



11 STEP GUIDE TO JUMP START YOUR HEALTH JOURNEY

Yen Ngo MS, RDN, CDN



MEET YEN, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

Hi guys! My name is Yen and I am a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. My mission is to help others feel their best physically, mentally, and emotionally through the power of food and positive lifestyle changes.

Being an expert in food and someone who spends a lot of time on social media, I understand the confusion when it comes to “healthy” eating and living. With all the conflicting nutrition information out there, how is one supposed to know what meal plan is best for their health and personal goals?

It’s not uncommon for us to want to diet for quick weight loss, but I challenge you.. can you switch your mindset from “I want to diet to lose weight” to “I want to adjust my meal plan to promote overall health and wellness”?

It won’t be easy, however, I can help guide you to a healthier lifestyle using science-based evidence, behavioral change, and long lasting strategies to mend your relationship with food.

Join me on a journey where we throw out the idea of diets and restrictions and focus on forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Diets don’t work.. we KNOW this. So why do we keep going back to them? Let’s explore together on how you can become the healthiest version of yourself without compromising your lifestyle.

Enjoy this free eBook on 11 Steps to Jumpstart your Health Journey and contact me for a comprehensive personalized nutrition plan.

Good luck!

Yen Ngo

Guide to Healthy Eating and Living Checklist

- Eat at least your basal metabolic rate.

- Eat consistently throughout the day.

- Plan your meals.

- Follow an anti-inflammatory meal plan.

- Optimize your gut.

- Mend your relationship with food.

- Prioritize sleep (7-9 hours per night).

- Identify and manage life stressors.

- Incorporate physical activity.

- Get annual lab work.

- Create a healthy environment.



Eat at least your Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR).

Basal metabolic rate describes the rate at which the body uses energy while at rest to keep vital functions going such as breathing and nutrient processing.

It's influenced by body size (height, weight), body composition (body fat mass, muscle mass), and age. In other circumstances, BMR can be adjusted for illness or injuries (burns, fever), hormonal imbalances (insulin resistance, over or under active thyroid, polycystic syndrome), activity factor, and pregnancy. With that said, each individual has his or her own personal BMR that they should strive to consume each day. Eating far less than your BMR can cause the body to function less optimally.

Eating below your BMR over the span of weeks, months, or years can cause the following:

- Lack of energy, poor mood, difficulty focusing
- Cravings and increased appetite
- Weight loss and weight gain
- Loss in muscle mass
- Increase in stubborn belly fat
- High stress

Eating at least your BMR will make you feel:

- Energized
- Focused
- Motivated
- Strong
- Satisfied from food

Takeaway- Work with a health professional to learn what your individualized BMR is. With that information you'll be able to gauge how many calories to eat each day to accomplish your goals (E.g. weight loss, weight gain, maintenance).



Eat consistently throughout the day.

General Meal Timing Guidelines

Eat breakfast within 3 hours of waking up

Eating your first meal soon after waking will help control cravings and prevent over eating throughout the day. As an added bonus, having a healthy, nutrient dense* breakfast will influence healthy meal choices and prevent low performance, energy, and mood.

Eat every 4-5 hours

Eating 3 meals per day with 1-2 snacks will maintain a consistent level of energy, blood sugar, and help to control cravings. The key is to find the right number of meals and snacks that work with your schedule, lifestyle, and considers any health concerns. Too little of meals can adversely affect blood sugar and mood and too many meals/snacks can spike insulin too frequently promoting fat storage.

Add snacks if gaps in-between meals are longer than 5 hours. Snacks should consist of a healthy carbohydrate (fruit, crackers, popcorn etc.) with a quality source of protein (plain non-fat Greek yogurt, beef jerky, etc.) and/or a healthy fat source (cheese, guacamole, hummus, etc.).

Carbohydrates alone will cause blood sugar to spike and drop too quickly, causing the body to feel fatigue, hungry, and sometimes irritable. Adding in a quality source of protein and/or fat will slow the digestion of carbohydrates, creating a steadier blood sugar.

02

Eat consistently throughout the day Cont.

