



FITTER FORT COLLINS YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

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Steps to Heal the Digestive System

The digestive system includes: the mouth, esophagus, stomach, duodenum, pancreas, gallbladder, small intestine, liver, colon, and rectum. In total, it's 30 feet long for an adult. Disruptions can occur in this magical system. Conditions like acid reflux, gallstones, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel, hemorrhoids, diverticulitis, and one of the most common disruptions; leaky gut syndrome.

Leaky gut syndrome is a rapidly growing condition that millions of people are struggling with and don't even know it. From the sound of it, you might think leaky gut syndrome only affects the digestive system, but in reality it can lead to many other health conditions. Per research, the cause of your food allergies, low energy, joint pain, thyroid disease, autoimmune conditions, and slow metabolism could be the progression of leaky gut syndrome.

What is Leaky Gut Syndrome?

Think of the lining of your digestive tract like a net with extremely small holes in it that only allow specific substances to pass through. Your gut lining works as a barrier keeping out bigger particles that can damage your system. When someone has leaky gut (often referred to as increased intestinal permeability), the "net" in your digestive tract gets damaged, which causes even bigger holes to develop, so things that normally can't pass through, are now able to. Some of the things that can now pass through include proteins like gluten, bad bacteria, and undigested foods particles. Toxic waste can also leak from the inside of your intestinal wall into your bloodstream causing an immune reaction.

Leaky Gut Symptoms and Progression

Leaky gut leads to inflammation throughout your system and can cause symptoms, such as:

Bloating

Food sensitivities

Thyroid conditions: Hashimoto's, Graves' disease, hypothyroidism

Fatigue

Joint pain

Headaches, depression, anxiety, ADHD

Skin issues like rosacea and acne

Digestive problems

Weight gain

Diabetes

What Causes Leaky Gut?

There are four main causes of leaky gut which include:

Poor diet: Foods high in sugar, fat (oil and fried foods), dairy, low fiber diet.

Chronic stress. It weakens your immune system over time, which cripples your ability to fight off foreign invaders like bad bacteria and viruses, leading to inflammation and leaky gut. To reduce stress try getting more sleep, schedule fun into your week, rest one day a week, meditate on scripture, and hang out with positive, uplifting people.

Toxins. We encounter over 80,000 chemicals and toxins every single year, but the worst offenders for causing leaky gut include antibiotics, pesticides, tap water, aspirin and NSAIDS. I recommend buying a high-quality water filter to eliminate chlorine and fluoride and look to natural plant-based herbs to reduce inflammation in the body.

Dysbiosis. One of the leading causes of leaky gut is a condition called dysbiosis, which means an imbalance between beneficial and harmful species of bacteria in your gut. For many, this imbalance can begin at birth because of a C-section or because the mother didn't have a healthy gut herself. The overuse of prescription antibiotic drugs, tap water with chlorine and fluoride, and the lack of probiotic rich foods contribute to this imbalance of good and bad bacteria.

Per the Journal of Diabetes, there is a strong body of evidence pointing to leaky gut syndrome as a major cause of autoimmune diseases, including Type 1 Diabetes. Another problem with leaky gut is that it can cause malabsorption of vital minerals and nutrients including zinc, iron and B12.

A Word About Leaky Gut and the Brain

Did you know there are more neurotransmitters in the gut than there is in the brain? Many experts call the gut the 2nd brain. Leaky gut can affect the brain. If you've ever seen a child with autism experience a mood swing, this can be caused by intestinal permeability. Gluten-free and casein-free diets have proven effective for many children with autism and individuals experiencing brain fog because these proteins can leak through the gut and then recirculate and act on the brain similarly to an opioid drug. This is also why leaky gut syndrome has been linked to other psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder. So, in many cases, if you can heal the gut, you can heal the brain.

The 4-Step Plan to Heal Leaky Gut

The good news is there's a solution to successfully healing leaky gut. The four-step plan includes:

Remove foods and factors that damage the gut. Gluten, alcohol, caffeine, refined sugar, high fructose fruits, including dried fruits, dairy. Remove for a minimum of 6 weeks up to 4 months depending on the individual circumstance.

Replace with healing foods. A high alkaline, low fat, high fiber plant based diet.

Repair with specific supplements. See the protocol below.

Rebalance with high quality probiotics (at least 15 billion count, dairy free, gluten free and soy free) and fermented foods.

Repair with Specific Supplements

Common protocol includes:

Digestive enzymes. These will help make sure your food is fully broken down, allowing for better nutrient absorption, but also for preventing undigested food particles slipping through your leaky gut and into your blood. 2 - 4 caplets before meals. Purchase dairy and gluten free enzymes.

L- Glutamine. 1,000 mg between meals. Helps heal and protect your gut lining from potential gut damaging foods.

Quercetin. 1,000 mg after meals 3 x per day. Helps improve gut barrier function by sealing the gut because it supports creation of tight junction proteins. It also stabilizes and reduces the release of histamine, which is common in food intolerance.

Licorice Root. 500 mg 2 x daily after morning and evening meal. Helps balance cortisol levels and improves acid production in the stomach. Helps maintain mucosal lining of the stomach.

Probiotics. At least 15 billion count. Choose companies that you trust and know that use higher quality ingredients. Choose multiple bacterial strains.

If Needed Take a Leaky Gut Test

Some individuals may be experiencing multiple food sensitivities and are unsure of food intolerances and other overgrowths like candida, yeast, parasites, etc. These tests can be requested online and done in the privacy of your own home. Two reputable companies are www.personallabs.com and www.directlabs.com.

Below are the recommended tests for leaky gut disorders.

Zonulin or Lactulose Tests

Why It's Important: Zonulin controls the size of the openings between your gut lining and your bloodstream. Even in healthy people, small openings are needed between the two to transport nutrients back and forth, but abnormally high levels of zonulin can cause these openings to become too large.

What triggers zonulin levels to rise? Most often, gluten, parasites, candida yeast and harmful bacteria. A leaky gut test can reveal how high zonulin levels are, which gives you a good idea of your gut permeability. It's important to correct zonulin levels right away because over time, even more damage occurs in the gut's "microvilli," the tiny cellular membranes that line the intestines and absorb nutrients from food.

IgG Food Intolerance Test

Why It's Important: You need to identify any food sensitivities you have if you think you have leaky gut, since most people who have leaky gut wind up developing sensitivities - and ignoring these can make the condition even worse.

Why does leaky gut cause sensitivities and food allergies? When particles and toxins enter the bloodstream that normally shouldn't be able to, the immune system basically goes on "overdrive," working hard to do what it thinks is beneficial for the body by raising immune responses. Intestinal hyperpermeability makes the body produce a high level of antibodies, with the hope of defending the body from dangerous particles.

Stool Tests

Why It's Important: A stool test looks at beneficial bacteria levels, the state of intestinal immune function, overall intestinal health, and inflammation markers. Additionally, fecal matter can reveal probiotic levels along with microbes present in the gut, both the good kind and the bad. It also reveals information about any pathogenic micro-organisms, such as yeast, parasites and bacteria that might contribute to leaky gut, chronic illness and neurological dysfunction (like mood changes or "brain fog").

Organic Acid Vitamin and Mineral Deficiencies Tests

Why It's Important: One of the common warning signs of leaky gut is nutrient malabsorption or vitamin/mineral deficiencies. This occurs because of damage to the gut's microvilli. When microvilli stop working properly, it's possible for large particles to pass through the gut lining that shouldn't (like gluten) and for some small molecules to be blocked that are meant to pass through and provide nutrients.