

Women's Vitality Summit

Dr. Keesha Ewers Interviews Erin Knight

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Dr. Keesha Ewers: Welcome back to the Woman's Vitality Summit, everybody, Caring For Yourself Body and Soul. I'm Dr. Keesha Ewers, and I'm delighted to introduce you to Erin Knight today. She helps women who desire natural solutions providing freedom from migraines so that they can experience a dramatic increase in productivity and drive in the active life that they dream of. Having suffered with migraines for over a decade, Erin is sympathetic to the impact that headaches have on our work and social life. After discovering functional medicine and realizing her migraines disappeared as she balanced her hormones and fixed her digestion, she started her company, Engineering Radiance, to help women who are frustrated with the conventional management of migraines and want to get to the root causes.

Erin has her Masters of Engineering from the University of Michigan and has trained in functional diagnostic nutrition and nutrigenomics. After a decade guiding Fortune 500 teams through root cause analysis, she now applies these problem-solving skills to our most complex system, the human body. She shares implementation strategies for achieving radiant health through online classes, corporate workshops, and one-to-one consulting. She has a goal of helping a million women discover freedom from their migraine headaches. Welcome to the summit, Erin.

Erin Knight: Thanks, Dr. Keesha. Thanks for having me.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: It's my pleasure. Migraines are a big plague for a lot of women.

Erin Knight: Absolutely.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Of course, they are life altering in the way that they adjust your quality of life, depending on if you're in pain or not. I would love to have you tell your own personal story about how you came to do this work.

Erin Knight: Absolutely. Of course, if you ask a little girl what she wants to be when she grows up, you're probably not going to get migraine expert, right? If you ask anyone in my family what I was like when I was a kid, and they'll tell you all these cute stories about how I'd run around with my Fisher Price stethoscope, giving them a checkup. Clearly, I was drawn to wanting to help people feel good from this early age. When I was a little bit older, I will never forget, I was on a

family vacation to Spain. It was this great trip, but the first three days, my mom was completely out of commission in the hotel room, just really sick with a migraine. As this girl that wanted to help everybody, I just was frustrated that I couldn't do anything for her and just being a kid, sad that she was missing out on these experiences with us.

I could tell how much migraines impacted not just feeling bad, but missing out on things, from that early age. Yes, I wanted to help people, and then also I remember being really inspired by my grandpa. He was a compounding pharmacist, which I thought was really cool. You can call me a geek if you want to, but I remember sprawling out in their living room as a teenager just engrossed in his pharmacology textbooks, toxicology textbooks, amazed with how we can impact the body with chemistry. I think that inspired my early interest in science. Let's see, fast forward a little bit through high school, I decided to go to school for engineering because I was influenced by my dad, who is a lean manufacturing expert.

We grew up in this household always looking at the most efficient optimal way to do anything and asking five whys whenever we had a problem come up or anything like that. It was only natural that I was going to become an engineer. Between that and my grandpa, I became a pharmaceutical engineer. All these years in school and early into my career, I had developed migraines myself, just like my mom. They were debilitating. It was frustrating. They would come at the most inopportune times. If I had some travel or was interviewing for a job or even wanting to go to a birthday party or something like that, those were the times that would push me into having the most severe migraines, which was very limiting.

I think I only now appreciate how much that impacted my social life and relationships because for those of you listening, you can hopefully notice in your life how hard it is to show up and be present with somebody and really relate to them when you're suffering with pain behind this mask of a smile. That was going on for years, and I think I just now appreciate how impactful that was. Let's see, when I hit the ripe old age of 27, all this life of achieving and stress really reached a breaking point, and not only was I having migraines, but all of a sudden, I had constant pain, nerve pain, in half of my body, digestive issues that really nobody wants to hear about, and fatigue to the point where just talking about what to have for dinner was just almost too much. That was really the breaking point. I said I-

Dr. Keesha Ewers: I think that's where I met you, was in that place.

