

I am currently a stay-at-home mom, happily married to my best friend now for over 18 years, and I have been blessed with two children. My daughter just started high school, and my son is finishing up grade school. I was initially diagnosed with LAM right before the holidays in December 2008 from a CAT scan of my lungs. It was definitely the worst holiday of my life bar none, and I am not all that fond of the hectic holiday season to begin with anyway.

Between visiting pulmonologists, LAM specialists and contacting the LAM Foundation, we achieved a pretty solid foundation into what LAM was – whether it was just basic information on the illness itself or more detailed information on how to handle certain potential events from the specialist. It was a lot for me to handle; I could only take it in little bits and pieces, pretty much constantly crying. I had to get past what I call a little mini-depression, but then I had an epiphany. I decided that even though I can't control what is going on with my lungs I can control my health otherwise.

I had always tried to eat well and exercise as much as I could, but now it was a priority. Like the saying, you don't find time to exercise – you make time to exercise. With a strong recommendation from my pulmonologist, I took a pulmonary rehab course at our local hospital. I would classify myself as introverted, and I was definitely not thrilled about the idea – but I did understand the need to learn how to best exercise with LAM, oxygen and my unique needs. I never did become comfortable at rehab, but I finished the entire program and learned a lot about utilizing oxygen and exercising with LAM. More importantly, I felt better physically as well as emotionally with the ability to exercise on a regular basis again.

Since then I have been regularly exercising within my limitations (both aerobic and anaerobic) and resolutely improving my eating habits a little at a time. Currently, I am on around 4-5L of oxygen to sleep, and I really pump it up for exercising to 9 -10L. I can only achieve a brisk walk on the treadmill, but I do it for 45 minutes now (starting from 20 minutes). When I do the weight lifting, I have to break some of the sets in half to allow my stats to recover (even with the oxygen). If I am careful, I only need my oxygen when I sleep, exercise or exert myself; it isn't something I currently need 24/7 – just to give you an idea of the level that my LAM is at now.

As far as eating healthy, I started by cutting out basically all artificial colors and sweeteners, worked on eliminating as much processed foods as possible, and constantly kept reading to learn more about what is healthy and not healthy to eat. The whole family has participated in these changes so far, which has helped improve everyone's health.

I initially lost around 50 pounds or so, and I know that the weight loss, exercise and improved diet really did make a difference. Fatigue however, has always been a constant problem. It used to be more good than bad days, but maybe as my illness is progressing (even a little) or maybe as our life is more hectic (my husband did get a job which is more demanding) – I don't know – it has lately seemed more bad than good days. I have really been struggling with what seems like constant exhaustion. All the kids' school activities and just trying to keep up with everything that needs to be done in a family (housework, etc.) was debilitating me. It just slowly seemed to get worse and worse, and it was extremely disheartening. To be honest, I probably wasn't keeping up with everything, and I certainly wasn't having any time to do anything for me. I was starting to feel that tinge of depression again, and I was realizing that something, somehow needed to change.

So in mid-October I changed my diet pretty radically this time (excluding dairy, sugar and gluten as well as eating certain foods in a certain order – from the book [The Beauty Detox Solution](#) by Kimberly

*Snyder*), and I have been feeling SO MUCH BETTER. I used to always get tired in the afternoon, around when it was time to get the kids (which, of course, meant that resting was impossible), and since I've been eating this way I haven't felt that afternoon weariness at all. I also used to have what I termed low-energy days sometimes. I never really could pinpoint what exactly brought them on, but I always describe them as 'walking through jello' days. Simply everything seemed harder to do, took longer to do, and I could literally only get through what I absolutely had to do on those days – and that was through sheer force of will, I swear. I haven't had one of those days either. Energy-wise, I almost feel back to normal. I'm even slipping back into some old habits, reading a little too late because the book is just too good to stop! I'm trying to keep that to a minimum though. 😊 An added bonus, I've even dropped a size without feeling hungry or snacky at all.

Since this is such a drastic change which requires the commitment to learn to eat a lot of different foods and exclude a lot, the entire family isn't doing this with me. I am not asking them to make such a drastic commitment to changing the way they eat. However they are still benefiting from the change by eating some of the same foods that I eat, which can only help improve their diet as well. I am only in the first stage the author has designated, and I am still learning new recipes and foods to eat. I continue to have my shortness of breath issues to deal with and need my oxygen at the same level, but I can make it through the entire day again energy-wise. It makes whatever inconvenience there is in eating this way moot. I have been getting a lot accomplished these last few weeks, and I hope that I can continue to get caught up with things, and start to find more time for me instead of just housework, school and other responsibilities.

