

AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

GUT HEALTH



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"Gut health is the key to overall health."

- KRIS CARR

Introduction

Most people never consider the importance of gut health. There's a lot more going on in your digestive system than just digesting food, absorbing nutrients, and eliminating waste. **If your health is less than perfect, your gut is likely to be at least partially to blame!**

The digestive tract is a fascinating combination of activities. Food is being digested. Some of that food is allowed to be absorbed into the bloodstream, while other components of your meal and the digestive process are prevented from crossing over into the body.

Think about it. Your digestive tract is a long tube that starts at your mouth and ends at the other end. The stuff that goes into one end and comes out the other never really made it into the body.

Water is reabsorbed in the large intestine. The waste continues to travel through.

There are also bacteria that play an important role in all of this. **Having the proper types and levels of bacteria in the digestive tract make a huge difference in your overall health.**

Consider how horrible you feel when your digestive system is out of sorts. Heartburn, cramps, bloating, gas, diarrhea, and constipation are just a few of the common inconveniences of an unhealthy gut. But it goes much deeper than that.

There are implications that an unhealthy gut can contribute to diabetes, heart disease, alzheimers, and cancer.

It pays to have a healthy gut. In this ebook, we'll look at the signs and symptoms of an unhealthy gut and discuss ways to bring an unhealthy gut back to a state of good health.

Consider these topics as a way to learn more about the importance of good gut health:

1. **Chapter 1: Your Gut is Loaded With Bacteria.** You have more bacterial cells

in your body than you do human cells. Maybe what we consider to be a human body is really a bacterial organism surrounded by human cells.

2. **Chapter 2: The Consequences of an Unhealthy Gut.** An unhealthy gut can cause more than digestive tract discomfort. An unhealthy gut can be the primary cause of many life-threatening diseases.
3. **Chapter 3: Causes of an Unhealthy Gut.** By now you know that an unhealthy gut is a serious matter. Now, you're going to find out what creates an unhealthy gut.
4. **Chapter 4: Leaky Gut Syndrome.** Leaky gut syndrome is a serious issue with serious health implications.
5. **Chapter 5: Elimination Diet.** An elimination diet is something that everyone should do at least every few years. It's one of the most life-altering things a person can do for themselves.

6. **Chapter 6: Food Allergies vs Sensitivities.** Poor gut health can contribute to these serious issues.

7. **Chapter 7: Tips for Enhancing Gut Health.** What can you do to boost your gut health? You'll find out here!

"I think that age as a number is not nearly as important as health. You can be in poor health and be pretty miserable at 40 or 50. If you're in good health, you can enjoy things into your 80s."

- BOB BARKER

Chapter 1: Your Gut is Loaded With Bacteria *(and that's a good thing!)*

In fact, there are over 100 trillion bacteria in the gut. These include both good and bad bacteria. **This collection of bacteria is referred to as the gut microbiota or gut microbiome.** Some of these bacteria, such as E. Coli, can cause disease. However, most of the bacteria in your body are there to help.

They are an important component of your immune system and help to maintain balance in your body.

There are a few hundred types of bacteria in the human gut that have a variety of effects on the human body.

For example, there are bacteria that increase inflammation, while others decrease it. Other bacteria aid with digestion and the absorption of nutrients. Scientists are still discovering all the various ways these bacteria influence the various systems of the body

If the ratio of these bacteria becomes unbalanced, it negatively affects your health.

Consider that over 75% of the immune system is managed by the gut. There are also over 100 million neurons in the gut that can communicate with other cells and organs in the body.