Erin Knight: That's about when I finally decided to get help because I just did not want to live the rest of my life like that. It's one thing to put up with headaches, but that was too much. I could not accept that other doctors were telling me there was nothing to be done for this. I said, "Look, I'm an engineer. I can figure this out if I really

sit down and start to work on it." That's when I launched into this whole journey of working with wonderful people like yourself and just spending three or four hours a day myself digging into this and discovered functional medicine, functional nutrition, which again, for an engineer, makes so much sense because it's all about the root causes, and that's what we do.

I just loved that and started to spend tens of thousands of dollars continuing education and trying different modalities to figure out what worked. Of course, there were many root causes, which there often are. As I started to chip away at them, the migraines disappeared also. I got to this point where I looked back, and I said, if I can help people like myself, if I can help other people like my mom get off of the sidelines and start really participating in life again and discover this feeling of freedom to live and not just do the things you want to do, but be the person that you want to be, then I had to do that. I reverse engineered all the pivotal things that had helped me get there, and that's how I came up with the Migraine Freedom Plan.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Wonderful. Let's go through that. Obviously, the Migraine Freedom Plan has to do with doing some things in a drug-free way. Let's talk about some of those alternatives.

Erin Knight: If somebody wants to go the drug-free route, which I fully support, the first thing I want them to know is there's not a magic bullet. I still get questions, a lot of questions, like, "What's the one supplement I can take?", or "If I do this migraine piercing, will that just completely get rid of everything?" It's time to just realize that our body is trying to tell us something is off balance when we're having headaches or migraines and that it's usually from accumulation of different stressors, so I look at biomechanical stressors, biochemical stressors, and even mental emotional stressors. I really work on biochemical, but I help people realize that there's a lot of different causes and that you need to work on them one at a time.

Sometimes people will be confused, like, "This therapy worked for my friend, Mary. My aunt had good luck with this. Why are there so many different things that can help people with migraines?" It's because it's a layering of stress up to a threshold where your body can't take it anymore, and it's screaming at you with this pain in your head that says, "Do something about this." It doesn't really matter which angle you want to start working on it, but you need to kind of chip away at those different stressors, whether that's the basics, like sleep and avoiding blood sugar crashes, or looking at different food sensitivities or gut parasites.

Eventually, when that stress level goes down, then you have more resilience to the stressors that you can't control, like traffic or having to take a last minute trip to help out somebody in your family or something like that. These things happen, and we want to be resilient enough to be able to cope with that. I call that the

bathtub theory of migraines because I think of all these stressors piling into the bathtub until they show up as a headache. Trying to take different stressors that we can out to lower the threshold is my approach.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah. Nope, that's perfect. I call it critical mass. Eventually things get piled on the barge to the point where it capsizes, right?

Erin Knight: Yeah.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You can start taking some of those things off. It's the same with reversing autoimmune disease, with getting rid of PMS, with stopping menstrual cramps, with any digestive issues. It's always about what's the combination of things that's going on. It's rarely just one thing. I think people get confused by that. They just really want the smoking gun.

Erin Knight: Maybe they get frustrated and give up, too, because they try one thing, and it doesn't work. Then they're like, "Well, natural things didn't work for me," or something like that. You have to do one thing at a time and keep going.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Right. Right, right. Sorry, my dogs are chiming in on all of this right now. When you talk about lifestyle changes, these lifestyle factors, of course ... again, when we're talking about migraines or we're talking about any other feedback mechanism from the body that's causing us some kind of stress, then there are going to be some lifestyle changes that need to be addressed. What are those? You mentioned a couple just a second ago, but let's go through all of those.

