

Hacking Skin & Gut Issues – Interventions With Dave – Nancy Pellegrino – #972

Dave Asprey:

Welcome to interventions with Dave. I really like helping people upgrade themselves, make their biology work better, and this is about performing better, but when you have enough energy, you are nice to other people. When you have enough energy, you think about things instead of reacting to things. In fact, when you have enough energy, you might even be dangerous because who knows what you might do when you can do what you want because you feel good. And I want to build a world full of people like that. And that's why I'm hosting this new series as a part of my podcast. I'll be working one-on-one with select members of the Upgrade Collective. This is my mentorship and membership group with tons of people. It's a tight-knit community and we meet every week to talk about the latest things and also to go through all of the courses, video courses I've put together, for all of the books I've written. So I'll teach you my books. This is a really powerful group.

And what you're going to hear on this is going to be somewhat detailed, but you're going to learn the mindset for troubleshooting and upgrading. And this is not meant to be a medical show. That's not what this is about. We will talk about medical conditions, but I am not a doctor. I'm going to talk with people about how to manage whatever's going on with nutritional and lifestyle strategies. And then here's what you might want to go ask your doctor about. To be really clear, this is not a replacement for doctors, but you should be prepared when you go into the doctor. So sometimes there's an idea. You can plant a seed working in partnership with a functional medicine provider and magically, you get better outcomes. That's what we want to do here.

This is a special intervention episode where I take a member of the Upgrade Collective, or sometimes someone who's just a friend or someone I run into who could use some heavy duty biohacking. The point of these is to teach you how to think about owning your own biology. I am not a medical doctor. I do not play one on the internet, but I do spend a lot of time working with medical doctors. So think of me as a detective.

When I talk about things that are medical, then go to your doctor or whatever regulatory authority you are forced to go through in order to make your own decisions for your health that are yours to make, regardless of whether someone gives you permission to. You can decode that however you want. I'm sure the artificial intelligence algorithms that control everything you think, say, and hear will have a hard time unpacking sentences this long. So screw you big AI. And on that note, let's talk about how you can think about what's going on with you. And Nancy, thanks for being a member of the Upgrade Collective. I like seeing you on the podcast live audience. Now it's your chance to be a guest. And how old are you? If you don't mind me asking?

Nancy Pellegrino:

55.

Dave:

55. All right. Menopause?

Nancy:

Post menopause.

Dave:

Post menopause. Okay. So you're all the way in menopause. Congratulations. You made it. Now, those are some basic things I think most people who are saying is she like me? How are we going to think about this? It helps to know those things. And then what's going on? What do you want to hack?

Nancy:

I have psoriasis. I've had a lot of skin issues, really dry skin. I have gut issues, sometimes sleep issues. It's not all the time, but there are these things that happen to me. I start to feel good and then I don't, and I have all the things. I have all your boxes. I have all of these little gadgets. I have a sauna. I have an ozone machine, but I just don't know what is right for me.

Dave:

All right. This is a fantastic place to be. And to look at it because you have access to the tools and if you don't know what's going on, you don't know how to approach a problem, you don't even know which tool to use. Although, some of them you probably use just because they're cool and because they work. If it makes your skin look better, it looks better, whether or not you know what's going on. So what I'm hearing here is you don't sleep that well some of the time. Your gut is off, I'm assuming gas, bloating or the other direction? Not constipation or is it alternate?

Nancy:

Mostly gas bloating.

Dave:

Okay. Got it. How did I know that? And dry skin, psoriasis and where's the psoriasis?

Nancy:

My knee mostly, but lately it's been on my chin too. I've been wearing a mask a lot. I'm a teacher. So I have to wear a mask every day. So I'm thinking that might have something to do with it, but it's been really dry, flaky, itchy, burning.

Dave:

Okay. Have you ever had a doctor look at you and make sure you don't have some kind of skin fungal infection going on just to rule out an obvious thing?

Nancy:

Not on my face, but I have had a dermatologist look at my knee and they described it as psoriasis.