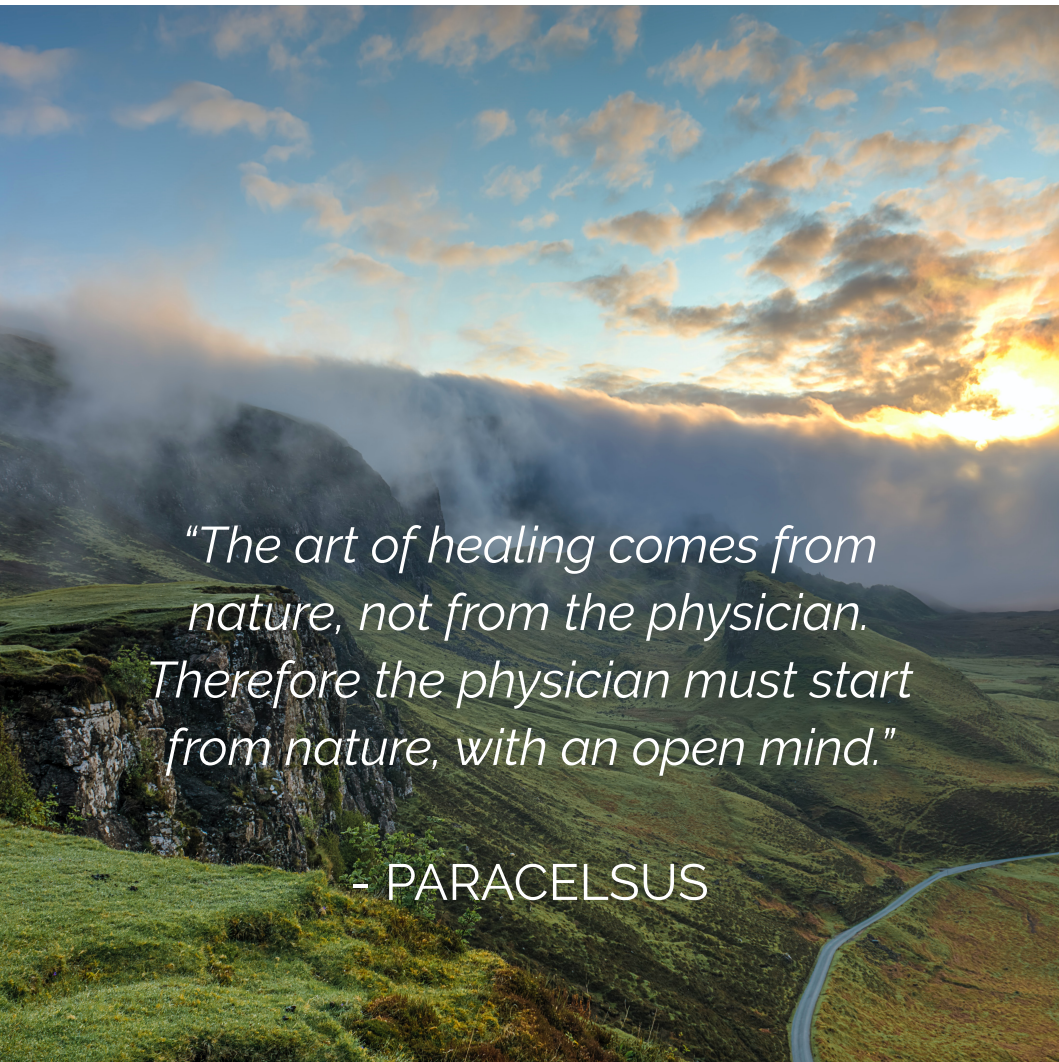
Many health conditions are believed to be either caused or influenced by poor gut health. Some of these include:

- Type 2 diabetes
- Heart disease
- Skin and hair issues
- Cancer
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Asthma
- Allergies
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Dementia
- Obesity
- Inflammatory bowel disease

If the bacteria in your gut are out of balance, you're suffering more than necessary. Many of

the health challenges you might be facing could be significantly helped by creating a healthier gut.

A healthy gut has the right types of bacteria in the proper ratios.



"The art of healing comes from nature, not from the physician. Therefore the physician must start from nature, with an open mind."

- PARACELSUS

Chapter 2: The Consequences of an Unhealthy Gut

There are three primary consequences of an unhealthy gut: inflammation, nutrient absorption issues, and immune / autoimmune issues. All of these issues can have devastating health consequences.

Inflammation

It is believed that the gut is the primary cause of inflammation in the body. **Inflammation is a primary contributor to disease and also results in many uncomfortable symptoms.** An inflamed body is an uncomfortable body.

There are several symptoms that can be caused by inflammation, including:

1. **Insomnia.** It might be hard to believe, but gut inflammation has been shown

to be a cause of insomnia. If you have trouble sleeping, and you're unable to pinpoint another cause, your sleepless nights might be due to gut inflammation.

