

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Hello and welcome to Unstress, my name is Dr. Ron Ehrlich, my guest today is [Dr. Peter Dingle](#). Now Peter has spent the last 30 years as a researcher, an educator, a communicator and [an author, and he has written 15 books on living well, that's quite an author](#). Peter helps cut through some very common health and medical myths as you will hear in a very accessible and a down to earth way, this is no-nonsense. It's a subject I feel very passionate about, and it's a subject we go into a lot in this podcast.

Now Peter has also coined the phrase, "[The Illness Paradox](#)" and we'll find out what that means and also "The Illness Triad" referring to three things that are common to *every*, yes every, disease. I hope you enjoy this conversation with Doctor Peter Dingle. Welcome to the show Peter.

Dr. Peter Dingle: Thank you Ron it's Fantastic to be here.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Peter I always love chatting to you, you always have so much to say, and you are a prolific author and researcher, but [this latest book of yours, The Illness Paradox](#), can you tell us what The Illness Paradox is.

Dr. Peter Dingle: Well look it's really simple. The first part of it is it's the way we look at illness, and whenever you get diagnosed with an illness, we've given it a name, we've called it cancer or breast cancer or liver cancer or have called it heart disease or stroke or blocked arteries. We tend to name everything as an illness, and we've really been trying to name aging as an illness and obesity as an illness, and all these conditions that we have.

And what it is is that when we name it there's a good part to it that people recognize that they've got something, but the bad part is we all see these illnesses as something that's going to kill us, something that's going to cause us pain and suffering, and we there have to look forward to a life of suffering for the rest of our life, or it's going to kill us in the next couple of years if it's diagnosed with cancer or something.

So by giving it that label, by giving it a name, we're being told we have to suffer from it, and the problem with that is with modern medicine, which is a part of the illness paradox, they don't fix the illness, they don't treat the illness in any way, they treat the symptoms. So instead of let's say when you've got diabetes type 1 you go to your doctor, you're high blood sugar, the doctor will say you've got diabetes type 2. And the doctor will say you're going to stay on these medications for the rest of your life and what's likely going to happen is this. And then we'll give you some medications which will regulate the blood sugar level and they'll regulate a few other bits and pieces, but what they don't do is look at the cause of the illness. They don't look at the contributing factors to the illness and how to actually resolve them.

And the reality is we can reverse these illnesses. It is something that we now know that we can do, but by giving it this label and by going on the medication we get into this vicious cycle, a negative cycle all about getting worse and sicker and taking more meds and a part of the illness paradox is the acceptance of it. The acceptance of oh no this Is genetic. When

people tell me it's genetic I go, "Rubbish. Stop talking rubbish." We now know that about 6%, 5%, 3%, in some cases 10%, in rare cases more than that, of these diseases are genetic. Sure your dad died of it, your brother died of it, your wife probably is dying of it, therefore, it's not genetic, it's our lifestyle and our diet. And if we recognize that then we recognize that these things that are contributing or causing the illness can actually be stopped, prevented, reversed. We don't do them anymore, and as a result, we can, in every condition that I've seen or at least understand after reading literally thousands of studies of it, can be reversed.

So the illness paradox is a paradigm, a model in our minds that we have to do it, we have to get sick, and it's a part of aging, it's part of our genetics, rather than recognizing illness as a call to arms.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. Now there's a progression here too isn't there? I mean there are lots of early warning signs that happen before ... it's not like a light switch, one day you were healthy and the next day you've got this diagnosis. And I know [in your book](#) you use the example of blood pressure as an example of here is a disease, we need a medication for it. But there's a reason why blood pressure goes up, it's the same as digestion, our bowel movements, our reflux, our heart. So tell us a little bit about some of the early signs that people can be faced with before we get a label on it. We'll get onto the labels in a minute, but what are some of those things and how medicine's approaching it.

