



WEEK 4

The Power of a Healthy Gut

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WELCOME!

Hi! Welcome to Week 4, The Power of a Healthy Gut, where we're going to keep building on what we've learned thus far and do a deep dive into gut health!

We will look at the HUGE impact your gut plays in your overall health. Restoring and balancing a healthy gut is vital! 70% of your immune health is in your gut, and that's also where your body extracts nutrients and vitamins, so in order to cleanse your body and make sure it doesn't get overloaded with toxins, you have to begin with your gut.

Let's dive in!

HOW DOES THE GUT PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR HEALTH?

Leaky gut, gut microbiome, gut health - we're seeing more articles and news stories talking about this topic, and the chemist is filled with products promising to restore gut balance. That's all well and good, but what does it mean?

For centuries, we thought the gut was only for digesting food, and while that's certainly the main role, the gut is so much more than this. Research is showing that having a healthy gut is necessary for overall good health, including nervous system function, immune health, and so much more!

This guide seeks to clear up some of the mysteries and confusion surrounding gut health and provide you with a solid understanding of what a healthy or balanced gut is, why it's important, and how to make it happen.

THE GUT MICROBIOME, OR GUT FLORA

It all starts with the gut microbiome, also known as gut flora. This is the name for the trillions of bacteria lining your small and large intestine. It's estimated that there are up to 1,000 species of bacteria located in the gut, so much that gut flora alone weighs between two and five pounds!

Your microbiome begins forming at birth and is passed down to you from your mother. However, once you begin life “on the outside,” your microbiome is impacted by the food you eat, lifestyle including sleep, smoking, and stress, and your environment.

As you grow, the various strains of bacteria in your gut have different roles that can affect every aspect of your health and wellbeing. While we often think of bacteria as scary or dangerous, there’s a great deal of “good” bacteria in your gut along with the “bad.”

When your gut flora gets out of balance, “dysbiosis” occurs, and that can lead to metabolic disorders, obesity, and other chronic health conditions, so it’s necessary to restore balance to the gut in order to heal.

THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

Your gut directly affects your brain and vice-versa. Doctors often call this connection the “gut-brain axis.” When you’re nervous, do you experience a queasy stomach? Or when you’re stressed, do you feel more acid reflux and other digestive distress?

This connection works both ways - a troubled mind can distress your gut, and a troubled gut can distress your mind.

Gut flora is responsible for much of your nervous system functionality. For example, the 90 percent of the “feel-good” neurotransmitter, serotonin is formed in the gut, along with other neurotransmitters. More studies are showing a strong link between gut flora health, dysbiosis, and mental health problems including anxiety or depression, you may be suffering from dysbiosis.

HOW GUT HEALTH AFFECTS YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Did you know that around 70 percent of your immune health comes from the gut? Healthy gut flora encourages the growth of T cells - these are the cells that recognize the difference between healthy tissues and foreign invaders like viruses, bad bacteria, and waste products that escape into the bloodstream.

T-cells act as a type of “first line of defense.” When the healthy gut flora isn’t available to support T-cells, your immune system can’t recognize what’s safe and what is a danger and thus starts attacking healthy tissue. This leads to toxic overload and is the root of dangerous autoimmune disorders.

WHEN THE GUT IS DAMAGED - UNDERSTANDING LEAKY GUT

The most common cause of a sluggish immune system is a condition called **Leaky Gut**, also known as “intestinal permeability.” When damage occurs to the intestinal lining, especially in the tight junctions of the intestine, microscopic tears develop, releasing undigested food, waste, and foreign matter into the bloodstream. The body signals a need for an immune response to attack the foreign matter, and this constant wave of immune stress and flood of toxins leads to a sluggish digestion.

Because 70 percent of your immune health is in your gut, when the lining is damaged, you are also less able to fight off a toxic overload.