Limit food and beverages 2-3 hours before bedtime.

Limiting food and beverages 2-3 hours before bedtime will allow the body to digest as much food contents as possible to prevent gastrointestinal upset (heartburn, indigestion, reflux), weight gain (if the last meal was unbalanced or too large in portion), and poor sleep (eating too much at night can adversely affect blood sugar causing you to wake up in the middle of the night).

 **NOTE:** These are “general” guidelines. Meal timings should be personalized to the individual’s lifestyle, health conditions, and health goals.



03

Plan your meals.

Ever hear the phrase *“If you don’t have a plan, you plan to fail”*?

Well, I believe in some cases, this is true to meal planning. We all have weeks where we don’t have time to create an organized grocery list let alone go out and grocery shop, however, is it sustainable to do that forever? Is it possible if you were to know you have a busy week, to plan for it? Or potentially keeping healthy snacks/foods available in your home, car, and workplace at all times?

Small steps such as those can make an enormous positive impact on your health! In fact, according to The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, being on a healthy eating pattern lowers the risk for disease since planned meals are found to be healthier because they tend to be lower in saturated fats, added sugars, and in general, more wholesome resulting in positive health outcomes.

First step- meet yourself where you’re at, meaning, consider your current eating pattern and identify any areas for improvements.

e.g. You tend to skip breakfast because you don’t have time to prepare it and eat at home.

Room for improvement- You blend a smoothie or make overnight oats the night before, so you can drink your smoothie on your way to work or eat your oatmeal once you get to your desk.





Follow an Anti-Inflammatory Meal Plan.

Inflammation is a natural response that is necessary for healing within the body, however when inflammation becomes chronic and unmanageable, that's where we run into trouble.

Chronic inflammation is associated with many diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, irritable bowel disease, depression, and much more. The scary part is that inflammation doesn't always show signs and symptoms which means inflammation can be manifesting without us knowing.

Unfortunately, we are exposed to numerous things throughout the day that can cause our immune system to activate. In order to manage and prevent our immune system from *over* activating, an anti-inflammatory lifestyle can be adapted.

But let's talk specifically about an anti-inflammatory meal plan.

An **anti-inflammatory meal plan** involves 2 steps.

1. Remove pro-inflammatory foods- Foods that worsen symptoms of inflammation and can fuel inflammation as a whole.
2. Replace with anti-inflammatory foods- Food that help fight and reduce overall inflammation.



NOTE: An anti-inflammatory meal plan will not be beneficial for all, due to personal dietary restrictions. Work with a health professional to identify any food allergies, intolerances, or sensitivities you may be dealing with.

Remember: A "healthy" food for one person, may not be "healthy" for another.



Follow an Anti-Inflammatory Meal Plan Cont.

Anti-inflammatory foods

- **Fruits and Vegetables**- All varieties and of all colors.
- **Whole grains**- Amaranth, barely, buckwheat, bulger, faro, millet, oats, popcorn, quinoa, brown/wild/jasmine/basmati rice, rye, sorghum, spelt, teff.
- **Beans and Legumes**- All varieties.
- **Healthy fats**- Nuts and seeds, avocado, hummus, avocado oil, olive oil, and high oleic safflower and sunflower oil.
- **Sustainable fatty cold-water fish**- Salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring and sardines.
- **Spices**- Turmeric, garlic, ginger, cinnamon, oregano, rosemary, and cayenne pepper.
- **Whole soy products**- Organic non-GMO tofu, edamame, soymilk, tempeh, and miso paste. Not processed soy products such as vegetarian meat alternatives due to soy protein isolates, a very processed kind of protein powder.
- **Organic chicken and eggs and organic 100% grass-fed beef**
- **Fermented foods**- Cultured dairy products (Greek yogurt, kefir), any fermented vegetable (sauerkraut), kombucha, kimchi, miso paste, tempeh, and probiotic supplements.
- **Water and Tea**- Black, green, white, and oolong.



Follow an Anti-Inflammatory Meal Plan Cont.