Dr. Peter Dingle: Well look the first time in any illness is things begin happening and changing your body. Unfortunately again with the illness paradox, we put it down to say hold on we're getting old. So we accept that, so we go, "Oh I'm feeling more tired, I'm feeling more run down and I can't walk anymore and I can't do this." But the first thing you've got to look at is what are you doing now that ... or what were you doing 5 or 10 or 20 years ago that you can't do now. They're simple things like exercise, I see people, they struggle to walk a couple of hundred meters, and they don't recognize that and they go to the doctor and the doctor says oh you've got high blood pressure and a blocked artery and all this other stuff and I could tell them that.

Another classic example is simple weight gain. Another classic example any of these changes that are not just in food anymore when you're 18, you used to be able to eat just about anything and wow you didn't have any side effects. Now you have a little snack and you've got gastric reflux.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yeah.

Dr. Peter Dingle: So everything, the changes, it's different than it was 10, 20, 30 years ago is the first step to say well you've got to do something about it. Don't just accept it that it's in your genes, don't just accept that you're just getting old, I was at the gym yesterday, Ron I met an old man, he's 88 and he's at the gym and I tell you he looks 60. He looks 60. And he just chose in life when he was 60 to stay younger and stay healthier, and having a quick chat to him he doesn't have any adverse health conditions, so he's just decided to live differently than everyone else.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: And I mean exercise is a big one isn't it, but we seem to be in a bit of a mess don't we. The statistics are not looking great in terms of after all these years of all the advice we've been getting heart disease still number one, cancer still on the rise, autoimmune conditions. What are some of the common myths or common public health messages that you feel we've kind of got wrong that may have been contributing to part of this problem.

Dr. Peter Dingle: There's so many myths in our life, but the first thing is most people must realize that the medications that people are put on are to deal with the symptoms, not to fix it. And I'm not saying these medications have a role, but the first thing every doctor, every health professional should be saying is go back to the root cause. And the problem with that, [going back to the root cause](#), is as you've indicated there are lots of myths out there. There are myths about what we should be eating, these are being perpetuated by the type of invested interest, people with a lot of money involved or the big companies.

My classic myth that I wrote a book on five years ago was all about [cholesterol](#), cholesterol's bad for you. It's called the great cholesterol deception. Cholesterol's one of the most important chemicals in the body. Recent studies demonstrated that it's a cholesterol level under the skin that determines how much vitamin D you get, not your skin pigmentation, so it's your cholesterol level under the skin. We were told cholesterol's bad, no one has ever died from cholesterol. Now instead of this course this leads onto the fat myth.

For years we were told get off, get off, the animal fats, get off the saturated fats, get off the salt and go on the vegetable oils, the margarines, and what's happened is heart attack rates have gone up. And now we see this was really a myth perpetuated and perpetrated by large money. The sugar industry, and people had vested interested in this industry, and as a result we now know that the fats aren't killing us, the fats are actually essential part of our component. Even saturated fats. Now with that I'm talking about the best ones, like coconut fats, avocados, nuts and things like that, and a little bit of the animal fats. Where we've gone wrong is we've been told one of the greatest myths is these vegetable oils are good for you. And the studies are overwhelming you stay away from vegetable oils. The heart foundation supports it. Margarines. All these things. But there's money involved, and when there's money involved you've got to take a step back.

There was [a study just three weeks ago all about canola oil, and it's the first one to do canola oils, which is one of the biggest global selling oils. Canola oil with Alzheimer causing and linked directly with Alzheimer and Dementia](#). So these are the types of things. Then again there are the myths that our children learn. A lot of people are starting to understand this one, a little bit of sugar's fine, rubbish. People have to understand that the amount of sugar people consume is huge and devastating to their body and their health. Then the authorities come to a compromise with industry when they create the standards, and the World Health Organization are trying to do something about it, they said what we need to do is cut down on the amount of sugar in our diet from 10% of our calories to 5%, and the big industry in America, the sugar and the sweet drinks like Coke and all that turned around and said if you do that we're going to stop funding the World Health Organization, and we're going to stop funding you to do all this. They couldn't come down with it. Even 5%, even 5% is too much. You're a dentist, you know.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Music to my ears, music to my ears Peter. Now listen you also ... yeah this is a very favored theme of mine too as you probably know, but one of the things I really enjoyed in your book too was this illness triad. Because like I said, by the time we've got a diagnosable disease things have been going on a while. So there's stuff going on in the background there that sets us up, that predisposes us, and you've identified three things that are common to all diseases. Big statement, but there it is, so can you tell us about it.