Dave:

Okay. So it's really psoriasis, not eczema, ringworm, all kinds of other stuff like that. And skin specialists know way more than I do because I'm not a doctor. I'm not a skin specialist, but fortunately I've dealt with a stupid number of rashes, especially when I was younger before I figured out all of these inputs and I can still give myself a rash very reliably by doing the wrong thing in my environment. And I've worked with a number of clients who dealt with psoriasis. So we're going to talk about this. When you say you don't sleep well, what happens? What's going on with your sleep?

Nancy:

I wake up heated and I wake up sometimes with anxiety. I do have a cool pad too, one of those chill pads.

Dave:

Okay. Does it help?

Nancy:

It seems to help.

Dave:

Now when you wake up with anxiety, three or four in the morning.

Nancy:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave:

What kind of diet are you on? Are you doing keto? Are you doing Bulletproof?

Nancy:

It's Bulletproof.

Dave:

So you're not on a zero carb diet?

Nancy:

No.

Dave:

Okay. Got it. And when do you have dinner usually?

Nancy:

Usually when I get home from work about 4:30, 5:00.

Dave:

Okay. So you have an early dinner the way I recommend. Interestingly, let's address the little waking up with anxiety sleep problem because that affects, in a cascade, all the inflammatory stuff that we're working on, which ultimately is psoriasis. So in order to do that, if you're having an early dinner, you're waking up, are you doing intermittent fasting most days?

Nancy:

Yes. At least 12 to 14 or 16 hours.

Dave:

Okay, 12 to 14 or 16. It might be worth playing around with a little bit of MCT oil and butter in herbal tea before bed and possibly even a teaspoon of honey and seeing if that helps with the anxiety. It's possible that you're fasting too often. And then when your blood sugar gets too low and it does happen more often in women than men, then your body says, "Oh, you want some blood sugar. I got just some blood sugar. Here's some cortisol and adrenaline, which are very fast ways to raise your blood sugar." Unfortunately, at three in the morning, those equal I woke up with anxiety and it's not emotional anxiety because I'm having nerves or whatever, talking down to you thing that doctors used to do. What this is a biological response. Those are stress hormones and their function is to liberate sugar so you can run away from things.

And since the body doesn't have sugar, fastest path, you should have eaten something already. So play around with shorter fasting windows. If your anxiety goes away, you may be over fasting or you may need a little boost before bed that could help you with that. So that's just a low hanging fruit to get out of the way, but you've done a little bit of lab work, which is worth considering. You've got your Viome results and Viome, as you guys may know, if you're a listener is a company I've worked with since their founding, really as an advisor, both on what to do in the test, as well as on some of the strategy side and I'm an investor in the company. So I get to look under the hood there and Viome's done really, really good stuff.

And one of the things that they can do is they can tell you how healthy is the balance of bacteria in your gut. And they're doing machine learning and offer this. And they said, you're about average 46 out of a hundred. So if you had the best gut ever, you'd be a hundred. You had the worst gut ever. You'd be zero. So you're right in the middle. It says though, your mitochondrial health and your cell health are only 33 out of a hundred. So you're in the bottom third of performance there for people. But the good news is you're handling stress well, your immune function is high on that test. So you're not making energy, right? For some reason. And your cell membrane health isn't as healthy as you want it to be either. How much omega 6 fat would you say that you eat versus butter and other stuff like that? I mean, do you use olive oil, avocado oil? Do you eat out a lot at restaurants?

Nancy:

I do not eat out a lot at restaurants. I have my Bulletproof Coffee with the MCT and the ghee okay for every, every day. And I eat a little bit of olive oil, but it's not cooked. I usually put it in my salad with some apple cider vinegar.

Dave:

Okay. I do the same thing. So that's not going to be a source of extra omega 6. I'm just asking because bad cell health is quite often correlated with too much of omega 6. You don't have that. It's not going on. Okay.