An added issue with leaky gut is that a damaged intestine is less effective at digesting food properly, leading to an inability to absorb vital nutrients and vitamins. Vitamin and mineral deficiencies lead to additional serious concerns, along with hormone imbalance and poor immune health.

Leaky Gut can also lead to other serious health risks and symptoms, including:

- Fatigue
- Digestive distress
- Nutrient and vitamin deficiencies
- Skin issues, including eczema and dermatitis
- Anemia
- Autoimmune disease

Leaky gut is most often caused by environmental factors that we do have some control over. For example:

- **Stress:** Chronic stress slows down the digestive process, leading to a higher likelihood of damage occurring to the gut, it compromises the immune system due to the endless waves of cortisol your body is releasing, and it makes your body more susceptible to illness.
- **Processed foods and sugar:** Diets high in sugar, sodium, and unnatural chemicals slow down digestion, have nearly zero nutrition, and are “foreign,” leading to waves of inflammatory cells being released. These foods also spike blood sugar, and subsequent spikes and crashes also lead to poor processing in the gut.
- **Gluten and Dairy:** These foods, gluten and casein, the protein in milk that reacts similarly to gluten, are very difficult for many people to digest and can damage the delicate lining of the gut

Also, damage to gastrointestinal bacteria, where much of your immune health lies, can lead to a sluggish digestion. Sugar, chemicals, and unhealthy fats feed the bad bacteria and throw your balance out of alignment, leaving you more susceptible to obesity, metabolic syndrome, and diabetes.

In order to quell the toxic and immune system response, incorporating some simple practices that are supportive of your gut health may be very beneficial to your overall health and wellness.

TIPS FOR OPTIMAL GUT HEALTH

If you have been following this 'clean eating' plan, you've been following an anti-inflammatory protocol which also supports gut health so you're already on the right path!

For additional healing, add these foods to your diet to balance your healthy gut bacteria and support optimal health in your gut! Obviously if you are vegan or vegetarian this first one won't work for you.

ADD SOME BONE BROTH

Bone broth made from animal and fish bones add a depth of flavor to meals. With collagen, gelatin, and amino acids to nourish your gut and minerals including magnesium, calcium, and phosphorus, this easily digestible broth is highly therapeutic and beneficial.

Sip two cups of bone broth each day for optimal healing, and use it as the base in soups, stews, and gravies! Try this simple recipe:

SIMPLE BONE BROTH RECIPE

Poultry/Beef/Lamb/Fish Bones - ONLY wild-caught/grass-fed/free-range animals.

Filtered Water to cover the bones completely

1-2 Tbsp. Apple Cider Vinegar or Fresh Lemon Juice

Combine bones, water and vinegar/lemon juice in a heavy pot or crockpot and bring to a boil. Remove any film that rises to the top and then reduce heat to simmer. Pour bone broth through a sieve or strainer and enjoy!

Cook times:

- Chicken/Fish 6-48 hours
- Beef 12-72 hours

INCLUDE COCONUT PRODUCTS

Coconut contains easily digestible fatty acids that are excellent for the gut. Using coconut oil over other fats and oils is especially beneficial because coconut oil has antifungal, antimicrobial, and antibacterial properties. Then, adding fermented coconut products like coconut milk yogurt add healthy probiotics to your gut and replenish the healthy bacteria! I recommend using the best quality coconut oil such as raw organic extra virgin cold pressed.

CONSUME SOFT, COOKED FOODS

If you're struggling with gut health, avoid raw foods that are harder to digest, and focus on foods within the anti-inflammatory diet that are easy to digest, such as cooked vegetables and soft, easy to digest fruits. Soups and stews are often easy to digest and let the gut repair while you continue to nourish your body.

HEALTHY GUT FLORA - PROBIOTICS & PREBIOTICS

Probiotics are specific types of "good" bacteria that live in your gut. They support your immune health, get your gut back into balance, and help your gut flora thrive. The great news is you can add probiotics into your diet whether through food such as kefir or through a supplement. (Check out my recommendations)

Talk to your doctor about adding a high-quality probiotic to your daily routine. Make sure you're exposed to different strains of probiotics, healthy bacteria.

