... And I know a pretty good idea of where their inflammation levels were based on their diet, their exercise, their stress, and so forth.

But nonetheless, we'd get a CRP test, a C-reactive protein blood test, to kind of see where's their baseline, where are they at? Assessing their diet, their daily movement, how hydrated on a daily basis. So, I like to encourage you drink half your body weight in pure water. So, if you weigh 160 pounds, you should have 80 ounces of pure filtered water daily, and that helps to flush your system and keep you very well hydrated, which is very important.

And then so the diet we talked about and making sure you're incorporating all of these anti-inflammatory foods. But even beyond that, if you have the four pillars and you're strong, it's a couple of my favorite supplements, omega-3s, which are excellent for reducing inflammation. I also like a high-quality curcumin, turmeric, and there's a variety of others.

There's EGCG, which we talked about from green tea or white tea, which reduces inflammation, ginger, there's an herb called Boswellia, which is really fascinating, quercetin, which is an antioxidant that



reduces inflammation – so there're all of these fascinating supplements that you can take, the four pillars are important. You kind of get a baseline from where you're at and then layer on some of these supplements.

I mentioned Boswellia, it's interesting because it's an herbal supplement that inhibits the synthesis of an enzyme called 5-lipoxygenase and leukotriene B4, which is the cause of inflammation. And quercetin, which is another supplement, acts as an antioxidant that also inhibits the enzyme, but in a different way.

So, these supplements, and the more I studied them, and I'd read about them, are pretty fascinating, but what's really fascinating is food works the same way. So, food, in a lot of ways, inhibits these inflammatory enzymes and pathways to help us feel our best. So, for me, it's making sure that you're focused on your diet, do that very in a disciplined manner, and then from there add on to it.

Mary Purdy:

Nice. And you may have been looking in my supplement drawer myself because I'm taking some of those very things that you're taking. And for those who may not be as up on supplements, I think other ways to get quercetin in are also it's found naturally in onions and apples if you're looking more for a dietary perspective. But excellent.

And it's just fascinating to hear all the different ways that we can improve our immune function with supplements, with food. And I'm interested in terms of Orgain, I feel like there's more products on the market, in general, designed to support our immune function, designed to reduce excessive inflammation in the body.

So, it'd be great to learn more about some of upcoming products that Orgain has or is futured to have that support the immune response. But what I'd love to know first before we talk about that is, what it's like? I'd love for you to share what it's like to go from that concept to the execution when it comes to Orgain products. In other words, how do you come up with stuff?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Sure. So, I mean, being a cancer survivor and physician, and somewhat of a little bit of a, kind of a bio-hacker myself, so I'm constantly experimenting with my diet, monitoring my blood work very carefully. I monitor my sleep with something called an aura ring that I wear that monitors my sleep and I really get an idea of my heart rate variability, and my deep sleep, and so forth.

And even though I'm not a diabetic, I wear a continuous glucose monitor called the Dexcom G6. But I don't have diabetes, but I like to see how my sugar levels respond to various foods. So, I'm constantly in pursuit of the best possible products for my very busy lifestyle, and constantly looking for ways to



increase my own health, especially given my history. I'm trying to increase my health span as much as possible for my kids' sake as much as I can.

And at Orgain, I take the same care with all of our products. So, we now sell the number one plant-based protein powder in the U.S., and there's many on the market that were on the market at the time that when we launched, but the taste and texture of those products were really difficult, they were horrible to me actually.

So, after two years of trying and continuous failures, we finally came up with the best tasting, most nutritious certified organic plant-based protein powder on the market. So, it's spending a lot of time, it's a lot of trial and error. I spend a lot of time really researching the market, finding gaps that I know that we could solve for, vetting out ingredients. And till today, I'm still sourcing the ingredients and crafting concepts really for the best nutrition products that we could possibly make.

And we're extremely meticulous. We make it with the best ingredients possible, we try to make it the most nutritious, and we want to make sure that it tastes delicious without any sacrifice on taste.

And quite frankly, it's difficult sometimes because you're dealing with foods that people are accustomed to that are made with all kinds of artificial ingredients, that are extremely sweet and tastes great. So, when you go to a organic, all natural product, sometimes it's a little bit of a gap, and sometimes it's a little bit of a jump, and we try to minimize that gap so it tastes delicious.

Mary Purdy:

Excellent. I have to tell you a personal story of myself. Back in, I think, 2010 I work at a teaching clinic, and I'm also somebody who goes through the supermarket aisles looking for new things, and what's trending, and what's going on. And I came across this thing, this little can or cartons that was kind of shoved in between two things and I thought, "What is this Orgain thing?" And I looked at it and I said ... Because we work with a lot of patients dealing with chronic health issues and people who needed something really easy to drink that had calories to help them gain weight again. And I thought, "What is this Orgain?" Oh my gosh. It was like a hallelujah moment where I thought, "Oh, thank goodness there's something beyond what is conventionally being served to people at hospitals and recommended."