Pro inflammatory foods

- **Refined grains and sugar**- Products with enriched white flour- Breads, wraps, bagels, crackers, pasta, pizza dough, cereal. Soda pop, sports drinks, Vitamin water, sweetened coffee drinks, energy drinks, fruit juices, lemonade, sweetened iced-tea. Artificially sweetened food and beverages.
- **Gluten containing foods**- Any product containing wheat, barely, or rye.
- **Dairy and Non-dairy products**- Milk and any food products made from milk, including cheese, cream, butter, and yogurt. Heavily sweetened and processed non-dairy alternatives.
- **Hydrogenated oils and trans-fat**- Vegetable shortenings, margarines, frostings, crackers, cookies, cakes, fast food, chips, frozen pizza and more.
- **Unhealthy saturated fats**- Fatty cuts of meat, sausage, bacon, deli meat/cold cuts, dairy products (cream, milk, processed cheese), skin on poultry, butter, lard, tallow, mayonnaise.
- **Refined vegetable oils**- Corn, canola, and soybean (vegetable oils), deep fried foods, most packaged snack foods.
- **Additives**- Artificial sugars, artificial colors, artificial flavors, preservatives, emulsifiers, gums.
- **Alcohol**- Excessive amounts of beer, wine, and spirits.

05

Optimize your gut.

Poor gut health can lead to a number of different health concerns and symptoms due to the relationship the gut has with the organs, cells, and tissues all within the body. When our gut lining is weak, unwanted particles can pass through, entering the bloodstream and can wreak havoc on our body. **NOTE:** I said bloodstream, so that means unwanted particles such as LPS (an endotoxin that is responsible for acute inflammation) can travel anywhere!

E.g. Inflammatory signals in the:

Skin--> Eczema, psoriasis, acne

Brain--> Anxiety, depression, migraines, ADHD

Lungs--> Asthma

Gut--> IBS, IBD (Crohn's, ulcerative colitis)

and more!

Using a **4-step gut healing protocol** can strengthen the gut lining, help you lose weight, ween off long-term medications, improve your mood, energy, and ultimately increasing your quality of life.

Why this protocol works:

It is realistic- This protocol works around YOUR world, not a “perfect world”. It considers your lifestyle, down to your occupation demands, home life, family life, mental and emotional health, health conditions and disease state, amount of sleep, mental stress, leisure time activities, diet, and physical activity.

HOW?

Because our gut does not have its own mechanism to repair itself (such as the mechanism we have to heal a cut or wound). The only way we can support a healthy gut is through positive lifestyle behavioral changes.



Optimize your gut Cont.

Step 1 - Eliminate any foods that can irritate the gut lining (3)

- Pro-inflammatory foods
- Food intolerances
- Food sensitivities

Step 2 - Eat/Drink. The second step is to introduce foods that will help fight inflammation and close up those “leaks” or “gaps” in the intestinal lining.

- Anti-inflammatory food and beverages.
- Gut healing foods.
- Detoxifying foods.

Step 3 - Enhance your gut with a personalized supplement regimen.

Supplements that can help heal a leaky gut.

- Prebiotics
- Probiotics
- L-Glutamine
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Deglycyrrhizinated licorice (DGL)
- Marshmallow root
- Fresh aloe vera
- Digestive enzymes

Step 4 - Educate. The fourth and final step is to learn and understand what parts of your lifestyle can be damaging your gut and can be causing systemic inflammation.

- Incorporate an intermittent fasting eating schedule.
- Improve sleep.
- Address and manage life stressors.
- Increase physical activity.
- Reduce environmental toxins and chemicals in food, air, water, household cleaning products, and beauty products.



NOTE: This protocol should be implemented under the guidance of a health professional. Never take any supplements without consulting a health professional.



Mend your relationship with food.

Intuitive Eating Explained

Intuitive eating is not yet another diet trend that gives you hope for weight loss. Instead, a method based on ten principles that guides you to create a healthier relationship with food.

After implementing each step, you will feel empowered each time you eat and even better, you'll never want to go on another diet or a restriction ever again!

#1 Reject the diet mentality.

