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FOREWORD

We've all heard the saying: "When you have your health, you have everything." Yet if you're like many people, you've tried every diet, only to gain more weight. Perhaps you struggle with high blood pressure or high cholesterol. If this sounds familiar, you may suffer from insulin resistance. With this condition, excessive glucose accumulates in the bloodstream. The body then produces more insulin to stabilize blood sugar levels and stores excess glucose as fat.

In more than 15 years as a registered dietitian, I've seen clients too often diet in the name of health, including skipping meals and denying hunger. This harmful behavior impacts insulin levels, blood pressure, energy levels—and self-esteem. If you've been diagnosed with insulin resistance or prediabetes, making positive changes in lifestyle, diet, and exercise can reverse its course. This doesn't mean following an over-restrictive diet or chronic dieting. When combined with high insulin levels, as in the case of PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome), dieting changes brain chemistry—intensifying cravings and bingeing and lowering self-esteem. Weight-cycling studies suggest that dieting actually increases inflammation and insulin levels, perpetuating the cycle.

Clients frequently come to me with tired metabolisms, insulin resistance, prediabetes, PCOS, and obesity. To help, I give them permission to trust their body and listen to its needs via signals of hunger and satiety. Together, we make small changes to food choices and meal composition, while boosting physical activity. In a study of more than 3000 people with insulin resistance at high risk for type 2 diabetes, the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program (DPP) found that even minimal weight loss through 150 minutes of weekly

physical activity and positive dietary modification lowered participants' risk of diabetes by 58 percent. I use this same curriculum with my clients. Small changes really do produce significant results. That is what this book is all about.

As Tara explains, when following this simple plan, you'll want to take the holistic approach. Eliminate processed junk, white flour-based ingredients, and foods high in saturated fats, refined sugars, and salt. Ease up on any restrictive thinking. Instead, eat regular meals and snacks, and focus on minimally processed foods. Visualize your plate: Aim to fill half with colorful, nutrient-dense, non-starchy vegetables like kale and broccoli, and antioxidant-rich fruits like berries and citrus; fill one quarter with high-fiber whole grains that lower glucose and insulin levels, like oats and barley; finally, eat one portion of lean protein. Skip fatty meats and full-fat dairy, but enjoy seeds, nuts, avocado, olives, and vegetable oils. On page XX, you'll find a handy list of foods with the most blood sugar-stabilizing effects plus those that promote fat storage.

Let's not forget that other essential component: exercise. A healthy lifestyle combines metabolism-boosting, muscle-building activities with heart-strengthening cardiovascular exercise, but the real key for improving insulin sensitivity is regular activity. Pressed for time? Tara's sample exercises and routines (see page XX) fit even the busiest schedule.

Most important, this book imparts one of the most valuable skills for achieving wellness: self-compassion. Please take heart. It's possible to alleviate your symptoms naturally, without the help of drugs. Taking charge of your lifestyle and nutrition will do wonders to restore your well-deserved good health.

—Jennifer Koslo, PhD, RDN, CSSD, LD, CPT

INTRODUCTION

If you're struggling with insulin resistance, then you're not alone. There are different reasons why people develop this condition, but the physical and emotional toll it takes is something we all share.

A few years ago, my body was a source of much unhappiness and confusion for me. I exercised daily and followed a healthy diet, but I still gained weight rapidly. I felt fat and bloated, but suffered from intense hunger and strong cravings. My energy levels rose and fell without any logical pattern, and I fainted three times within a year.

My doctors dismissed my symptoms as the ordinary hormonal fluctuations of a twenty-something-year-old woman. I blamed myself and decided I wasn't working hard enough on my fitness or being strict enough on my diet. The reality was, I was working too hard and being too restrictive.

It was not until I further researched my symptoms and sought out the expertise of a specialist that I learned I had insulin resistance, and was eventually diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).

In my case, the two conditions were triggered by years of eating too little and exercising too much. I was living off less than 1,200 calories per day—not enough to fuel for lying in bed all day, let alone the multiple hours of exercise I had pushed myself to perform.

The result of my unhealthy dietary and exercise practice was a slowed metabolism, which created hormonal imbalances within my body. During those years, I did not have a regular menstrual cycle, and I started gaining weight, particularly around my midsection. In addition to limiting my caloric intake, I'd tried eliminating carbohydrates, but that only led to extreme cravings followed by inevitable binges and guilt.

Once I received my diagnosis, I became frustrated by my body's lack of response to traditional treatment methods. That's when I set out to manage my insulin resistance and PCOS through natural treatment methods instead.

Using my knowledge and experience as a certified nutritionist and personal trainer, I learned how to take control of my diet and exercise regime to improve and, eventually, overcome my insulin resistance. In the process, I learned to manage the symptoms of my PCOS, regained a healthy menstrual cycle, healed my metabolism, and lost the weight my body had been stubbornly retaining for years.

Dealing with these two conditions taught me to listen to my body, and through simple trial and error, determined the best way to nurture it. I learned how to treat my body with the kindness and love it deserves, and to understand the crucial role emotional health plays in overcoming a medical condition. I learned how to be patient with my body when it came to trying new foods, and to accept that significant changes would not occur overnight. I stopped fixating on the way my body looked, and instead focused on the way I felt during the recovery process: happier, more energetic, and stronger than I had felt in years.

The Insulin Resistance Diet Plan & Cookbook outlines exactly how I optimized my health by following a specific diet and modifying my exercise regime. It is for those of you who feel frustrated by traditional treatment methods, just as I did. It is also for those who seek a more natural means of improving their insulin resistance by addressing the very factor that likely led to their developing the condition in the first place: their diet.

This book provides a 28-day meal plan, and clearly defines which foods to enjoy in abundance and which to avoid. Accompanying the plan are 100 delicious, nutritious, easy-to-prepare recipes to kickstart a healthier way of living. This new lifestyle will help you overcome insulin resistance, and if applicable to you, it can help control PCOS, halt the progress of prediabetes, eliminate excess weight, and improve metabolic syndrome.

Finally, this book will teach you that achieving these outcomes is not simply a question of following the right diet or exercise regime, but rebuilding your self-confidence and healing all aspects of your internal health. With *The Insulin Resistance Diet Plan & Cookbook*, you're taking a crucial step in reclaiming your health for the rest of your life.