If you prefer a more naturally sourced probiotic, try coconut water kefir or fermented vegetables. Coconut water kefir is a simple, fermented beverage is easy to make or you can purchase brands at health stores. Coconut water kefir and fermented vegetables are both rich with B vitamins, probiotics and enzymes to encourage healthy digestion and optimal gut health!

Gut flora, like any living organism, needs food to thrive, so adding what are called “prebiotics” to your routine will feed and nourish your healthy probiotics. Prebiotics are a source of fiber, and while you can get them in supplement form, (Try a brand like Chuckling Goat) you can also get them through food.

Leafy greens, bananas, onions, and garlic are excellent sources of prebiotics! Remember you need to eat a wide variety of foods to ‘feed the good bugs’

DIGESTIVE ENZYMES

Digestive enzymes occur naturally in the body to help break down fats, carbohydrates, and proteins while extracting the nutrients and vitamins.

When your gut is flourishing, you may not need to supplement with enzymes, but when your gut is out of balance, you may not be producing enough enzymes to fully digest your meals and absorb the nutrients appropriately.

To support your gut health, it is often recommended to supplement with digestive enzymes at each meal.

SUPPLEMENT WITH A WHOLE FOOD VITAMIN

When the gut is compromised it is likely that nutrients are not being well absorbed. A high-quality multi-vitamin will help ensure you’re getting the nutrients you need while you focus on healing your gut.

ADDITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- Glutamine is an amino acid critical to rebuilding the intestinal lining.
- Aloe Vera Juice soothes the intestines and acts as an anti-inflammatory
- Zinc is necessary for cell turnover in the body and is a critical component of a healthy gut. Zinc competes with copper, so if you plan to supplement, consult your doctor to be sure you balance these two minerals.
- Collagen restores gut lining and contains amino acids that are essential for cell growth and repair.
- Slippery Elm protects the gut from toxins while acting as an anti-inflammatory
- Omega 3 fatty acids support cardiovascular health, the nervous system, and can aid recovery from gut lining damage

Before starting any type of supplement or vitamin, speak with your physician to make sure it's right for you! If you can talk to a nutritionist or a functional medicine Doctor you can get a clearer idea of the best personalized approach for you.

DON'T FORGET THE POWER OF JUICING

I have written about juicing intensively, so there isn't much about it here, but don't forget one of the quickest ways to get a wide variety of fresh fruit and veg straight to your cells is to make fresh vegetable juices. You can also make a smoothie by using some of the juice and adding in softer fruit, veg and superfoods to make a power packed drink.

If you are a member of The Sober Club we have a 7 day Juice shot challenge to get you kick-started.

WEEK 4 HOMEWORK

1. Drink 1 cup of bone broth each day – if you don't eat meat make a veg broth.
2. Add 1 prebiotic and 1 probiotic food or supplement each day

THANK YOU!

So, there you have it! I hope you now have a better understanding of how important your choices are when it comes to what you eat and the lifestyle choices you make each day.

This plan focuses on simple food and lifestyle shifts that can lead to improved health. This is a process and doesn't happen overnight. Please be patient with yourself and reach out to me as you need support.

How you choose to approach these changes directly influences your success. Keep a positive attitude and know that these changes can lead to improved energy, sleep, and vibrant health.

Stay Sober! Focus on optimum health and wellbeing!

Janey

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this document is being provided to you for informational purposes based on my personal knowledge, opinions, and experience as a holistic health coach only. It is not intended to prevent, diagnose, treat, or heal disease nor replace medical advice or instruction from a licensed professional. I am not a medical doctor and make no claim to specialized medical training. Please consult your doctor if you have any questions regarding the suggestions made in this content, and make your own well-informed decisions based on what is best for your physical needs.

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