I mentioned earlier the book I am using as a guide, it seemed like the natural progression from what I have been reading for the next step to take in improving my diet. It sounds a bit superficial at first glance, but the author equates beauty with health – so don't let her use of the term beauty put you off. I also don't like to "diet" in the normal sense; I like to make healthy lifestyle changes. I used to count calories (it helped me with that initial weight loss), but it isn't something that I was able to keep up on a long-term basis. It gets old keeping track of everything you eat, and I was always struggling with wanting to snack all the time. It wasn't a permanent solution for me. I had at least gained around 10-20 pounds back, not really sure, constantly weighing myself isn't high on my list of things to do either. If by changing my diet I could accomplish even some of the claims in the book, especially the more energy claim, I would be ecstatic. So starting in mid-October (I am pretty sure the actual day was 10/18/13 – the day before my daughter's second Soccer Regional game), I followed the rules laid out for her first stage – Blossoming Beauty.

The author claims that "digestion takes more energy than any other specific internal function of the human body" and that "some experts estimate that digestion takes as much as 50 to 80 percent of our total energy". Also that when we eat poorly, the waste from "less than perfect foods, pollution, preservatives, toxic additives, medications and many other things" builds up in our body. That "sludge" as she calls it gets stuck inside our body's digestive systems slowing digestion down even further and making it harder to even get the nutrients from the food we eat. According to her, this is why we can still feel snacky right after eating – because our bodies aren't absorbing the nutrients it needs even though we have just been fed.

The basic premises:

- Eat alkaline first, which also gives us a great deal of fiber – striving for an "80 percent alkaline – 20 percent acidic food rule"
- Practice beauty food pairing – enabling foods to digest optimally

- “Our bodies can properly digest only one concentrated, non-water-containing food at a time.”
- “Proteins and starches don’t mix.”
- “Vegetables are neutral.”
- “Mixing two starches is okay.”
- “Mixing two different types of animal protein is not okay.”
- “Fats should be eaten moderately with protein (animal and plant) but are okay to eat with carbohydrates.”
- “Fruit should be eaten only on an empty stomach.”
- Eat light to heavy – eating foods that digest quickly first and finishing with those that take the longest (avoiding a digestive traffic jam)
- Limit animal proteins – if we do choose to eat them, only at dinnertime allowing the full evening for digestion
- Start each meal with raw vegetables – strong minerals, vitamins, enzymes and amino acids as well as our “strongest detox weapons”
- Eliminate dairy – an extremely acid-forming food that creates mucus, further clogging our systems
- Avoid gluten – “can help improve our overall health, help eliminate sugar and carb cravings, help stabilize our moods and help us lose weight”
- Incorporate probiotics, plant-based digestive enzymes, probiotic & enzyme salad, and magnesium-oxygen supplements – all help the digestive process along and cleanse the digestive system along the way

I also feel that I have candidiasis, or an overgrowth of yeast. I feel that the constant use of inhalers, antibiotics for my complexion, and other factors have contributed to this. So in this initial stage, I am also cutting out fruits (natural sugars). She says that, “By closely adhering to this program, you will starve the yeast and rebalance your body once and for all!” I suffer from thrush on a regular basis and also recently had a yeast infection underneath my toenails (ick!). I have been working on eliminating the antibiotic for my complexion (went from 2X daily, to 1X a day, to once every other day so far), without any noticeable consequences in my complexion. In the past, when I’ve had to stop taking the medication temporarily due to complications with another medication, I have always had major problems with my complexion until I could get back on it. When I feel the candidiasis is gone, I can once again reintroduce fruit.

Another perpetual problem that I have had is congestion. When you need to be on oxygen, having your nasal passages regularly clogged up is a constant problem. I am on Allegra-D (or generic equivalent), and I even broke down and started using a neti pot. (For some reason, I had an extreme reluctance to try one. It wasn’t until I was sick and desperate one evening to sleep, that I finally did.) The neti pot is a great help, but the congestion still was overwhelming. I asked a family physician, my pulmonologist, the physician at the LAM clinic, even an ear/nose/throat specialist for a stronger medication for the decongestion or any ideas to help with the congestion to no avail. Thankfully, simply by eliminating dairy from my diet, my congestion issues have drastically reduced. I still have problems, and I still use a neti pot to help alleviate symptoms, but the congestion is much more manageable now. The author strongly recommends eliminating dairy from your diet for a variety of health reasons, as well as stating, “Dairy is one of the most mucus-forming foods there is.” I find it frustrating that not one medical professional ever mentioned the possibility of eliminating dairy from your diet to see if that helps.

I am not a physician, dietician or any expert in the field of nutrition. I feel I have always eaten pretty well, even before diagnosis, and feel I am pretty knowledgeable about what is healthy/not healthy to eat. A lot of the concepts in this book jive with many of the previous books on nutrition I have read, which to me lends to the credibility behind this way of eating. And more than anything else, the improvement in my energy level and the renewed way that I feel is a strong validation for me. As she says, "Nothing resonates as truth like personal experience." Admittedly, I have only been eating this way for a little over a month. I am only in the first stage, and I am still learning new foods and recipes to eat. I have also continued my routine of exercising pretty much daily, both aerobic and anaerobic, which also helps with my overall health. But the relief from the constant fatigue and the consistent congestion has been markedly significant!!!