Let's talk about something that you might not think about. You've had low blood pressure for quite a while, right? Not dangerously low, but every time you go to the doctor, even when they have a white lab coat, you're at the doctor's office, they still say it's low. So that's kind of a smoking gun that says, okay, something's going on in the system. And when you see psoriasis, you always look for autoimmunity. And when you see gas and bloating, you also can see a pattern here. And the pattern can oftentimes be around something called mast cells, and mast cells are a source, a major source of allergy in the skin. In fact, they're tied to almost every allergy throughout the body. So if you get hives, you ever had hives, has that been a part of your path? Okay. It's another sign. Are they, if you had it only once in your life or multiple times?

Nancy:

A few times.

Dave:

A few times.

Nancy:

Okay. Yeah. Not like a whole lot, but...

Dave:

Okay. Enough times though, that they're, that they're not foreign to you?

Nancy:

No.

Dave:

It sounds to me like the, oh, and by the way, how long have you had that psoriasis on your knee? Is this like a lifelong thing?

Nancy:

No, it's been like about a year.

Dave:

Ah, so it's new. It's also quite helpful for some types of psoriasis to do ozone bagging. Do you know what that is?

Nancy:

Yes.

Dave:

Okay. And for listeners, what you do with ozone bagging is you get an ozone generator and I've done a couple episodes about that. And what you do there is you take ozone gas that you make from an ozone generator and you put it in a bag that's over your knee or in a cup that's over your knee. Have you tried doing it? You know what it is, but have you?

Nancy:

No, I just do the, I do the rectal and I drink the water.

Dave:

Okay. So if you have the equipment, I would do it locally and then hit it with some red and infrared light therapy. That can be really profoundly effective. But, my gut is telling me that if you look at just reducing your allergic sensitivity and you cut out eggs, you might find amazing, amazing results from doing that. And it's funny how a psoriasis, sometimes it is just something going on with the food interaction that

you just wouldn't predict. One of the things that works ridiculously well for some people here is black cumin seed oil. Have you heard of that stuff?

Nancy:

No.

Dave:

Some people call it black seed oil and it comes out of the Middle East. And it's been around for thousands of years and you can get it in a liquid form or you can get it in another form like capsules and you take relatively high doses, usually two or three times, whatever the capsule manufacturers recommend. None of this is going to cause your knee to look amazing overnight, it takes a while for skin to regenerate and all it takes less time with ozone and red light therapy, but doing black cumin seed oil on a regular basis could be really, really beneficial and doing anything else that turns down IL6 could be, could be beneficial. I have a blog post on the daveasprey.com page about IL6 or Interleukin 6, which is a primary inflammatory cytokine. That just wreaks havoc on the body.

Guess what causes IL6 to go up. When something triggers your mast cells. It's one of the signaling molecules that says, "Hey, I'm under attack, what's happening?" But to reduce that can be really powerful. Another thing that most people haven't heard of that works really well there is called Stephania root S T E P H A N I A. And you will find that as one of the components of the Bulletproof Curcumin. Curcumin Force, Curcumin Max, there's a few other formulas out there that use that. And that can work. That can work very well. Specifically for turning down some of the types of inflammation. Turmeric itself may be beneficial. Do you take that regularly?

Nancy:

I take the Circumax.

Dave:

Okay, good. So you've, you're already getting stuff on your route. Any changes in psoriasis from, from that?

Nancy:

I wasn't taking it for a while because I was doing that other protocol that I was telling you about the Ayurvedic one.

Dave:

Got it.

Nancy:

So it's been like 17 days and then I started taking it again. I started taking all the stuff again the other day.

Dave:

Okay. And the protocol you're on is Ayurvedic protocol that has a lot of liquid tinctures and all, and it's funny, there's some really good stuff that your practitioners recommending there like andrographis, which is a really, really powerful herb. You're taking your vitamin D as well. I almost don't want to ask

you that. That's also correlated with improving psoriasis. So is K2, relatively high dose vitamin K2. And then there's omega 7 and omega 9 fatty acids. Do you ever play around with those?

Nancy:

No.