Dr. Peter Dingle: As you said these diseases have been going on for years, even decades, and you said earlier it's not the light switch it's the dimmer switch that's been slowly turned on and we accept it and we put on a kilogram and blood pressure goes up a little bit, blood sugar level goes up, and we just accept it, we just roll on. And what we now know is there are three conditions, I could change the numbers a bit, but there are three primary conditions that are underlying every single form of chronic illness. In fact even acute illnesses like viruses and things too, but what we know is there's something called inflammation. Now inflammation is a normal part of your body system. It's a part of your immune system, it protects you, and when you get a virus inflammation fires up, it literally fights off the bacterial or viral infection, so inflammations critical, and it's constantly running at a really really low level.

But what happens, the things we do, the foods we eat, our lifestyle, all the stresses, all of these factors and what's unique about [my book](#) is I've actually looked at all of them, not just diet, and we've found that all of these negative things in our life are contributing to this inflammation. So rather than having this really really really low level, we've got this chronic upper level form of inflammation. Now inflammation is found in every illness, heart attacks, strokes, blocked arteries, cardiac arrest, you name it is it doesn't matter, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure. Every single condition, every cancer, and people don't understand.

There's another classic example too. You were saying well what are some of the myths, if your body isn't healing like it used to 20 years ago then it's a message. If you've got this condition. So the first one was inflammation and that's running all the time, and it's just now running at this level that's putting this huge amount of stress on the body. So there are some really simple things that you can [lower inflammation](#) with, very very simple things, and we just need to get that message out.

The second one is oxidation, everyone's heard of free radicals and antioxidants, the free radicals and the oxidation are literally burning parts of the cells and burning the molecules and burning the atoms, literally causing damage as they go along the way. What people don't understand is one, it might be one molecule of a chemical or something that causes oxidation, or these free radicals, and it can have 10,000 chain reactions along the way. So it can cause a lot of damage, a little bit can cause a lot of damage.

And the final one was acidosis, the thing about inflammation, oxidation, and acidosis is when you've got one you've got the other two, and when you've got the other two you've got the one, and they all link in. So it doesn't matter where it starts, and in fact what we find is the vast majority of things that are antioxidant and anti-acid forming in the blood are also antiinflammatory, so it's a win win win situation. So you've got to look for these things that do all.

Now acidosis what becomes particularly of concern is when you've got ... it's nothing to do by the way with acid in the stomach, this is the levels in the cells and in the blood. We know from early work that [cancers](#) are formed through inflammation, oxidation, and acidosis. And cancers actually kill all the cells around them by pumping out the acid to literally wipe out the cells surrounding them so they can spread a little bit better. So if anyone's interested in preventing and even reversing some cancers the message is [you need to look at this acidosis](#). Nowhere is acidosis more current than in the arteries. People might have cholesterol in the arteries, remember nobodies' ever died of cholesterol.

It's not the cholesterol in the arteries, it's the calcium plaque in the arteries. Now I actually tracked this one down through it was a fishing tank science book.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Say it again, hang on, fishing?

Dr. Peter Dingle: A fish tank. Fish tanks where you put your little fishy in the water.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yep.

Dr. Peter Dingle: And of course what they were doing is they were finding there was all this calcium plaque buildup on the outside of the fish tank. And so what were some of the suggestions they did is why that plaque is building up is when you put something alkaline like calcium, what's called a base in science, with an acid, it forms a salt, a crystal salt. I learnt that 50 years ago Ron, and I still remember that science lesson. Acid plus base equals salt, so when you've got a little bit of acid in your blood and you've got a little bit of calcium in your artery then it forms a salt and that forms a hard calcium plaque on top of your cholesterol, on top of your artery. So that's what causes the problem, the hard, rock hard calcium crystal.

