

Restoring Digestive Health

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“All diseases begin in the gut.” ~ Hippocrates

Overview of Digestion (blank area to take notes)

Our Somatic Abdominal Area (smile)

Stomach – The ability to transform and digest what is happening in our lives; can we stomach it?

Liver – The seat of growth and regeneration; seat of the emotion of anger if in imbalance or blocked

Gallbladder – Will-power and motivation; do we have the gal?

Small intestine – Discernment

Large intestine – Grief and letting go

The enteric brain:

- The gut is now being called the ‘enteric’ brain or the second brain
- We have more than 3000 square feet (about the size of a tennis court) of gut surface area
- The gut-brain produces, and uses, 95% of the serotonin in the body (serotonin is both a hormone and a neurotransmitter)
- The vagus nerve connects our brain with our digestive system, heart, lungs, and other organs; this communication is sensory and informs our instincts
- 90 % of the information goes from the gut to the brain in terms of systemic health
- About 70-85% of the cells that make up your immune system are found in the gut

Common Digestive Ailments

- GERD - gastroesophageal reflux disease or acid reflux – when the muscular valve at the top of the stomach allows acid to seep back into the esophagus
- SIBO – chronically low HCl in stomach allows the migration of bacteria from large intestines into small intestines (lactic-acid producing bacteria, typically), thus fermenting food in the small intestine and causing digestive distress (can also cause acid reflux)
- IBS – Irritable bowel syndrome – does not cause inflammation, ulcers or other damage like IBD; typically caused by holding too much stress in the stomach; painful cramping, bloating, gas, mucus in stool, diarrhea, constipation; digestive system looks normal but doesn’t work like it should
- IBD, Crohn’s, Ulcerative colitis – Inflammatory bowel disease – diarrhea, abdominal cramps, rectal bleeding, fever, joint pain, loss of appetite and fatigue; a big factor for the cause of this may be balance of beneficial bacteria
- Leaky Gut – byproduct of intestinal inflammation; partially digested foods and proteins (and even bacteria, yeast, and fungi) enter the blood-stream through intestinal membranes that have

been damaged, loosened, or lost their integrity; associated with a lot of mental health issues; has been linked with auto-immune issues as well

- Genetic mutations/MTHFR
- Food allergies and intolerances – A food allergy will trigger an immune response that will effect different organ systems while an intolerance simply causes a short-term digestive problem
- Celiac disease – An inflammatory condition of the colon that causes the breakdown of intestinal tissues due to a gluten allergy

Restoring Digestive Health

REMOVE harmful substances and drinks and foods that trigger

REPLACE with wholesome foods

REPAIR with beneficial bacteria, gelatin and bone broths, herbs, enzymes

REPEAT and fine-tune as needed

Types of Foods for a Healthy Gut

- Gelatin-rich foods/bone broths
- Soaked, sprouted, or fermented nuts, grains, seeds, legumes
- Fermented vegetables (and some fruits)
- Nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables low in sugar content and high in fiber
- If omnivorous, organ meats, animal protein, pastured animal products
- Healthy fats (pastured butter, coconut oil, EV olive oil, red palm oil, pastured animal fats)
- Herbs and wild foraged foods

Bacterial breakdown:

- Bacteria outnumber human cells 10 to 1
- About 100 trillion bacterial cells are found in our intestines alone
- Beneficial bacteria are numerous strains of bacteria that assist the digestive system in assimilating and absorbing vitamins, minerals and other nutrients; they keep pathogens at bay and interact directly with your immune system >>> Bifidobacteria, Lactobacteria, Propionobacteria are some of the main ones
- One of my favorite, Lactobacteria, you can find on anything near the soil or even in the soil and it is common all along our digestive tract from the mouth to the anus
- There are pathogenic bacteria in the gut no matter what; if your beneficial bacteria are thriving and healthy – the pathogenic bacteria will be kept in check and will actually participate in some small beneficial functions within the intestines
- Pathogenic bacteria also bounce back and reproduce faster than beneficial bacteria
- Pathogenic bacteria also produce very toxic substances as byproducts called endotoxins which can cross the blood-brain barrier
- H. pylori, which used to be found in all humans for the past 60,000 years is now only found in 10% of the population and headed toward extinction; it is linked to stomach ulcers but also linked with obesity, acid reflux, and asthma when not present