2. **Acne and other skin disorders.** It is believed that acne, psoriasis, and many other skin conditions can be caused by inflammation in the digestive tract.
3. **Depression.** Inflammation that reaches the brain can influence the production and ratio of neurotransmitters.
4. **Anxiety.** Anxiety without an identifiable cause can also be caused by inflammation.
5. **Fatigue.** Inflammation can lead to imbalances in the body's stress hormones, resulting in adrenal fatigue and overall fatigue throughout the body.
6. **Brain fog.** Inflammation in the brain can be a cause of brain fog.

7. **Hormone imbalances.** In females, gut inflammation can alter the levels of hormones and cause hot flashes, alter menstrual cycle length, and affect PMS symptoms.
 - In men, hormonal imbalances due to gut inflammation can result in fatigue, muscle loss, erectile dysfunction, and poor memory.

8. **Thyroid-related symptoms.** Systemic inflammation in the body can make it more challenging for your body to utilize thyroid hormone properly. This can result in symptoms of hypothyroidism, even if your thyroid hormone levels are normal.

Nutrient Absorption Issues

The nutrients that your body are able to absorb and utilize are affected by your gut bacteria. While most of the absorption of nutrients in the human body occurs in the

small intestine, there is also a significant amount of digestion that occurs in the large intestine.

Nearly all of the digestion that occurs in the large intestine is the result of bacterial activity. The bacteria ferment the remaining proteins and carbohydrates that made it beyond the small intestine. These proteins and carbohydrates are converted into short-chain fatty acids which can be used for energy in the body.

Bacteria in the gut are also needed to synthesize vitamin B12, thiamin, folate, riboflavin, vitamin K, and biotin.

A healthy gut is necessary for synthesis and absorption of nutrients.

Autoimmune and Immune-Related Issues

Interestingly, gut bacteria are believed to play a huge role in autoimmune diseases. **It turns out that proteins produced by common gut**

bacteria can serve as the trigger for many autoimmune diseases such as ulcerative colitis and rheumatoid arthritis. These proteins mimic proteins that naturally occur in the human body.

The immune system becomes sensitized to these proteins and begins attacking these proteins and the naturally occurring proteins.

Leaky gut syndrome can also contribute to autoimmune disorders. We'll discuss leaky gut syndrome shortly.

An unhealthy gut can be the primary cause of many autoimmune disorders, such as:

1. **Celiac disease.** Celiac disease is an immune disorder that prevents people from eating gluten without injury to the small intestine. The immune system is activated in the presence of gluten and attacks the small intestine.
2. **Gluten intolerance.** There are many people that don't have a true gluten allergy but are very sensitive to gluten