Dave:

You can get those in supplement form and those can be beneficial. And one thing that works really, really well is called GLA or gamma linoleic acid. Now GLA is actually an omega 6 acid. Oh my God did. GLA is the, is that linoleic? Yeah. So omega 6 fats are bad for you. Well, that's a generalization. It turns out that GLA specifically for psoriasis works really well. Now there's this one company that I used to work with that for some weird reason, maybe because I worked with them was they put GLA in the omega 3 fish oil formula. That of course is the Bulletproof stuff. You can get a variety of either evening primrose or there's one other common source of GLA I'm forgetting right now that may be also really beneficial, taken orally. So I think you want to play around with your fatty acids like that and because you have dry skin and because of the gas and bloating, I want you on a really good digestive enzyme that can make a difference for you as well. Do you take one?

Nancy:

MassZymes?

Dave:

Okay, cool. I was going to say MassZymes would be a good one. If you need a recommendation, that stuff works. It'll break down things. Keep doing that because that'll help you to digest any fats that you need to in order to make your skin healthy. There are also a variety of plant sterol products. Things like policosinal, possibly that may be helpful. Low-dose naltrexone is also very beneficial for people. I wrote about that in Super Human as an immunomodulator and funny enough, it also helps to stabilize mast cells. There's something called PEA, which acts like low-dose naltrexone. You could try. So what I'm proposing here is a broad-spectrum, anti-inflammatory strategy, antihistamine and anti-allergy strategy because that's what's underlying this. Do you take activated charcoal ever?

Nancy:

Yes. I've been taking it a lot lately.

Dave:

Okay. Do you notice any improvements in your skin when you take it regularly?

Nancy:

Yeah. The, the actual rash. Yes.

Dave:

Oh this is a big sign. So now we've dialed it down. And so it's much more likely to be in your GI tract. It doesn't mean it has to be because it's a whole body detoxer but that means it's more likely to be a lipopolysaccharide base, which is what bacteria make in the gut that then accesses what's called an

endotoxin. All right. If we know that now your gut bacteria from Viome were reasonably healthy. Are you taking a prebiotic of any sort?

Nancy:
InnerFuel.

Dave:
Okay, cool. That I would like to think is a well-formulated one with science back in it. Cause I formulated InnerFuel. Do you notice an improvement or maybe even a nonimprovement with gas and bloating when you take it?

Nancy:
I have it every morning in my coffee, so...

Dave:
Okay. And, and things are things work some days then work other days regardless of whether you take it. Okay. I think that you probably are dealing with the low grade mast cell activation thing. I'll bet you, so let's see if a little while on Pepcid works and if you want to double down on making it go away, if you are taking Pepcid, it is generally considered safe to take a normal adult dose of 340 milligrams of aspirin once a day with food. As long as you're on Pepcid, it's unlikely to cause GI bleeding. Aspirin has all sorts of beneficial effects, but it also causes GI bleeding. I don't think you want to be on it every day forever, but if you were to do a month of, Hey, I'm going to see what happens. Aspirin really works nicely on mast cells as well. So then you're doing Claritin, you're doing Pepcid, you're doing aspirin.

You've changed your fatty acid intake and you've done some topical stuff with ozone and red light on it. And that may be enough to get you over the hump. I also just a whole body dry skin that also feels like it's probably immune activated, given that you're eating stuff, you could try taking an enzyme that has lipase in it. The other thing that could be beneficial for you is something called phosphatidylcholine. And you can get this from sunflower lecithin or from soy, non-GMO lecithin. Both of those have some omega 6 in them, or you just get the straight phosphatidylcholine and taking higher doses of that, a tablespoon or so of that on a daily basis for a month or two can help to stimulate things in your liver and bio flow. And just generally speaking, health of cell membranes. When I look at your Viome score that says your cells are only at 33, I think phosphatidylcholine could be beneficial. It helps with dry skin and it may help with your psoriasis as well. And it's unlikely to cause any trouble. So I would look at phosphatidylcholine.

Nancy:
You can do all of that together. You can do the Pepcid twice a day. The Claritin twice a day, the aspirin is it once a day or twice a day?

Dave:
It's once a day.

