INTRODUCTION

The Killer Fat Within

America’s top urgent-care doctor targets “Killer fat” — the greatest risk to your health, your life, and even your bank account — with a revolutionary new 4-week prescription that will grant you a lean belly for life!

IT’S ANOTHER SATURDAY NIGHT IN THE E.R.

I Haven’t been too busy — an unexplained rash here, a wrist sprain there — which can mean only one thing: It’s just a matter of time before somebody out there gets seriously hurt.

And sure enough, the PA system barks a warning, announcing an auto accident with multiple injuries. I leap to my feet and abandon a cup of coffee that I won’t return to for several hours. Who needs caffeine when you’re pumping high-
test adrenaline? I’ve been preparing for moments like this for my whole medical career: getting my E.R. patients through the “golden hour,” the critical 60 minutes that determine whether they will live or die.

I hear the sirens wailing as the ambulances near Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, where I’m on call in the E.R. whenever I’m not in Los Angeles hosting The Doctors. If you think hosting a TV show watched by 6 million people must be stressful, then you haven’t spent a night in the E.R.

Two ambulances arrive at the door, and in a flash the victims roll down the hallways and into my care. In the E.R., I have to determine immediately what’s wrong and figure out how I can help the next patient who arrives, often on death’s doorstep.

So what vital sign do I check first? How much they weigh.

*C’mon Dr. Travis, you’re thinking. You don’t check for a pulse or blood pressure? You don’t check for missing limbs or scan the report compiled by the ambulance personnel? Well, sure, I’m looking at a lot of things simultaneously, but often the most important indicator of how well a patient will manage a health crisis is how much excess weight he or she is carrying. In fact, obese people are 37 percent more likely to die from injuries sustained in a car crash than people of ideal weight.

The patient who just arrived in Trauma Bay 1 is an unfortunate example of that. He’s more than 50 pounds overweight, and evidence retrieved from the car indicates that he was eating behind the wheel when the accident happened. His body is under siege—not just by the injuries he sustained in his accident, but by the myriad complications brought on by all that belly fat. In fact, visceral fat—the most dangerous kind of fat, the fat inside your abdomen that packs internal organs in a toxic soup of goop—literally attacks the people who are lugging it around all day. It’s one of the primary causes of the diseases that haunt our lives: Heart disease. Stroke. Diabetes. Cancer. Arthritis. And that’s if you stay out of car accidents and other mishaps. If you’re injured, the added weight actually fights your body’s natural healing powers.

In the short time I have with people in medical emergencies, there’s only so much I can do. My focus is the acute injury or illness. And like many urgent-care doctors, that frustrates me. I may help a patient survive his most recent accident, but the ultimate accident that costs many of my patients their lives isn’t really any accident at all. It’s a lifetime of making unhealthy choices, often scores of them each day, that leads to a premature death.
And that’s why I wrote this book. Like many of my fellow doctors, I find it difficult to help save people’s lives only to send them out into the world where they’ll grow more obese, more out of shape, more frustrated by their struggles with their weight. It’s heartbreaking to see them back in my E.R. 2 years later, with another heart attack, another stroke, another obesity-related complication. I have the power to write them a prescription for medicine but what I really want is to write them a prescription for a better life.
And now I have.

WHY WE NEED A LEAN BELLY PRESCRIPTION

In the crazed, adrenaline-fueled moments I have with E.R. patients, I try to give them the best lifestyle advice I can: why they need to watch what they eat, why exercise is so important, why making small changes to their daily activities will have a profound impact on their health — how they look, how they feel, how they live. And often, I’m met with a blank stare, a shrug, and a noncommittal murmur. “Lifestyle changes” seem hard, especially when a doctor is trying to explain them to you in 5 minutes or less. In fact, more often than not, my patients will look at me and ask one question:
“Doc, can’t you just give me a prescription?”
Well, yes. I can. Not for a weight-loss pill you can pop, and not for an elective surgery that will trim you down suddenly. (Both have terrible potential side effects and spotty long-term track records.) Instead, I’ve written a prescription that simply, effectively, and nearly effortlessly strips away pounds, focusing on your biggest enemy and mine — belly fat.
I’ve created a list of eight life-altering dietary changes that will burn away belly fat with shocking speed. I call them “The Laws of Leanness.” But you don’t actually have to make all eight changes. In fact,
you don’t even have to make half of them. These lifestyle tweaks are so powerful, so dramatically effective, that if you make just three of them—your three favorite, whichever ones you want—you can drop up to 15 pounds in 4 weeks or less. I call it PICK 3 TO LEAN. And the best part? You’ll keep losing after those first 4 weeks—15, even 25 pounds, you decide—and you’ll never gain it back!

