

Hi,

Once again, I want to keep this Challenge as simple-to-follow as possible so that we all do it successfully!

That said, I have been doing a lot of research, taking a discerning look at my own behaviour, and meeting with various health care practitioners. With all that in mind, **I have made some decisions for us.**

The first ones I'll do like ripping off a bandaid. So, here goes...

NO ALCOHOL

There is NO alcohol allowed on this Challenge. No booze of any kind for 28 days. Allow that to sink in for a minute. And breathe...

NO or LIMITED CAFFEINE

If you are a coffee or tea drinker (even decaffeinated), **you will be reducing or eliminating your caffeine intake throughout the Challenge.** The research suggests we should cut it out completely, but I know that could be a potential deal-breaker for a lot of people (“I can give up sugar for 28 days, but coffee too?? No way!”)

Caffeine spikes blood sugar, and so although it doesn't actually contain sugar, **there is a sugar response in the body.**

With that in mind, **I challenge you to either cut out the caffeine or cut way down.** Don't go “cold turkey” if you are a moderate to heavy coffee drinker as doing so will result in headaches and brain fog, but, starting today, **I want you to begin reducing your intake by one cup each week until you get to only one cup a day or you cut it out completely.**

So, if you normally drink four cups of coffee a day, drop it to three starting today. After this week, drop it to two. If you normally only have one cup in the morning, you may want to cut it out for the Challenge...and keep reading. :)

******If Coke is your caffeine source, you will be eliminating it once we start the Challenge due to its high sugar content (in the form of High Fructose Corn Syrup)**

Now, here are things we will be adding:

WARM WATER AND LEMON

Waking up and having warm water with lemon has made a huge difference in my digestive health, my skin, my cravings and my overall well-being. I want you to start your day this way as well. When we have been dehydrated all night and then start our morning with caffeine, we dehydrate our bodies even more.

So, **between now and all the way through the Challenge**, I want you to start your mornings with an 8-16 ounce mug of warm water and the juice of 1/2 to 1 whole lemon (you want to get at least a couple of tablespoons of lemon juice, so it will depend on the size of your lemons).

To get the most out of a lemon, use a reamer. You will be AMAZED at how much more juice you will get out of it!

So go and buy a lemon reamer at your local kitchen, gadget, dollar store or grocery store. And grab a big bag of lemons (Costco has the best deal, but most grocery stores sell them in bags now). You decide if you want to buy organic or not.

Enjoy tomorrow morning's new ritual. :)

MARIA'S SWEDISH BITTERS

We don't eat enough bitter things in our diets. We just don't. While I will be sharing recipes using some bitter greens when we officially start the Challenge, I want you to buy Maria's Swedish Bitters. **We will be taking them 3 times a day when we start the Challenge on February 16th.** So, head to your local health food store or buy them [here](#).

Bitters help recruit all organs and functions involved in digestion. They aid in proper digestion, helping to reduce gas and bloating, helping us to eliminate (poop!) better and **they have a powerful effect on sugar cravings. When we eat bitter, we lessen our craving for sweet.**

For all of these reasons (and more! I encourage you to research the benefits of bitters), I have added them to the Challenge. I have chosen the alcohol-free variety for obvious reasons, personally, and I recommend this for you as well, considering the nature of the Challenge (we eliminate alcohol as a sugar).

We will only be taking bitters for the first week, 3 times a day, 15 minutes before meals on an empty stomach. We will be taking bitters in a bit of water.

******DON'T START TAKING THE BITTERS UNTIL FEBRUARY 16th WHEN WE ALL START THE CHALLENGE!**

The 100 ml size is perfect for one person for one week. I bought the 250 ml size, as Roger is joining me on the Challenge. *But be sure to buy the size that is right for you, as once opened, they must be used within 6 weeks.* **Store in the refrigerator.**

After the Challenge is over, you can feel free to look at taking bitters much like you take your car in to get detailed. Perhaps do the 7-day regimen once every two or three months.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONS TO YOUR CHALLENGE

TAKE PROBIOTICS

This is optional, and based on where you are at health-wise. Probiotics help promote a healthy gut. If you eat plain Greek yogurt or lots of fermented foods, you likely have healthy gut flora.

But if you have been eating a diet that included a lot of sugar-laden, processed and junk food or if you suffer with digestive issues like gas, bloating, constipation or diarrhea, then a probiotic like acidophilus (or others) could work wonders. I leave this up to you.

They can be pricey, as I suggest *only* buying high quality live probiotics that are found in the fridge at your local health food store. ***Take probiotics before going to bed.***

USE COCONUT OIL

There are so many uses for coconut oil (like in yummy recipes we'll be eating!) but what I want for now is for you to start **moisturizing your entire body with coconut oil. A little goes a long way** and I want you to perform this ritual of self-care and self-love every morning after your shower. **Your skin and well-being will thank you.**

You want organic “Virgin” oil and Costco sells a large container at a great price, but any grocery store, health food store or bulk barn sells it as well. I separate some into a container that I keep in my bathroom so I can dip my fingers in it.

START DRY BODY BRUSHING

I have been body brushing for years. **Although not necessary, I want you to enjoy the benefits of dry body brushing.** It improves the look of cellulite, aids in circulation, moves lymph fluid which helps eliminate toxins, and gives skin a glow, among other benefits. I also love the connection to my body and the demonstration of love it offers. Plus, it feels amazing!!

I have researched many types at various price points and [this set](#) is excellent value for money.

Starting with the bottoms of your feet, use your body brush *before your shower* and work in circular movements all over your body. There are several good videos on YouTube showing you how to body brush. **I really hope you try it!**

TO RECAP:

1. Prepare to **cut out all alcohol** when we start the Challenge.
2. **Cut out one cup of coffee/tea per week, starting today**, until you get down to one cup per day. Once you've weaned yourself down to one cup per day, cut out caffeine completely for the duration of the Challenge, for best results.
3. Head out and buy your lemon reamer and lemons. **Start drinking warm water with lemon tomorrow morning.**
4. Go out and buy or order your **Swedish Bitters**.
5. Buy your **Probiotics** (if using).
6. Pick up your container of **Organic Virgin Coconut Oil** (we will be cooking with it, so even if you don't want to moisturize with it, you'll need some).
7. Buy or order your **Dry Body Brush**.

We're a few steps closer to starting The Challenge and I am so excited!

xo Sarah

P.S. I'd love to hear from you! How is all of this sounding so far?