Nancy:
Once a day.

Dave:

And what I'm proposing is, and this is also something that drives lab clinicians nuts because we have this natural thing to say, well, what was the one thing? I don't think there is one thing here. I think that we're taking a complex thing and we're moving it. So if you were to say, I'm trying to move a herd of cattle or sheep, what's the one thing that makes them go over there. Well, I have three sled or not sled dogs, three collies or whatever dogs do that kind of thing. Herding dogs, golden retrievers, German shepherds, whatever the heck they are. But I have three of them they're trained and they like do livestock stuff. Right? So what was the one thing? Was it you on a horse or an ATV? You don't know. And it wasn't one thing and it was a dumb assumption that it was one thing.

So what a clinician looking for that one drug would do would say, well, let's just send one of the dogs out and well that didn't work. You know, it's not a dog. And eventually you come up with these complex things as a biohacker look, I really hated having these rashes that I'd get on my shins and on the back of my calf and I'd get them on my face. And it was just a constant thing. I just wanted him to go away. I want my brain fog to go away. Right? So then you're saying, all right, I'm going to stack all the things that are likely to work together, to get the system to where I want it to go. And when you're you look down and you say, oh, that's great. My dry skin's gone. My knee is back to normal. It worked.

Then you can say, you know, I'm going to stop the Pepcid and I'm going to stop the aspirin and see how I do, right? Maybe you're at a new set point, right? Maybe you do that once every three months. Maybe you never have to do it again. Maybe it didn't even work. And it's because the moon changed phases. And because three leprechauns danced a dance and you didn't notice outside your window one night, you don't know there's many variables. You aren't measuring you, aren't tracking, you don't know matter and I don't know matter. I want you to get to where you want to be to get the results for the minimum amount of work, minimum amount of suffering, minimum amount of money, and then back off, but to live with a condition for long periods of time, because you're looking for the one golden bullet. I don't need a golden bullet.

I'm happy to have a whole army working with me. And that mindset is just so different, but that's how you get the change you want. And some people will say, what about if there's a complex interaction? Do you eat pancakes? Okay. There's a complex interaction between the sugar, the flour, the eggs, whatever kind of syrup used. Have we ever tested that? Do we know for safety studies? Have we tested it with the lotion you put on your skin? No, but the odds were low. So we chose to take a risk and it's called choosing danger. Yep. Every bite you could choke, but you still eat because it was worth the risk. And what I think for biohacking is getting rid of something that is bothering you like gas and bloating and itchy knee and a rash on your face.

It's actually really precious. It improves your quality of life and it's worth taking the risk of commonly taken well understood over the counter thing that you can buy for 20 bucks and say, Hmm, did that work? Did it not work? I would do it for me. Right? And it might be worth doing for you and all these, you have to run in past a pharmacist or a doctor and make sure that they don't interact with anything you're taking and all that. Cause I'm not a doctor, but I can tell you that set of things to address the set of things that you have, that sound like they might at least somewhat be interrelated. That's how biohackers think. And of course you want to sleep well and do whatever else you can think of. But these are some common things that I think can get your results so that you feel better.

Nancy:

Yeah.

Dave:

Any other questions or thoughts or things that aren't clear?

Nancy:

The sauna, is that good to do like too much? Or is it, could it be like I do the Abhyanga oil and I, then I go in the sauna.

Dave:

I don't know about sauna and psoriasis specifically. You'd probably have to do some Dr. Web. I used say Dr. Google, but Dr. Google is no longer a doctor. It's literally, I can't write any of my books using Google anymore. So they, they don't have any results worth looking at. You have to go to DuckDuckGo or something. So go to the web and see about whether heat shot proteins are good for psoriasis or bad for psoriasis. There's something else I'm going to bring up. I talked about the Dr. Massel a guy who just, oh, look, here's the interactions between all these, these things. There's another even older guy who I think has since passed, who wrote a book about low-dose cortisol for autoimmune conditions. And when you talk about low blood pressure, it makes me wonder if your cortisol is a little bit low and you can get it tested.