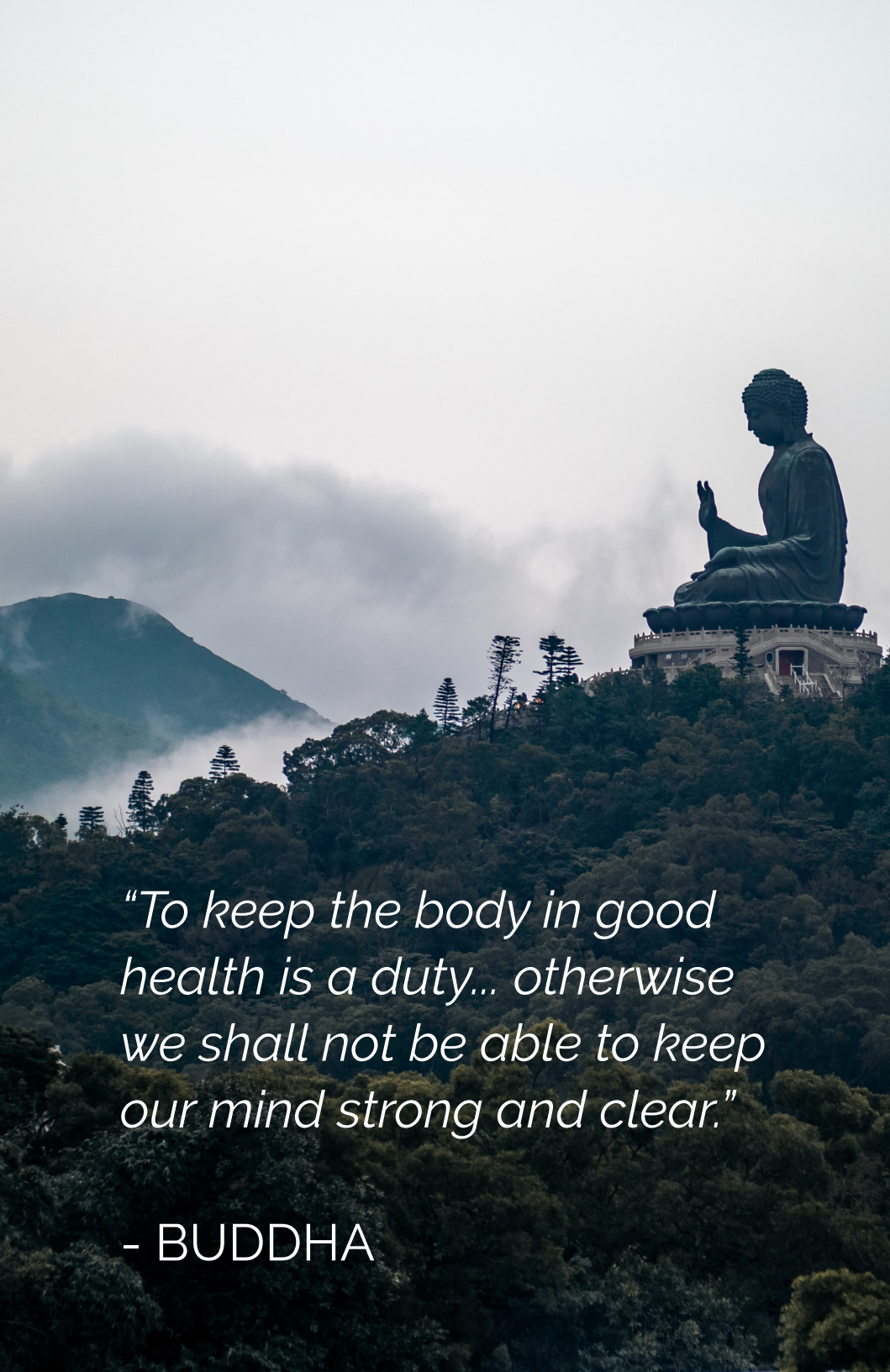
in the diet.

3. **Inflammatory bowel disease.** This is a broad term that describes disorders that involve chronic inflammation in the digestive tract. It includes several diseases, the most common of which are ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease.
4. **Depression.** There is mounting evidence that an autoimmune issue is at least partially responsible for some cases of depression.
5. **Irritable bowel syndrome.** While celiac disease affects the small intestine, irritable bowel syndrome targets the large intestine. Irritable bowel syndrome doesn't cause permanent damage but can be troubling to manage. An immune system response or changes in gut bacteria are often to blame.
6. **Food allergies and reactivity.** Bacteria imbalances in the gut have been implicated in many food allergy cases. Intolerances to certain foods can also

be blamed on gut flora.

7. **Joint pain.** Rheumatoid arthritis can cause great joint pain and long-term damage in the joints that are affected. This is an autoimmune disease that affects 1.3 million people in the United States.
8. **Hypothyroidism.** The most common cause of hypothyroidism is an autoimmune disease that is often treated by addressing infections in the gut.

Hopefully, it's beginning to become clear just how important a healthy gut is for general health. **100 trillion bacteria have the potential to either cause a lot of challenges or to support good health.** Autoimmune diseases can be debilitating and life threatening.



"To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear."

- BUDDHA

Chapter 3: Causes of an Unhealthy Gut

What causes an unhealthy gut? There are many causes, and it's likely that researchers will find more in the next few years.

Fortunately, the causes of an unhealthy gut can be largely eliminated by making wise decisions about what you eat. Smart choices at the dining room table can go a long way toward creating a healthy digestive system.