Diets... what a viscous cycle. In the beginning, we feel excited and hopeful and by the end of it we ask ourselves, why did I do this to myself again? Yo-yo dieting does more to us than just add on an extra couple of pounds. It can be emotionally and mentally draining in ways we never expected. In addition, most of the time we have no idea it's happening until we develop destructive eating patterns later on. I challenge you.. reject the diet approach and learn to eat freely with no restrictions.

#2 Honor your hunger.

Honoring your hunger means not to ignore your hunger cues. This includes but not limited to when your stomach starts to growl, when your energy level starts to dip, or when you get a headache from waiting too long to eat. Never forget that food is fuel!

#3 Make peace with food.

Give yourself unconditional permission to eat any and all foods! Throw out the ideas that there are "bad" and "good" foods or "clean" and "dirty" foods. Going on diets and having food restrictions can lead to intense feelings of deprivation that can lead to cravings and binge eating.



Mend your relationship with food Cont.

#4 Challenge the food police.

Sometimes we are our own worst enemies in making ourselves feel guilty when we eat certain foods. How often have you said to yourself, “I shouldn’t eat that”, “I need to save my calories”, or “this food will make me fat”.

#5 Respect your fullness.

Simply put, respecting your fullness means listening to your body and value what it’s trying to tell you. Let’s take Thanksgiving as an example. Each year at Thanksgiving, most of us will use this day to indulge in all the great offerings at the table. After 1 plate our stomachs starts to stretch, we feel bloated, and in some cases we might feel ill from consuming too much. Yet we have another plate and let’s not forget about dessert. Doing this occasionally is okay, but if we make this a bad habit, we alter our abilities to sense our satiety cues. Instead, be in tune with your satiety cues and trust these signals to guide your eating behaviors.

#6 Discover the satisfaction factor.

While learning how to intuitively eat, we also discover which foods make us feel great, but not just during the meal, I’m talking after the meal as well. For example, think of how you feel while you’re eating a large bowl of pasta, probably pretty good. But how do you feel after? Stuffed, uncomfortable, and regretful? To prevent these negative feelings, slow down when you’re eating and savor each bite.

#7 Honor your feelings.

People who eat intuitively use food to satisfy physical hunger versus an emotional hunger to cope with times of high emotions or distress. Although food can help us feel numb from our feelings, we should find other ways to cope and ultimately find the root reason of why we turn to food in the first place. Because remember, when you finish eating, your problems will most likely still be there.



Mend your relationship with food Cont.

#8 Respect your body.

There will be days where we love our bodies and other days we might hate it, but despite the feelings of love and hate, we must always respect the body we were given. Intuitive eating challenges you to embrace your body for all that it offers.

#9 Movement.

Have you ever asked yourself why you exercise? Are you being more physically active because you're trying to lose weight? Because you want to be healthier? Or maybe it's because you feel pressured or maybe you are punishing yourself from the foods you previously indulged in. Your attitude towards exercising will shift the moment your purpose of exercise changes from weight loss to improving overall health and wellness.

#10 Honor your health.

Your health comes first. This might be extremely difficult to come to terms with due to the demands of life. We are busy individuals, we work, we take care of others, and we may not have time for ourselves. However, our health is one of the most important things we have control over. As we age, our risk for disease and health conditions increase and the importance of healthy lifestyle behaviors is vital. Healthy food choices, physical activity, stress management, and good sleep are just a few lifestyle changes we can start with.

YOU DESERVE TO BE HEALTHY!

07

Prioritize sleep (7-9 hours per night).

S

Structure

Establish a regular sleep routine. Try and wake up and go to bed at the same times each day. This creates a synchronized circadian rhythm, keeping the body healthy and less stressed.

L

Light

Make it a goal to get outside in the sunlight in the early morning/afternoon. The light/dark cycle of the sun has a powerful effect on our circadian clock, how well we sleep, and how alert we are during the day.

E

Electronics

Reduce all lights and screentime an hour before bedtime. Light from lamps, phones, laptops etc. reduce the amount of melatonin our body produces.