And sometimes taking five milligrams of cortisol. This is bioidentical. This is the cortisol your body makes. And guys, you go, but cortisol equals bad. It's the death hormone. No, it's also the hormone that stops you from having inflammation. It controls some parts of your immune system. It controls your blood pressure. And if you don't have enough cortisol, you will get sick and die. If you have too much cortisol, you'll act like a jerk and you could also die over time, but I'd rather have slightly high cortisol on occasion than have low cortisol all the time. Because people with low cortisol, universally get autoimmune conditions, they get the gas and bloating, the dry skin, the psoriasis. And when you go on this low dose replacement protocol, that gets your levels up. We're talking about five milligrams, four times a day, divided doses. Sometimes it resolves conditions for decades at a time with no side effects whatsoever.

And that is worth investigating. If all this other stuff doesn't work is finding a doctor who can prescribe five milligrams of Cortef four times a day and say, I want to try it for a month. And you could even maybe do it twice a day. And you can start with cortisol testing. So for anyone listening, five milligrams of cortisol once or twice a day, when you are jet lagged and traveling is a godsend. And this comes from the author of that same safe uses of cortisol book, which you may be able to find a copy still, but he was 88 when he wrote it. And he says, my entire clinical practice for 30 something years, this is what I've noticed. This is what I've found. Here's case report, after case report, after case report, these are like the lost types of medicine.

So if you look at testosterone and thyroid and your testosterone is fine, cause you manage it, your thyroid's probably okay, because you have someone looking at it, but then you look at cortisol as a meaningful hormone. You go, oh, that's really, really important. You look at progesterone, it's really important. And then activation of your immune system is also important and cortisol is a part of that immune system activation thing. So these are the buckets of, huh, I have way too many symptoms, nothing makes sense. And all the specialists can't help me. Those are the areas where I tend to look.

Nancy:

Okay.

Dave:

Beautiful. Well, thank you. I appreciate you coming on Nancy, appreciate you being a member of the Upgrade Collective and just being willing to share and talk about this stuff. Not everyone's willing to say yes, sometimes I have gas and bloating, but the bottom line is probably 70% of people listening have it some of the time and no one likes it and you wonder, oh, I wonder what I did. It must have been something, well, maybe we can get to the bottom of it. And if you're like me where you can clear the room every single day for the first 30 years of your life, well, you kind of take it personally and you get over it. And the fact that even on the Bulletproof Diet, it's still happening makes me think that you've got some cells that are too sensitive, and we can dial that down with some of the stuff we talked about today.

Nancy:

Absolutely. Thank you so much. I will try.

Dave:

You got it.

Nancy:

I will try all of these things.

Dave:

Cool. And for listeners, the Upgrade Collective is something I put together because so many people have been spending forced time at home, whether they wanted to or not. And so it just realized I was missing out on community because of that. I wasn't traveling as much as I wanted to. And I wanted to way to organize and share the stuff that I've done. We're looking at 3,000 posts, seven books now, and about a thousand hours of video, that would be full course materials for two years of college studying. And most of us, most of you are not going to spend two years studying everything that I do. I don't expect you to. In fact, I have done a terrible job if I set it up. So that's the only way you can get the benefits that I've had personally. So the Upgrade Collective is there because I teach each of my books in short courses so you can learn them, even if you haven't ever read them.

The books are there because they're distilled knowledge, but having a community where we meet once a week and talk with coaches and there's a group of people who are interested in it, like you are, it's been really powerful for me and for all the members of the group. And I would invite you to join. Cause you get to listen on the podcast while I'm recording them. I actually chat with you back and forth on Zoom and answer your questions. You get to ask questions of the guests. And I pick some people with interesting problems like Nancy and we get to work through it. So everybody learns. So if you like learning in a group, you like having friends who are as cool as Nancy is, and probably as uncool as I am. This is a place to go. ourupgradecollective.com. I'd love to see you as a member because it's worth it and it's time well spent. And Nancy, thanks again.

Nancy:

You're welcome. Thank you. I really appreciate it.