Now here's the answer, in the fish tank science they used to just put in some calcium minerals. I'm sorry magnesium, and magnesium alkalizes a bit more and got rid of the plaque, and the same thing happens in our arteries too. Magnesium is one of the simplest ways to start unblocking the calcium that's causing the problems in your arteries. So acidosis, inflammation, oxidation, three things that go hand in hand. When you've got acidosis, it's also forming an inflammation, and it's creating free radicals too, so all of them go hand in hand.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: So this whole [preoccupation with an alkalizing diet is really important](#), and you would be suggesting, well you've mentioned the magnesium, but from a dietary perspective, something to alkalize the diet?

Dr. Peter Dingle: Oh absolutely. And the interesting thing about magnesium is it's in obviously the richest source is in plant foods, all your green foods, and I'm a fanatic when it comes to green foods like your spinaches and lettuces, all those other ones, bok choy, and cabbage. The green is actually made by magnesium, so anything green is rich in magnesium. Now in fact the molecule chlorophyll that a lot of people would know the name of, that gives it the green color, is the same as the hemoglobin in our blood, but we have iron to make it

red, and that same molecule has magnesium in it which gives it the green color. So it's literally the same molecule with a mineral change over.

So our body needs that magnesium, so lots and lots of green. And there's another classic example people start to get muscle cramps and muscle pains, magnesium is a really simple source of resolving that, and that comes in your green veggies. Other alkalizing minerals are obviously most of your nuts, I'm not talking about peanuts and cashews here, that I have occasionally, not regularly. But nuts, my super foods, and frequently the talks I do I'm telling people look if you want to come all illnesses, in fact there's a growing body of research I just posted about last week about nuts and weight loss. The people who consume the highest amount of nuts, which are rich in fats and rich in calories have the greatest weight loss, and keep the weight off.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: What do you think of alkaline water, I'm not sure about that. It seems as though a little bit of a trendy idea very oversimplified.

Dr. Peter Dingle: Look, it can be, but I think there's a role for, and if you imagine a few thousand years ago when we hadn't polluted the planet and so on, most of your rivers and springs and creeks would be running over rocks and picking up minerals, and as a result they'd all be a little bit alkaline. Not too much. I won't go into the numbers too much, but there are some alkalising in products that say are 13 and 12 and that's far too high.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Yeah. Because I always think the paradox there, sorry to use that word, but the paradox there is we're told of squeezing a little bit of lemon into water or Apple cider vinegar prior to a meal is not a bad thing, and so the alkalizing. Anyway I'm getting distracted with the alkalizing water thing.

Dr. Peter Dingle: But the answer is probably up to around 8, 8.2 in something isn't an issue. It reflects what used to happen in nature, and it also reflects the fact that most of our lifestyle and foods we eat now, not you and me of course, and not the listeners, but all the other people out there, have acidic foods. But on top of that the water, what they add to water, the fluoride, the chlorine, the contaminants like aluminum, heavy metals, are all acid forming.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Ironic isn't it.

Dr. Peter Dingle: So our water is slightly acidified now.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Well we get out of this mess by taking control, what would be the first steps that people should be taking?

Dr. Peter Dingle: Well you know the first thing is to recognize that they're in charge, they're in control, you are the best person to judge how you feel and what you think is true or not. GPs, our medical doctors have an important role, but they are just the educated technicians, you are the expert, and you need to do your own homework, you need to be responsible, you need to ask questions, if you don't ask you'll just be 10 or 20 questions every time you see them. And you're not doing your task. You're just believing that this person you



see for 10 or 15 minutes a month or a year or whatever knows more about your health, and they don't.

So the critical thing is to take responsibility, learn it, and Ron there is nothing more important than health. People get caught up in finances, people get caught up in the shares, people get caught up in the busy lifestyle and parties, guess what once you're health disappears all that disappears. So my biggest thing is take control of health, and then realize health isn't just about healthy eating. It's about your diet, your lifestyle, your environment that you're in, and just as importantly [your attitude](#).

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's a big one.