I am writing this for any other LAM patients who may be feeling the same feeling of despair due to fatigue and general feelings of malaise in the hope that it may help even one other person. Also, I volunteered to help with the Genome Wide Association Study and completed the questionnaire. It mentioned possible areas of future research, and one was in regards to diet and LAM. I would have to say that in my case, improving my diet has consistently helped me handle the illness better (whether or not it is specifically helping the LAM, I have no idea). She has also written a second book, [The Beauty Detox Foods](#), which briefly goes over the main concepts again as well as goes into further details which foods help specific issues. For instance, I found it interesting that pears are supportive of both the lungs and colon. "They are believed to improve lung function and even help reduce Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease symptoms such as breathlessness and coughing, and they're said to be useful in treating inflammatory conditions of the mucous membranes. An Australian study has revealed the consumption of whole pears has a protective effect against developing asthma." When I can reintroduce fruit into my diet, I will definitely be adding pears to my menu! In addition, this second book is filled with many more recipes.

---

*Two months later, switching from the Stage 1 to Stage 2, Radiant Beauty.*

In Stage 2, it is time to introduce a green smoothie into your diet. It is filled with greenery (romaine, mesclun, celery, spinach, cilantro and parsley) and even some fruit (apple, pear, banana) with a few other things. After not having fruit for two months, I could really taste the fruit in the smoothie. I'm still following the other basic premises for eating. The changes at this point are the addition of the green smoothie, the ability to eat fruit, and limiting even more animal proteins. The author said to work towards a goal of eating animal proteins (at dinner only) three times a week; I'm going for every other day. I figured that's close enough for now at least, and it is easy for me to remember. I have also been completely off of my antibiotic for my complexion for a while now, with only occasional outbursts that aren't that bad or long-lasting.

I still feel great (for me); I still can make it through a day without the afternoon desire for a snooze; and I feel like my body has naturally achieved a healthy weight for me. I have never felt hungry eating this way, and I have never messed with counting calories even once. I thought I'd miss eating meat more, but it really has been a non-issue. I do like having some tacos or chicken soup sometimes, so I'm not really sure I want to completely go meat-free – this seems like a good balance for me. My main problem was wanting something sweet, but I've been finding out a lot on alternative foods and ingredients and found some great recipes to help out with that as well.

My husband decided it was time for him to lose some weight too. He joined a weight-loss contest at his work, and he's been following the Stage 1 mandates for a couple of weeks. He's already lost about 30 pounds, and he hasn't been feeling hungry either. Instead of maybe desiring something sweet in general, like me, the main thing he is missing is ice cream. I found some great recipes to try that are dairy free, and we're going to start trying those out. Since he doesn't have the health issue behind him that I do, he doesn't have the desire to faithfully follow this way of eating on a continual basis. Once he's reached a healthy weight, he'll probably follow it most of the time and cheat here and there. I feel so much better, that I don't even have the desire to cheat and possibly feel as tired and bad as I did before. I'm committed to pretty much following this way of eating indefinitely -- until maybe I learn something better.

It has been a bit of a steep learning curve. My husband keeps asking me questions about why this or that is done, and I have to keep referring to the book to answer. It's just a lot of information to take in at once. It is a lot to change eating-wise all at once too. Since I had already eliminated so many processed foods and artificial colors, etc. -- I was already partly there. I have had to invest in some new foods and ingredients, even having to order some on Amazon.com since there were no local stores who carried them close to where we live. Patience and perseverance help too. You can learn to eat almost anything, and one bite of a food won't cut it. I struggled eating the probiotic and enzyme salad (it is basically similar to a sauerkraut). Initially, I just took a bite with a sip of water and swallowed it. I found it extremely distasteful; now it doesn't bother me at all. I've also had a friend who also started following this way of eating, and she hadn't made those preliminary changes and was finding it a difficult process. I would recommend taking small steps at a time, don't try to drastically change the entire way you eat at once. Select one thing to eliminate from your diet at a time, and once you are comfortable with that, make another change. It will be a lot less overwhelming (and expensive!) and much more manageable for the long run. In addition, when you are ready to eliminate sugar, I would also endorse completely eliminating sweets for a month. The new sweets you can make with healthier substitutes instead of refined sugar, won't be that super sweet taste that you may be accustomed to; by waiting it will give you a chance to adapt to the new tastes that much easier.

I've also learned to be more pro-active on planning meals, ensuring that I always have the right foods when I need them, as well as mass producing salads so I don't have to cut fresh food each and every day. My smoothie batch gives me enough for three days, and I try to always have a vegetarian soup or meal on hand for my meat-free meals. I try to put a serving in the freezer too on a regular basis, for those days I don't have anything ready and I need a break from salads. Food preparation has become a family chore as much as possible as well. My daughter sits on the table watching her Netflix while cutting salad ingredients. She's a little slow but does well, and it is one less thing that I have to do. My husband helps make the smoothies most of the time, while my son is great at helping us get the necessary ingredients out and measured. Something that would take me pretty much all day, can get done in a fraction of the time when we all work together.

I am excited to see how I continue to feel and hopefully even improve as I maintain this program, and maybe by writing up my experience it can help someone else.