E

Exercise

Exercise regularly. Physical activity increases your drive to sleep at night as well as reduces stress and improves mood.

P

Prioritize

Poor sleep on a regular basis causes more consequences than just feeling fatigue throughout the day. Did you know chronic poor sleepers have a higher risk for serious health conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes? Start by making sleep a priority to reduce your chances of illness.

National Sleep Foundation



Identify and manage life stressors.

What comes to mind when you think of stress? Is it mental or physical? Because unfortunately our bodies can't tell the difference. Whether you're stressed from an injury or from looking at emails, the brain will signal the body to release stress hormones such as cortisol.

Examples of stress include:

Living a hectic lifestyle, being a caregiver, hating your job, easily agitated, under/over eating, over exercising, under sleeping and more!

Think about what YOUR daily stressors are and ask yourself..

What can I do to manage my stress the best I can?

Of course, if you hate your job, quitting might not be best for you, so maybe practicing deep breathing techniques when your boss is irritating you might be the better option. But whatever your stressors are, we need to identify them and find a plan of action to manage it.

Long term stress can have several adverse effects body wide.

- **Immune health**- Stress triggers the immune system therefore long-term stress can lead to a weakened immune system, making you more susceptible to illness.
- **Mental health**- You can blame your altered mood on the gut-brain connection. The gut contains trillions of microbes that effect various parts of your body, including the brain. High stress can change gut microbes into ones that can affect mood. Those who live with chronic stress not only have an altered gut microbiome but also have higher chances of anxiety and depression.

Identify and manage life stressors Cont.

- **Digestive health**- Ever have to run to the bathroom under high stress? There's a reason for that! Under high stress, the digestive system shuts down in order to give the rest of your body energy it needs for "fight and flight" mode. So no surprise if your digestive system is slowing down, you may experience some loose stools or nausea.
- **Respiratory health**- During "fight and flight" mode, the body may show signs of rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath. Those with respiratory disease will have even more issues under chronic stress as the body tries its best to manage.
- **Type 2 Diabetes**- Under stress, the body produces excess glucose to give you energy (which is good)! However, if stress is chronic, the body might not be able to keep up with all the excess glucose resulting in increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- **High blood pressure**- High stress causes your blood vessels to dilate, thereby increasing the amount of blood pumped into various body parts and elevating blood pressure.
- **Pain**- The body has a defense mechanism to protect itself from injury during times of high stress. You may have noticed that when you're in "fight and flight" mode, your muscle tightens up (that's again, to protect you), however, with chronic stress, that mechanism can result in long-term body aches, neck, shoulder, head, or back pain. And if your doctor doesn't treat the root cause of stress, you might be taking pain killers or over the counter pain relief medications for the wrong reasons.
- **Infertility**- High stress effects the reproductive system in both men and women.

09

Incorporate physical activity.

Being physically active is one of *the most* important things you can do to improve your overall health.

Science-based evidence for the benefits of physical activity.

- Improved bone health and weight status for children ages 3 through 5 years.
- Improved cognitive function for youth ages 6 to 13 years.
- Reduced risk of cancer at a greater number of sites.
- Brain health benefits, including possible improved cognitive function, reduced anxiety and depression risk, and improved sleep and quality of life.
- For pregnant women, reduced risk of excessive weight gain, gestational diabetes, and postpartum depression.
- For older adults, reduced risk of fall-related injuries.
- For people with various chronic medical conditions, reduced risk of all-cause and disease-specific mortality, improved physical function, and improved quality of life.

For substantial health benefits:

- Adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity exercise.
- OR 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (cardio-brisk walking, running, swimming, and bicycling).



Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans 2nd edition

10

Get annual lab work.

Routine annual blood work is a great way to assess an individual's general health. With that information, your doctors, dietitians, and other health professionals are able to check the condition of your organs, see if you're at risk for any health conditions, and much more. Even those who feel "healthy" should receive regular blood testing because at the very least, your doctors can identify trends of whether your health numbers are going towards the lower or higher end of those ranges.