And I’ve based these dietary secrets not on foods I want you to give up, but on foods I want you to enjoy. For example:

- Love pasta and rice? I’ll show you how to eat them and still lose 24 percent more belly fat than traditional “dieters” d.
- Crazy about steak? I’ve got a beef-based plan to strip away the pounds.
- Enjoy snacking? I’ll show you how to build several snacks every single day that will fuel weight loss while keeping you satisfied.

Combined with your choice of easy, effective activity programs, which you’ll also find outlined in this book, (you won’t think if these as “exercise”) your PICK 3 choices will begin to strip away belly fat almost from day one.

How do I know that? Because I’ve based this prescription on the latest science, on results that have been proven by the top researchers in America and abroad. And I’ve based it on my experience as a medical doctor, watching what works, and what doesn’t in the real world. I’ve seen these strategies succeed for my patients, sure, but I’ve also seen them work for friends and family members who have turned to me for help. Now I want to include you in that group of happy, grateful, newly skinny people.

BLAST FAT, STAT!

As an E.R. doc, I see every possible health problem. I treat everything from heart attacks to concussions to gunshot wounds and food poisoning. I even treat little kids who think it’s a great idea to stuff crayons up their noses.
My patients there -almost all of them- tend to look at what has happened to them and think: *What rotten luck.*

So it was with the guy who came into the E.R. that Saturday night. The lid on his soft drink wasn’t on right, so he tried to adjust it—while going 45 miles an hour on the turnpike and eating a fast-food burger. Next thing he knew, his car came to a rest on the median and he was bleeding from multiple wounds, with untold internal damage.

*What rotten luck.*

My dozen years of medical education and experience tell me that luck has almost nothing to do with it. Our lives are determined by choices we make every day. Should I cook myself a hot breakfast at home, or grab a doughnut at the coffee cart near work? Should I take a walk after dinner, or settle in with the tube? They seem like small decisions at the time, but the difference these choices make is enormous.

I could list for you all the negative consequences of making the wrong choice. But as long as I’ve got your attention—as long as you’re willing to spend the length of this book learning about how to change your life—then I’d much rather point out to you all the positive consequences of taking *The Lean Belly Prescription* to heart.

Among the benefits:

- You’ll lose weight and look better than ever—as much as 15 pounds in just the next 4 weeks.
- You’ll enjoy your life more because you’ll be free of the pain and hassles extra weight entails. In fact, women who keep their weight within normal range are 40 percent less likely to develop arthritis than obese women.
- You’ll dodge three of the biggest killers out there—heart attacks, diabetes, and stroke—and be much less likely to get cancer.
- You’ll have more energy because your metabolism will be revving high, and you’ll have the physical strength to take you places you’ve never been before.
- You’ll have more money to spend, because people who take care of their bodies look better and earn more money as a result of it—up to 15.4 percent more!
You’ll be more confident, because you will have demonstrated to yourself that you can tackle something important and succeed.

You’ll have more and better sex. More sex because obese people who slim down to their ideal weight are considered 43 percent more attractive to the opposite sex; better sex because sexual function is largely about good blood circulation. Less body fat means better blood flow –in all the places you need it.

You’ll add active years to your life –as much as a decade more to play with the grandkids, travel, watch 3,000 more sunsets and 3,001 more sunrises

I’m asking you to stop right now and take a look at your life, and envision living it the way you want to, for as long as you want to, feeling the way you want to. Can you motor up the stairs rather than pausing after every five for a break? Are your weekends filled with fun activities rather than naps to compensate for your constant exhaustion? Are you still in the fame at the office, or are younger and more vigorous people by passing you?

And, looking off into the future a bit: Will your grandkids remember you as the active grandparent who matched them step for step and showed by example what it really means to be alive? Or will they remember you by your weight or your limitations, and be left with the idea that getting older means getting fatter, weaker, unhealthier?

I believe that The Lean Belly Prescription will give you ways to answer each of the upbeat questions with a resounding “yes,” and make the negatives vanish. And you’ll accomplish those things not by radically altering your daily life, or by giving up the things you love, but by making small changes to your diet and your daily habits, and learning to live lean –for life.

As a doctor, that’s the prescription I’ve always wanted to write. This book is it.