Erin Knight: Okay. Sure. Let's talk about sleep first because I'm really passionate about the topic of sleep just because it helped me so much. It took me from having headaches and migraines in combination like four or five days a week to that inconvenient migraine, where it would just pop up in stressful situations. It made that much of a difference getting my sleep aligned because as a student, even though Mom tells you to go to bed, you're up late studying, and things are all over the place. We know that having a regular set sleeping schedule can make a huge difference for people with migraines, so that means not sleeping in on the weekends, not changing your routine wildly. That was certainly true for me.

Another benefit of getting sleep is it's a virtuous cycle, if you will. You know all about a vicious cycle, where one bad habit compounds and turns into other bad habits. Sleep is kind of the opposite. It can be a catalyst for other healthy changes because suddenly you have more energy to wrap your mind around going to the grocery store and starting to cook for yourself and stuff like that because you have more energy. A lot of people say, "Oh, I sleep fine. I'm fine. I'm getting enough sleep." Think about the drunk guy at the party who thinks he's fine to drive. We don't even know how exhausted we are until you get like a week or two of really good quality sleep, and then you suddenly realize what you're capable of, so that's kind of interesting.

I think I read on the CDC website that one in three people in the US don't get enough sleep, just quantitatively. Then of the people that do get enough sleep, there's another third that will report not even having good quality sleep. Then 20% of Americans will report not waking refreshed on the past seven days. This is a big, big deal for people. It's when the brain detoxes, and it's kind of the foundation for good health. Some things we can do, if you want to get into that, one of the things I recommend is setting a routine ... I'm sorry, not a routine, a ritual before bed. It sends a signal to your body that it's time for bed, so creating a nice set of things that are sensory, like warm tea.

I especially like essential oils because the scents or the essential oils are not only relaxing in and of themselves, but your sense of smell is a strong trigger for memories and for habits. Just the reminder that it's time for bed is complementary in addition to just the relaxing lavender or whatever you pick, on top of that.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, that olfactory bulb is right there, so it's definitely a big piece of getting your brain's nervous system to calm down, so that's a great idea. Sleep rituals, a routine. What else?

Erin Knight: Routine. Well, we all struggle with this one, is avoiding the electronics at nighttime.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: This is a huge one. I always say-

Erin Knight: It's a big one.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: ... no screens in the bedroom.

Erin Knight: No screens in the bedroom and ideally a couple of hours before bedtime, but of course, everybody listening is like, "Yeah, right." What you can do instead ... well, two things. One, I still want to be learning and listening to things at night, but instead of watching videos or reading, I'll go listen to lot of podcasts or audiobooks at night. That way, I'm not getting the blue light that's going to impact my melatonin production, but I can still continue working in a way, or continue thinking in a way, just by listening. That's one thing. The other thing would just be to get blue-blocking glasses. They have orange glasses that you can get online now for like 10 or 20 bucks that will help reduce the impact if you are going to work up until ... even after dark, I would use them.

Then you can buy filters to put on your screens or use an app, like f.lux that will take out some of the blue light and have it more of an orange tone. That will have less of an impact. Best case scenario, yeah, you shut it off, and you go spend time with your family or relax or something like that, but if that sounds just completely crazy, then at least mitigate the impact.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Good ideas. Good ideas. What else?

Erin Knight: Well, we know that magnesium is helpful for sleep and for people with migraines in general. A lot of times, people will be still taking magnesium oxide or magnesium citrate, which aren't absorbed particularly well. Especially in the sleep rituals, I encourage people to try a topical magnesium and have it absorb through the skin. You can get like an oil or a gel to apply after you shower or take a nice Epsom salt bath. A tip that I like to share with people on that is to really make sure that it's concentrated enough to absorb and be useful, so we're talking at least a pound of salt, a pound or two of salt, in your bathtub, which is way more than most people use. That ensures that it's concentrated enough to actually be absorbed and useful.

When I do that, I find that I'm way more relaxed and sleep better, so you notice it right away. Then magnesium and the sulfur from Epsom salts play an important role in many different body functions, including detoxification and stuff like that, so it will be supportive of your healing and your health journey overall, too.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: I get giant tons of that delivered to me all the time because I use so much of it.