An annual blood test is typically composed of 3 main tests:

1. Complete blood count
2. Metabolic panel
3. Lipid panel

In some cases, a thyroid panel and nutrient tests for vital nutrients such as B-12 and iron are added.



Get annual lab work Cont.

This section will discuss some health numbers and give you quick tips on what you can do to improve those lab markers.

- **Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG)**- This test measures how much sugar is present in the blood. High numbers may indicate hyperglycemia, prediabetes, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- **A1C**- Measures your average blood sugar for the past 2-3 months.
What you can do- Adapt a “whole-real food” approach and decrease the amount of heavily processed food you consume. Also engage in physical activity at least 150 minutes per week, quit smoking and heavy drinking and consume “balanced” plates at each meal, meaning a plate that consist of a quality source of protein, a healthy high fiber carbohydrate, and a healthy fat source.
- **Triglycerides**- Are a type of free-floating fat in the blood stream. High levels are linked to heart disease and uncontrolled blood sugar.
What you can do- Work with a dietitian who can customize the number of calories you should consume daily that will support good health and a healthy weight. Also be mindful of portion sizes since high triglycerides are related to excess calorie intake.
- **HDL**- Your “good” cholesterol that picks up excess cholesterol, transports it to the liver for processing and excretion.
- **LDL**- Your “bad” cholesterol that can deposit plaque in your arteries and increase your risk for heart disease.
What you can do: If your total cholesterol is high, HDL is low, and LDL are high, start by identifying how much saturated fat and hydrogenated oils you consume daily. Replace those fats, with heart healthy fats such as those from olive oil, fatty fish, and nuts and seeds. Additionally, adding more high fiber foods into the diet can also promote cholesterol to trend towards the normal range.



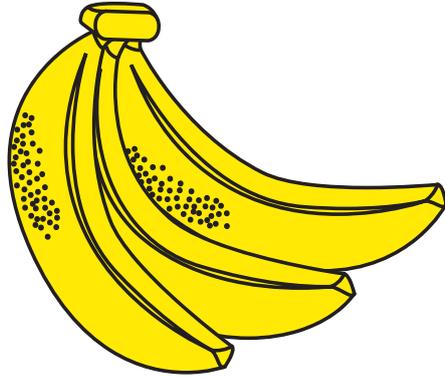
Create a healthy environment.

Each day, we expose ourselves to countless environmental factors that trigger our immune system. We contaminate ourselves with toxins and chemicals through inhalation, dermal contact, and ingestion, however we may not see the long-term effects until it's too late.

Tidying up products that you put on your skin, inhale, or consume to less toxic alternatives can greatly improve your health. Again, it's the things we come into contact daily that will make an impact on our long-term health, so do not sweat the small stuff, only consider switching your everyday products.

Consider the following:

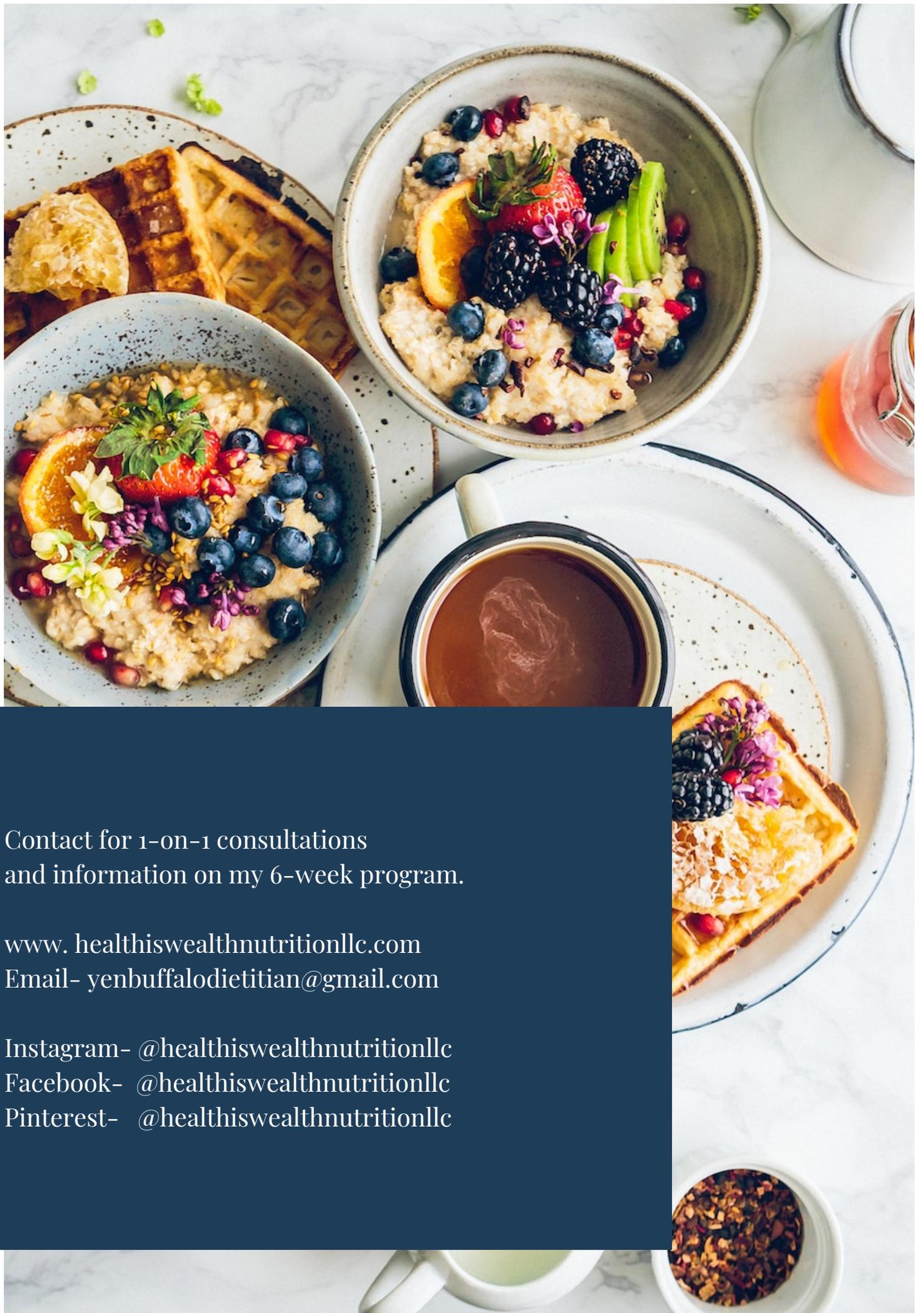
- **Cleaning products**- Incorporate less toxic products such as those found on EWG.org, where they have numerous recommendations for less toxic cleaning supplies. Example brands: Seventh Generation or Dr. Bronner's Pure Castile Soap.
- **Personal care products**- Dangerous ingredients to watch out for: Parabens, fragrances, aluminum compounds, ethoxylated agents, formaldehyde, refined petroleum, hydroquinone, talc, triclosan, silica, and oxybenzone. These ingredients are linked to hormonal disruptions (mimics estrogen), are carcinogenic, and contain heavy metals that can be absorbed into the bloodstream.
- **Mold**- Long-term exposure to mold, whether from food or from your home (homes with water damage, leaky pipes, or high humidity) can be a possible cause for extreme chronic health issues due to the mycotoxins they create.
- **Water**- Something as simple as water can negatively affect our health if it's not filtered. When water is filtered it removes contaminants like heavy metals such as mercury, fluoride, and chlorine.



**THANKS
A BUNCH!**

**AND
GOOD
LUCK!!**





Contact for 1-on-1 consultations
and information on my 6-week program.

www.healthiswealthnutritionllc.com
Email- yenbuffalodietitian@gmail.com

Instagram- [@healthiswealthnutritionllc](https://www.instagram.com/healthiswealthnutritionllc)
Facebook- [@healthiswealthnutritionllc](https://www.facebook.com/healthiswealthnutritionllc)
Pinterest- [@healthiswealthnutritionllc](https://www.pinterest.com/healthiswealthnutritionllc)