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Leisa talks DNA

maybe she's
BORN *with it*

*Former workout video instructor LEISA HART tells us
how she's using science to create her perfect regime*

by CORI BAKER | photography by ALYSSA VINCENT



IT'S NOT OFTEN SOMEONE FINDS their life passion at 15 years old, but Leisa Hart was lucky enough to stumble—quite gracefully—into her life's work at a young age. Leisa is best known as the lead trainer for fitness videos such as *Buns of Steel*, *Abs of Steel*, *Arms of...* you get the picture, plus *Fit Mamma* and other bestsellers. In the last few years, Leisa closed her studio and stopped teaching classes in order to focus on her family and consult for various fitness companies in her spare time. We meet up at a neighborhood park in Allen, but before we start chatting, Leisa and I work up a sweat. She leads me in an outdoor workout involving yoga, a bit of running and striking some tough poses with exercise bands. Needless to say, Leisa definitely has muscles of steel.

RISE TO FAME

Leisa, a Carrollton-native, is the youngest of 10 siblings, six of them brothers. "Toughness was not an option," Leisa laughs. She began teaching aerobics at Bally Fitness in high school. "My friend had tried out and got the job. If she could do that, so could I! It was purely competitive. Everything I wore was pink: pink leotard, pink parachute pants, pink leg warmers and pink Keds. I could barely walk for days after trying the class, but I was hired!" she tells me while wearing a hot pink athletic zip-up and neon pink tennis shoes.

In her 20s Leisa participated in national fitness competitions which led to a job as a sports reporter in Dallas. Her sports agent got her to send in a demo tape for Warner Brother's *Buns*



of Steel franchise. With fitness and television experience, the position was perfect for her.

"The [Warner Brothers] staff narrowed it down to five women from entries across the nation. They popped in my video for the CEO first. He watched mine briefly, stopped it and said, 'Okay we're done' and didn't watch anyone else. I get the news, and I'm thinking I'm going to be in the background, but maybe they'll notice me and someday I could be the lead instructor. As we're going through the contract that's when I finally realized I *was* the lead."

FITNESS PRESCRIPTIONS

Even though Leisa has been in the fitness business for nearly 35 years, she'll admit that through all the diet fads and exer-



cise crazes, there hasn't been anything truly revolutionary in the industry until now—DNA fitness testing.

"I have seen over and over again—women and men—who have attended my classes or saw a trainer every day, but it seems like they're gaining weight. Sometimes instructors who teach 20 classes a week will have 15 pounds they can't get rid of, and I just think 'What is the deal?' Then you look at the flip side where some people don't work out that hard and drink wine all the time, but they look fantastic," Leisa explains to me. "Everyone's DNA responds differently to various forms of exercise and foods. What matters is getting to your personal target heart rate, which in the past has generally been based on age. One size does not fit all."

Several months ago, Leisa sent off a sample of her DNA to Simplified Genetics, a fitness genetics testing company. It's kind of like the tests you can do to find out your heritage except it's all about discovering your fitness profile, or prescription, one could say. According to Simplified Genetics' website this test "tells you the type, duration and frequency of exercises efficient for you, the daily macro nutrients beneficial for your body and the supplements that will be effective." You get an idea of the perfect exercise routine for you, as well as the number of grams of protein, carbs and fats that are best for your body.

"A lot of times someone is working out too intensely, so the body goes into stress mode and stores more fat in response. The DNA test will tell an individual that maybe they need 40 percent high intensity workouts and 60 percent low. I respond better to high intensity so that's 90 percent of my workouts and 10 percent are low. But I was surprised that I only need to work out three to

four days a week instead of every day like I've been doing the last three decades," Leisa says.

She's even had her kids tested so she knows their specific nutrient and exercise needs. "This is your food prescription. I've had my kids tested because I wanna know now! This isn't information I can withhold. For my kids, I don't want to wait until they're in college." Leisa and her husband are also proudly raising their kids to be "food snobs", quizzing the three of them at the dinner table to see if they can distinguish the various ingredients and herbs in a dish.

Now that she's been following the DNA-based program for a few months, Leisa feels more energetic, happier and healthier on the inside and out. "I would find that the more [workouts] I did, I would have to take a nap. If I didn't nap I couldn't wait to get my kids to sleep because I was so tired. I was like 'Wait, I'm supposed to be in the health industry and be all full of vigor and energy.' I feel like my body has responded better now that I'm not working out so frequently and giving it more time to heal. It's really coming together for me now."

For the first time in decades, Leisa's not teaching multiple fitness classes during the week. The motivating knowledge that class attendees were counting on her is mostly gone so exercising became a personal activity again. "I'm like 'Wow this is how other folks do it, you have to commit'. Having to workout on my own time, I'd go 'Eh, I'll do a few more things around the house and then go.' It shocked my way of thinking, and I see why people put it off. Without pushing other people in their workouts I found myself going easy sometimes, and I had to totally recondition

[RETURN TO LeisaHart.com](https://LeisaHart.com)

[LEARN MORE ABOUT DNA FITNESS](#)



LIVE THE LEISA WAY

Feel healthier, happier and more energetic by following these tips from Leisa

1. BE AWARE OF FOODS WITH A LONG SHELF LIFE

"It's the quick fix foods in bright shiny packages that have 20 million ingredients that you can't even pronounce. Those things are added not for our health but for a longer shelf life. The longer the store shelf life, the longer shelf life it will have on your body."

2. INVEST IN A FITNESS GADGET

"I never bought a fitness watch because I didn't think I needed that. I broke down and it's hooked up to my phone, and oh my gosh, to see my heart rate the whole time I'm working out—I know I'm not wasting my time. I've started to see my body change."

3. EIGHT GLASSES OF WATER MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH

I drink my body weight divided by two and that's how many ounces of water I need. Why would I need to drink the same amount as my husband—who weighs 100 more pounds than me? It's back to individualization."

4. IF YOU'RE HAVING CRAVINGS, BALANCE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR—BEFORE REACHING FOR A COOKIE

"Yes you can have a sweet, but when your blood sugar is low, like right after school or work, have a good snack first. I give my kids a protein-carbohydrate blend like apples and peanut butter, or cottage cheese and some fruit. Your blood sugar will be more balanced and you won't want as much of the sweet."

5. YOU CAN EAT HEALTHY DISHES AT FAST FOOD PLACES

"Chick-fil-a has a great kale salad and Market Salad, just be mindful of the dressings. Their wraps are pretty tasty, too. Lots of fast food places have decent salads which aren't made of just iceberg lettuce which is a waste of time."

6. A SUPERFOOD THAT'S NOT OVERRATED: COCONUT OIL

"We get a huge tub from Costco and put little containers of it in all the kids' bathrooms. I use it for make-up remover and moisturizer. For my son, who has asthma, we mix it with eucalyptus, tea tree and peppermint essential oils. It's great for acne, and for more stubborn acne, mix it with apple cider vinegar."

myself. It was difficult," Leisa says.

Things are definitely looking up for Leisa and potentially anyone who has struggled with losing weight and getting healthy. "Within the first week [of following the DNA-based program] you'll feel better, and then within a couple of weeks you can see visible results. It really will change how people are able to become successful." 

Learn more from Leisa at her website, LeisaHart.com.

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