Erin Knight: Yeah.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You can mix it with essential oils, and it's just beautiful. All the aroma comes up, and you also get the detoxification and the relaxation from it. You want to make sure you use sesame oil on your skin afterwards, so it doesn't dry out because a lot times people get super dry with the salt. Yeah, good tips.

Erin Knight: Yeah. Buy it online in bulk. If you look at a gardening supply store or something like that, they'll have big 40-pound bags, so you don't ... I know why people, when they just buy the fancy bath salts, they don't want to use the whole thing. If you're talking about two pounds, that's quite a bit, so you need to buy it in bulk.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah. What else?

Erin Knight: What else? I would encourage people to put their phones on airplane mode before they go to bed. Whether or not you're into the EMF debate or not, the other benefit of this is not being woken up by text messages randomly or your screen turning on and stuff like that in the middle of the night. At a minimum, do it for that reason. I was reading studies about, I think, young people, teenagers, and people in college still, and they'll be woken up by their phones just multiple times every single night. That's going to make it really hard to get a good night's rest, so just switch it off before you go to bed. Another thing is investing in some nice light-blocking curtains. It took me way too long to do this, and after I did, I was so, so thankful.

You sleep much better when it's completely dark in your room and environment, and you're not seeing car headlights driving by or streetlamps and things like that. Actually, those things are much brighter than the light of moon and stars, so it can affect the quality of sleep. You might still be in bed and asleep for seven to eight hours, but you'll have deeper sleep if it's completely dark.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Good tips.

Erin Knight: Okay. If somebody wants to kind of go through those and didn't catch the notes, I think we'll share the ... I have a PDF on this that we can share. Is that right?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: It's your bonus. It's on the Woman's Vitality Summit bonus area for Erin's talk, so a really nice downloadable tip sheet for you for that. You actually have a summit coming up on migraines. It's the Migraine Summit, so many different experts and speakers about this topic. That's how big it is and how complex it can be. Give us a little peak through the curtain here of what kinds of topics are going to be covered for this. It's pretty exciting.

Erin Knight: Yeah. I'm really excited about this event. We'll be talking to functional medicine experts, like yourself. We are talking to people who will give just great home self-care tips. We're going to talk about different root causes, including emotional trauma, some of our toxic exposures and how to clean those up and how to move past that, food sensitivities, all these different avenues that you may or may not have pursued yet. In one week, your brain will be exploding with all of the options and new ways to think about migraine headaches.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: All right. Great. We are going to email everybody, so you guys know. What month is this coming out?

Erin Knight: The dates will be July 10th through the 17th.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Okay. In June, you'll hear from us, and we'll send out all the links for opting in to the summit and getting all registered so that they can tag onto another fantastic week of great experts. It's a great ... I'm so excited you're doing that.

Erin Knight: Okay.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: What do you think the most important thing for women that suffer from migraines ought to know?

Erin Knight: Well, the most important thing for people to know is just that it is possible to gain freedom from migraines in the first place. I was stuck in this place of complacency for a long time. When we grow up around other people that are in pain and just taking medications to treat the symptoms, and we go to the doctors, and they give us pills that might help with the symptoms, but never really get

past it, if you don't think something is possible, you'll never drive towards that goal and really look for the resources that you need. The first step is to know that it is ultimately possible. With that knowledge, I think everybody will be able to be persistent and keep looking until you find what helps you.

That's why I say that's the most important thing to know. Then once you start to dig into the different types of stressors and chip away at them, it's not an overnight process, but step by step, it's definitely possible.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Great. Migraines interrupt ... I mean they affect your libido. You're not going to really have a sex drive. You're not going to want to be intimately connected with your partner. You're not going to really want to be connected to your kids. You're not going to want to be connected to your coworkers and your job, with anything. It's the dark room, "I want to be by myself," no sensory overload experience. It's a way of kind of opting out of life when you have a migraine, which can sometimes be a secondary gain. Do you ever talk about that? I'm just curious because it's pretty interesting. I deal a lot with women that are in Wonder Woman mode.

