

Keep This Part of Your Body Healthy and Keep Your Overall Health Excellent

How many patients who have come through my doors would have seen immediate relief of their symptoms or diseases had they jumped into the Healthy Gut Zone diet? The answer is thousands upon thousands!

Naturally, though many of them needed to take action, not all of them did. But I will say this: Every patient I have had who took action to improve his or her gut health always had multiple health benefits come as a direct result. When you heal your gut, your entire body wins! And a happy gut is the foundation for a healthy body!

Now, you know I am not promising that every disease, sickness, ailment or symptom will go away by following the Healthy Gut Zone diet.

However, I have seen so much good happen with my patients, so many healthy prognoses after seemingly dead-end reports from doctors, that I encourage everyone to at least try it. What harm can it do to focus on your gut's health?

One of my recent patients was an 80-year-old woman with kidney failure. How is that for a serious condition? She was on kidney dialysis, but within six months of starting the Healthy Gut Zone diet, she no longer had to go in for dialysis, and her doctors couldn't believe it. Her creatinine dropped from 2.6 to 1.6 in just a few months and stayed there.

Now, not everyone is faced with extreme health challenges like she was, but the simple act of getting her gut healthy again had amazing side effects on everything else in her body. She said she would stay on the Healthy Gut Zone diet for the rest

of her life. The last time we spoke, she expressed her thanks for being healthy. Young or old, that is what everyone wants.

Patients with serious diseases, autoimmune diseases and neurodegenerative diseases (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease and dementia) will need to stay on the Healthy Gut Zone diet and avoid most lectins. But the majority of patients with gut issues will eventually be able to eat most foods, as long as they limit or avoid sugar and wheat and rotate every three to four days any foods that may inflame their gut.

With that said, it is crucial to understand what is at the core of the Healthy Gut Zone diet. Here it is in straightforward terms:

Feed the good. The Healthy Gut Zone diet feeds the good bacteria in your gut the things that they need (probiotics, prebiotics, polyphenols, fiber and resistant starches).

Starve the bad. The Healthy Gut Zone diet avoids, minimizes or eliminates sugars, most starches and carbs, saturated fats and foods that cause pain, inflammation, leaky gut, bloating or irritation.

Take time out. The Healthy Gut Zone diet gives your gut time to catch its breath and heal itself.

That is all your gastrointestinal tract needs. Your body is amazing in its ability to heal and recharge itself. And because the entire body is connected to the gut, we must get your gut healthy first. Everything else will follow.

With the Healthy Gut Zone diet, all three pieces (feed the gut, starve the bad, take time out) come together at the same time. The 1-2-3 tandem action is required by the gut, and it makes the whole process that much easier to implement.

Feeding the Good

With the gut, the underlying foundation is always that of

making it healthy again. When the gut is healthy, you are usually happy. That is always the focus, no matter what.

“Feeding the good” means feeding the good bacteria in your gut what they need to be happy, healthy and effective. You will be looking at food in that light, which means you will want to eat gut-friendly foods, such as the following.

Salads and vegetables: You want about one-half to two-thirds of each lunch and dinner to be raw or cooked veggies.

The core or base of the Healthy Gut Zone diet is the veggies because that is what your gut needs the most. Thankfully there are endless recipe options, ways to prepare salads, soups, vegetables and toppings. This diet also brings in healthy gut-friendly food options from different countries around the world.

For lunch almost every day, I have a large salad with lots of veggies and a small amount of grilled chicken breast with grilled onions and a lot of high-phenolic extra-virgin olive oil (about four tablespoons). I don't put vinegar on it since vinegar decreases many of the polyphenols. But it is so tasty, and my wife and I have this almost every day. When your gut environment shifts from mostly Firmicutes to Bacteroidetes, your cravings usually shift from sugars, carbs and starches to healthy foods. Now I actually crave salads with high-phenolic olive oil.

Proteins: You need protein from a variety of sources with almost every meal or snack. About one-fourth to one-third of each lunch and dinner should be protein.

Everything else: In addition to the veggies and proteins are the fruits, fats, flours, resistant starches and other things that accompany the Healthy Gut Zone diet.

It's everything else that goes along with your veggies and proteins. These are important and healthy additions.

As you know, veggies are the base of the Healthy Gut Zone diet. Protein is a side but vitally important. Everything else is a complementary but necessary addition to the Healthy Gut Zone diet. All combined, your gut bacteria thrive on this mix of ingredients.

Starving the Bad

As you focus on foods that support the growth of good gut bacteria, you simultaneously starve the bad bacteria. This is the other half of the equation, and it simply means that you avoid, minimize or eliminate foods that cause pain, inflammation, leaky gut, bloating or irritation.

If it hurts your gut, you don't eat it.

This concept of feeding the good and starving the bad is what your gut wants and needs. It is the perfect recipe for healing the gastrointestinal tract.

How do you know what to avoid, minimize or eliminate? You remember the seven causes of a leaky gut (increased intestinal permeability):

- Antibiotics.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Acid-blocking meds.
- Genetically modified organism (GMO) foods.
- Chlorine in drinking water.
- Pesticides.
- Intestinal infections.

Starving the bad means not putting any more of items one through six into your body if you can help it. The biggest hurdle for many will be the fact that they are taking

medications (items one through three), whether doctor prescribed or over the counter. Abruptly stopping may not be advisable, and you may need to wean off meds such as antibiotics, acid blockers, NSAIDs and aspirin under your doctor's care or under the care of a functional medicine doctor, but your gut needs a break.

So what should you do? I don't recommend stopping medications right away. Focus on healing the gut and let the body respond. The end goal is to add nothing to your gut that hurts it in any way. If it takes a few weeks before you can do that, then so be it. But the sooner, the better.