And, again, as a food is medicine dietitian, I just thought, "Oh, thank goodness, there's something that I can actually recommend with a state of mind that feels calm and anchored." And I actually ended up asking my father-in-law who had stomach cancer and was having a really hard time gaining weight again, because he just couldn't really digest things very well, he got on Orgain and it's been incredibly beneficial for him. In fact, I just got back yesterday from visiting him and that's how he starts his day every morning. So, I wanted you to know that there's a real ... It was like a personal connection to it for a lot of us, so we were very grateful.



Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Oh thank you. No, and that's wonderful to hear and that warms my heart and is really the main reason why I started Orgain is to help either ... It's to help others really kind of live their best life and whether you're dealing with cancer or just looking to improve your health in any way, kind of that's what we are striving for.

And the number one word I heard when I first launched Orgain was the word, "Finally. We've been waiting for a product like this for a long time." So, we really strive to hear the word finally with all of the products that we launch. Like, "Finally, we've been waiting for something like this."

And really this has become kind of my life's passion, this is what I enjoy doing, it's truly what I love. And when I wanted to make an immune product, for example, I used my own daily immune regimen and thought, "If I could put all of this into a single product, that would be great; and that's really the approach.

So, we have a new item that has 50 super-foods and an immunity that focuses on vitamin C from food, vitamin D from mushrooms, organic lemon, zinc, super mushrooms, like reishi and cordyceps, apple cider vinegar. I know we talked about gut health, so prebiotics and probiotics for gut health. So, all of these things that I was doing and had really kind of did a tremendous amount of research, I then applied to an Orgain product. So that's really the approach for me with every product that we launch.

Mary Purdy:

That's great to hear. I was actually going to ask you about some of the latest trends in the industry, and what's actually next for Orgain. It sounds like you just gave us a little sneak peek into what you have coming in store. Anything else that we should know about future products or innovations?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah, I mean, I think in terms of trends for us, I see a tremendous movement that I don't think is going away where it's higher protein, lower carb offerings with a real focus on reducing or eliminating sugar; and that's not fleeting, I think that's here to stay.

So, the impact of your metabolic health is extremely important and I think now more than ever, consumers want to use products from a brand they really trust. So Orgain has now been around for 12 years, we've built a tremendous trust, it's really not a protein or nutrition brand anymore, we feel like Orgain is a lifestyle brand.



So, we're looking at a variety of different segments now. What can Orgain do in breakfast, for example, in supplements that we talked about? Really looking for the different usage occasions and finding the best possible products that we can make.

Mary Purdy:

Wonderful. And I know supplements are a real area of these days, so it's interesting to hear that Orgain is expanding its product line in that direction. What are some other areas of research that you are personally curious about, or professionally curious about and following, and why those particular areas?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah, so for me, it's I have a keen focus on longevity medicine because I think for us, it's making sure that we're living not only a long time, but more way more important in my mind is, is living a healthy life for as long as possible; that's the most important thing.

So for me, it's looking at a variety of different food and beverage applications. I mentioned breakfast. In the medical realm, what are we doing there? Powders, beverages, anything that we could do to make truly disruptive products that make our lives easier and help us feel better I think is important.

So, the way I view kind of our approach to innovation and trends is how many truckloads of sugar can we remove from the system every day? How do we go back to enjoying the foods that we love the taste of, but that aren't good for us? That's kind of more of the approach and so we're being super active in innovation and I'm super excited that we're launching many more items here in the near future.

Mary Purdy:

Yeah, and that taste piece is so key for people when they are engaging in a healthier diet and lifestyle. If it's easy, if it tastes delicious, it's much more likely to wind up on your plate and in your mouth.

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

That's exactly right, that's exactly right.

Mary Purdy:

And as you said, we all want to be part of, as a place where I worked called them, the welllderly as opposed to the elderly. Anything else that you would like your fellow healthcare professionals or consumers to know about in terms of your perspective on overall health as a patient, a doctor and, of course, as an entrepreneur of a nutrition focused company?

Dr. Andrew Abraham:

Yeah, I mean, I think I'd say that what I can tell you from my own personal experience is that nearly all doctors today, we just get a few weeks of training on nutrition, which I believe is a catastrophe. So, we



learn every possible detail about how to treat a disease, how to write a prescription for every possible ailment; I mean, that's what we're trained on, it's almost like a cookbook. Someone came in, they have high cholesterol, write the prescription for the statin.

The truth is, though, the single most important thing we can do to take a huge strain off our healthcare system, improve the health and wellbeing of the world, minimize medications as much as possible, is to realize that the real prescription is in the kitchen. And food heals, it cures, it increases our life and health span, which we talked about, if we make the right choices.

For me and Orgain, the goal is simple. Through our mission and our products, we want to do our part to be a part of the solution and encourage everyone to really just live their healthiest most vibrant life.

Mary Purdy:

Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful responses, Andrew.

We look forward to having you join us for future episodes of *The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast* sponsored by Orgain, where we'll interview more subject matter experts on a variety of health and nutrition focused topics. To stay up to date on the latest episodes of this podcast, be sure to subscribe on your favorite podcast platform. That's it for now. Thanks so much!