Benefits of Fermented Foods (blank area to take notes)

All-star Ferments

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- Beet kvass
- Sauerkraut
- Lacto-fermented fruit chutney
- Whey cooler
- Kombucha & jun
- Sourdough
- Kefir & yoghurt

Fermented Foods and Probiotic Supplements:

- Introduce beneficial bacteria and sometimes certain yeast strains to our guts
- Can be applied to the skin for skin issues and can be inserted or applied vaginally for yeast infections
- Yogurt, kefir, lacto-fermented fruits and veggies, kombucha, water kefir, unwashed organic or chemical-free veggies and fruits, traditionally fermented sourdough
- My favorite probiotic brands: BioKult, Prescript Assist
- Probiotic pill or ferment >>> both are fine, however pills can be expensive. Once you are in the rhythm of ferments, it takes no time at all. Probiotic pills have between 50 million to 10 billion beneficial bacteria strains; ferments from 1.5 billion to 10 TRILLION beneficial fellas (.9 ounces of sauerkraut, in this example)

Prebiotic foods:

- They feed friendly bacteria and help them proliferate, not digested by humans
- Act in concert with probiotics
- Oligosaccharides (for example, oligofructose and inulin – increase magnesium and calcium absorption, ease IBS)
- Traditional diets were definitely richer in prebiotics than our current diet in the US
- Fresh dandelion greens, radicchio, frisee, endive, Jerusalem artichoke, onions, asparagus, chicory root, jicama, garlic, leek, small amount in whole grains, asparagus, prebiotic supplements, fibrous wild plant matter

Herbal allies for gut health:

- Gut inflammation – astringent and/or cooling herbs help – peach twigs/leaves, wild cherry bark, hawthorn leaf/twig, slippery elm bark and/or marshmallow root
- Intestinal cramping – peppermint
- Yeast overgrowth – garlic, usnea, oregano, black walnut hull, spilanthus, monarda
- Diarrhea – blackberry root, yellow dock, rose, rose hips, red raspberry, marshmallow root
- Constipation – drink more water, flax seed (ground) and ginger tea, yellow dock root, aloe vera, magnesium-rich herbs like nettles or magnesium supplement

- Bloating and gas – peppermint, fennel, chamomile, cardamom, ginger

Favorite ferment recipes!

Ginger-garlic Sauerkraut Recipe

Makes 1-2 quarts

1 medium cabbage head, cored and shredded
2” chunk grated garlic
2-4 cloves garlic, minced
1 T sea salt
4 T whey (if not available, 1 more T sea salt)

In a bowl, mix cabbage, garlic, ginger, sea salt and whey. Squeeze with hands for about 10 min to release juices. Place in a quart-sized, wide-mouth mason jar and press down firmly you’re your fist (or a wooden pounder) until juices come to the top of the cabbage (add a little water if needed). The top of the cabbage should be at least 1 inch below the top of the jar. Cover tightly and keep at room temperature for about 3 days before transferring to cold storage (40 degrees cool or cooler). The sauerkraut may be eaten immediately, but it improves with age.

Beet Kvass

Makes 2-quarts

3 medium or 2 large red or golden organic beets (peeled and chopped coarsely)
1/4 cup [whey](#)
1 Tablespoon sea salt
filtered water

Place beets, whey and salt into a 2-quart glass container (1/2 gallon). Add filtered water to fill the container. Stir well and cover securely. Keep at room temperature for 2 days before transferring to the fridge (3 days if you have it in a colder room). It is ready to drink (I definitely prefer it chilled).

When you are almost out of beet kvass, fill the jar with water again — keep at room temperature for 2 more days and then put in fridge again. This second batch is way less potent, but still some good stuff in there. You can also use the liquid from the first batch as the inoculant for future batches instead of whey.

Suggested Reading:

“Gut and Psychology Syndrome” by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride

“with Love from Grandmother’s Kitchen” by Monica Corrado

“Nourishing Traditions” by Sally Fallon

“Wild Medicine Solution” by Guido Mase

“Rosemary Gladstar’s Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health”

“Wild Fermentation” and “The Art of Fermentation” by Sandor Katz

“One Spirit Medicine” by Alberto Villoldo