Erin Knight: Yeah.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: It's like bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and try and look hot at the same time. They kind of overdrive themselves to be the best at whatever it is that they're doing, and it could be 10 different things. Sometimes they're not taking time for self-care. Like you said, it's that threshold, right, the bathtub. Then the migraine kicks in and says, "No, you will now go lie down." I'm so glad that you're talking about this. This summit, one of the reasons I did it is for this very population of people. If you're not listening to you, if you're not putting yourself as important on the list, then sometimes migraines are your friend. They're the part of you, right, that's saying, "No, you're going to take some time out." Why not take some time out when you're not hurting? Right? Why get to that place?

Erin Knight: Yeah, like [inaudible 00: 24: 40] some things.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, exactly.

Erin Knight: Overdrive mode is definitely a big factor they have to kind of look at. Then another thing is looking at the way we react to stress, so if you can catch yourself overreacting to stress ... let's just use road rage as an example. Ask yourself, "Is this helping the situation? Is this helping me right now?" Even if you're mad at somebody, "Is my anger or are these feelings serving me?" is how we ask that in yoga class. I think it took me a lot of yoga classes to get this point, but it is something that's really beneficial when you can start to realize that the cascade of hormones that happen and even the shift towards anxiety feelings that might show up as gut issues or headaches or whatever isn't to your benefit at all.

If it's not an on/off switch now, then at least start to cultivate an awareness of when it's happening and work towards letting go of that. It's a disproportionate reaction, and sometimes we can learn that from early trauma or watching how other people acted when we were young, so it's not necessarily a rational reaction to what's happening in our environment. Once we realize that, then it's easier to let go.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Sometimes it's a really super quiet reaction. It's an under-reaction, as in bearing it in your body and not expressing yourself. Oftentimes, chiropractors will find that migraines are because somebody is holding their jaw in a certain way, you know, clenching. That's not reacting, so it's like this extreme on either side of the scale of not expressing your feelings and asking for what you need in a really healthy, functional way. Migraines become the teacher. Where are you on that scale? Are you clenching and holding your shoulders up like this so your neck goes out of alignment, or are you setting boundaries, like, "No, I can't do that, but thank you for asking."?

Erin Knight: Yeah. The stress reaction doesn't show up the same as everybody. I said road rage, but not everybody like yells and screams when they're upset and stressed.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, exactly.

Erin Knight: Sometimes, yeah, you just lock up, and you disconnect. If somebody is having trouble, like that on/off switch, like, "Okay, that's not serving me. I'll stop doing it," one thing that kind of can interrupt that pattern would be EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique. If you catch yourself doing that, and you're like, "Okay, I want to stop, but I can't," you can learn even from YouTube how to do this for yourself. It's tapping on different pressure points that interrupts your body's signaling and connection between the emotional things that you're going through and then the way it's physically impacting your body. It's really powerful, and it only takes a couple of minutes. You can do it in your car or in the ladies' room or whatever and kind of help break out of the cycle of stress.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Wonderful. Wonderful. Yeah, I can't see you raging, Erin. I think you're that-

Erin Knight: I know. I don't think I was a rager. I think I was the-

Dr. Keesha Ewers: ... quiet [somatitizer 00: 28: 04].

Erin Knight: Yeah, pretty much.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: All right, well, thank you so much for sharing this great information and for hosting the summit later on in the year that ...

Erin Knight: Okay. Yeah, I'm excited about it.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: There are so many thousands of women that suffer from this, so I'm excited for them to have access to it. I appreciate you so much and all that you're doing for women.

Erin Knight: Thank you, Dr. Keesha. It's just going to be a great event.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: I'm excited. Thank you again.