Most of the problems in the gut come from the seven causes of a leaky gut and the 10 common enemies of the gut, which are mainly foods, including gluten. Though quitting something harmful for your gut will be a wise move, it is also essential to plant the good bacteria in your gut.

When the good bacteria are in control of your gut and the gut wall has healed, that is when the inflammation usually subsides. Many times, symptoms disappear, food sensitivities decrease, and sicknesses, even diseases, usually fade away. The psyllium husk powder also feeds the good bacteria and acts similar to a broom, sweeping out the bad bacteria and yeast.

To get to that point, starving the bad is required. These first seven common enemies must first be removed from your daily diet:

- Gluten.
- High-sugar, high-carb, high-processed foods.
- Dairy.
- Lectins.
- Artificial sweeteners.

– Emulsifiers.

– Saturated fats.

The shift away from these common enemies of the gut is more dramatic for some people than others, but it needs to happen nonetheless. The quicker, the better, but if it takes you a while, that is fine as well. When it comes to these first seven enemies of your gut, plan your escape this way:

Go less, then go low and finally, go none at all.

For example, going gluten-free or lectin-free or sugar-free will not be a simple flip of a switch. It will take time to replace one food with another. Relax; don't put unnecessary pressure on yourself. Some changes may be immediate (e.g., not using artificial sweeteners), but others may take a little longer (such as going without dairy).

What is most important is that you are making lifelong habits of starving the bad bacteria while feeding the good bacteria. This is an ideal lifestyle, and your gut will be happy!

Taking a Timeout

Looking at the big picture of your overall health and lifestyle going forward, you recognize that the change may need to be gradual. But you do need to start somewhere. There needs to be a break with the past and a rollout of the new. This is why the new year is such a popular time to try to make healthy changes. If you can't start at the beginning of a new year, I suggest that you embark on the Healthy Gut Zone diet as one season ends and another one begins.

When you begin, give yourself the expectation that you are jumping in completely and doing this for at least eight to 12 weeks (two to three months). You can do anything for just eight to 12 weeks, right? Naturally your body may love it so much that you wish to continue, but it is important that you

mentally assign a window of time for your Healthy Gut Zone diet.

Usually the gut begins to heal within one to four weeks. I've had some patients feel the benefits immediately, but most start to feel the effects about four to seven days into it. That means symptoms often begin to fade away around the end of your first week!

While you are busy starving the bad bacteria and feeding the good bacteria, you will also be busy creating new habits that will further benefit your gut. Five complementary habits go in perfect tandem with the food-eating/food-avoiding habits you have already started. You already know these habits:

Psyllium husk fiber: Take fiber (1/4 to 1 teaspoon) one to two times daily, after breakfast and dinner, in 4 to 8 ounces of water.

Probiotics: Take one to four probiotics per day or eat probiotic-rich foods. (Add supplements if needed.)

Prebiotics: Take 12 grams of prebiotic supplements (add prebiotic-rich foods if you can) a day. Start with much less if you have bloating or gas. Use caution if you have small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), small intestinal fungal overgrowth (SIFO), Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis; hold off, or start low and go slow.

Polyphenols: Add as many polyphenols to your daily routine as you can.

Resistant starches: These add options to your diet as they feed your good gut bacteria. Use caution if you have bloating, gas, SIBO, SIFO, Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis; hold off, or start low and go slow.

After eight weeks, you can begin to add back into your diet certain foods you might want to avoid completely at first. For

example, I recommend that you stay off cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers during the initial part of your Healthy Gut Zone diet. This minimizes lectins. After a couple of months, by peeling and deseeding these vegetables, you may be able to eat them with only a slight increase in lectin exposure (since lectins are more concentrated in the seeds and skins).

With beans, which are excellent sources of protein, pressure-cooking them for 7 1/2 minutes or longer after 24 hours of soaking (discard the water they are soaked in) will break down and remove virtually all the lectins, making them safe to eat. But during the first one to two months, I would recommend not eating beans at all.

In addition to watching lectins, you always have to be aware of sugars (such as fructose in fruits), carbohydrates (such as in legumes), grains, saturated fats (such as in dairy products) and fatty cuts of meat. For your gut, while it is healing, the longer you can stay low sugar, low carb and low saturated fats, the better. As for gluten, I recommend that most people pretty much stay off gluten, though an occasional small amount of food containing gluten will usually not hurt.

When you begin to slowly increase your food options, such as adding a new food each week, keep in mind that you will want to stay within the overall Healthy Gut Zone framework of starving the bad and feeding the good. That means continually avoiding the seven causes of a leaky gut and the first seven common enemies of your gut. You know what those are.

When you add dairy back, start with sheep or goat milk products or A2 dairy. For example, I enjoy some feta cheese in my Greek salad. Choose low-fat, low-sugar goat milk that is fermented, such as goat milk yogurt or kefir. Eventually you can add small amounts of A2 milk or 2 to 4 ounces of low-fat cheese and rotate it every three to four days.

Usually within three months you can add back in foods you love, such as Indian basmati white rice (limit to 1/2 cup per serving) or potatoes without the skin (where the most lectins are found). Rotate this food as well as other high-lectin foods every two to four days, and avoid any high-lectin food that causes abdominal pain, excessive bloating, gas or other symptoms of leaky gut. Rotating foods that are inflammatory for you or high in lectins is a great way to still enjoy them yet limit them so they are less likely to harm the gut. But do not add in sugar foods, gluten, GMO foods or excessive foods high in saturated fats.

Stay with it. Most people will find that their gut is healed within three months.

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