Dr. Peter Dingle: And it's a combination of those things, the combination of those things. Hence that's why, again, to do with the illness paradox. We don't just have these antioxidants, anti-inflammatory, anti-acid forming nutrients in our food and in our supplements and so on, we have to have them in our lifestyle. We've got to get rid of the things in our environment, [the toxins in your personal care products](#) and [the other things that we surround ourselves with](#). We've got to get rid of them because they're also acid forming, they're causing the inflammation these days, as is the stress in our lives. As is lack of exercise or overexercise, the elite athletes and so on, because they've all contributed.

So what we've got to do is understand it's a balance between our diet, environment, attitude, lifestyle, and each of them is as equally important in dealing with these issues.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Well Peter you've summed it up beautifully. You've answered my next question, and that was what is the biggest challenge people face, and it's to take control and do all those things you've just mentioned. Look we're going to have links to [your webpage](#) and [this great new book you're just about to release called the illness paradox](#), thank you so much for joining us today.

Dr. Peter Dingle: Ron it's been an absolute pleasure, I just hope I've been able to share some good information so everyone out there listening can go out and take control of their own health, because that's what we're here for, to look after ourselves.

Dr. Ron Ehrlich: Now your health is not a light switch. One day you're healthy, the next day you have a diagnosable disease. It just doesn't happen that way. Listen to your body. Don't just accept things like indigestion, reflux, constipation, diarrhea, high blood pressure, skin conditions, cramps, low energy, the list goes on. These are all signs that things aren't as they should be or as they could be. If the only thing you know about your health is your doctor's phone number, you wouldn't be listening to this podcast if that were the case. I know we're all motivated, that's why we're all listening. Take control. [It's a recurring theme you'll hear from me, and confusing health messages, well that's another one you'll hear a lot about.](#)

So how do you approach taking control, well first and foremost and this is sadly the case, I think we've been let down by the health authorities. I think people's interest, over the last 20 or 30 year particularly in complementary therapies like diet and supplement and a whole lot

of other alternative therapies is just a reflection of a search for control and a response to the frustration with our health system. The themes are recurring ones, nutrition, exercise, environment, attitude, how you think about things. It's actually remarkably simple, it's not a complicated story.

So the triad that Peter refers to of oxidation, inflammation, and acidosis, or an acid environment, is a subject I'm going to expand on also in a lot of future blog posts and podcasts. When it comes to oxidation I think it's worth just refreshing ourselves on this one. It's a process that drives our metabolism. In that process, free radicals are produced. They're mopped up, those free radicals are mocked up by antioxidants, vitamins and minerals like vitamin E, vitamin C, Selenium, coenzyme Q10 and there are many, many others in the body. Powerful antioxidants mop up free radicals before they can do damage. That's why we're always encouraged to eat lots of vegetables with lots of colors, healthy fats, and get out in the sun. Vitamin D, it's one of the great antioxidants. Things that are high in antioxidants as well as avoiding sugar, alcohol, processed food that produce free radicals because it's those things that cause the overproduction of free radicals that in turn, result in tissue damage and eventually, suddenly. Well I don't think suddenly, appears as a diagnoseable disease, this is a process that goes on.

So this all typically occurs when the body's more acidic, and it sets up chronic inflammation. That's the common denominator in all degenerative disease, which turns out makes the body more acidic, causes more free radicals, resulting in too much oxidated stress, and so it goes on. It's an ongoing process. The bottom line is this, Peter's triad are the biochemical processes that underpin all that causes the body stress and eventually disease, so it's those things that reduce that impact. Things like nutrient dense food and exercise. In fact exercise is a critical one.

Interestingly overexercising can cause the production of too much free radicals, so there's a balance to be had there. Avoiding environmental and nutritional toxins, pesticides, herbicides and all that sort of thing. We've covered that and we'll cover that in some upcoming podcasts. Reducing what we refer to as emotional stress, that's another great podcast coming up. It's something we're going to be exploring a whole lot more. All of that's important. Above all take control, build resilience, that's the key message. So until next time, this is Doctor Ron Ehrlich, be well.

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