Try these methods to eliminate the causes of an unhealthy gut from your life:

1. **Unhealthy diet.** A healthy diet is specific to the person. A diet that boosts gut health is one that supports the good bacteria in the body, doesn't upset the digestive tract, provides the proper amount of calories and nutrients, and is sustainable. Food allergies and sensitivities are also important considerations.

2. **The wrong balance of bacteria.** This is primarily a function of diet.
3. **Alcohol.** Alcohol can disrupt the digestive process and also impact the natural balance of bacteria in the gut.
4. **Anxiety and Stress.** There are studies that show that anxiety and stress can impact gut health. Not only are the gut bacteria affected, but food consumption and digestion are also impacted.
 - You might feel compelled to overeat or to eat poorly when stressed. Or perhaps you find it challenging to eat when stressed.
 - Anxiety and stress can also contribute to heartburn, nausea, diarrhea, and constipation.
 - Anxiety and stress also reduce sleep quality.
5. **Poor blood sugar control.** Does insulin resistance disrupt the bacteria in the

gut, or do the bacteria in the gut create insulin resistance? Actually, both situations occur.

6. **Antibiotics can kill off the healthy bacteria in the gut.** Antibiotics have a broad spectrum of action. Many antibiotics cause diarrhea. Now you know why.

As with many other health-related issues, diet is a primary cause of an unhealthy gut. **A healthy diet is one of the best ways to boost your general health and your gut health.** Most of the causes of an unhealthy gut can be minimized by making smart food choices.

"The medical literature tells us that the most effective ways to reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and many more problems are through healthy diet and exercise. Our bodies have evolved to move, yet we now use the energy in oil instead of muscles to do our work."

- DAVID SUZUKI

Chapter 4: Leaky Gut Syndrome

The lining of the small intestine is very important to good health. **It provides a barrier between the bloodstream and the contents of the intestine.**

Not everything that enters or lives in the intestine should enter the bloodstream. It is up to the cells of the intestinal lining to make this important decision. In a healthy gut, nothing is able to enter the bloodstream without the blessing of the intestinal lining.

In leaky gut syndrome, the intestinal lining isn't 100% intact and undesirable substances can enter the blood through the intestine.

These substances can wreak havoc in the body in several ways, such as:

1. **The liver is overburdened.** When toxic substances enter the body, the liver is tasked with eliminating those substances. You can't live without your liver, so reducing its workload as much

as possible is a good idea.

2. **The immune system is activated.** A foreign substance in the body can stimulate an immune response. Unnecessary immune activity can be damaging to the human body.
3. **Inflammation occurs.** Immune system activity can trigger inflammation. **Inflammation is believed to be the cause of many serious diseases.**
4. **Increased likelihood of food allergies and sensitivities.** Leaky gut syndrome is one pathway that can create food allergies and sensitivities.

Symptoms of a Leaky Gut

There are a wide variety of symptoms, which can make it challenging to identify leaky gut with a high degree of certainty.

These symptoms include:

- Regular bouts of bloating, diarrhea, gas, constipation, or digestive-related pain
- Asthma
- Seasonal allergies
- Rashes or other skin-related issues
- Multiple food sensitivities
- Auto-immune disorders such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis
- Brain fog
- Poor memory
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Anxiety, depression
- Difficulty concentrating

This is a pretty wide-ranging list of symptoms! If you have one or more of these symptoms, do you have leaky gut syndrome?

Maybe.

Let's consider what contributes to leaky gut syndrome.

“Some people are naturally thin, and some are heavier. There is a lot of focus on it, and it can be a lot of pressure for people. But honestly, I think as long as someone is healthy, that is most important.”

- JENNIFER LOPEZ

Causes of Leaky Gut

Most experts are in agreement that leaky gut can have several contributing causes.

These include:

- Stress
- Toxins and infections
- Food selection

What these factors have in common is that they create inflammation which many consider to be the primary cause of leaky gut.

The primary strategy for combating leaky gut is to remove the sources of inflammation.

Stress

Chronic stress is a significant contributor to leaky gut syndrome. Stress leads to inflammation. Stress can also inhibit the immune response which permits various sources of inflammation to go unchecked.

The best ways to eliminate this contributing factor are to learn and practice relaxation techniques and to minimize the amount of stress in your life.

Toxins and Infections

The bacteria that normally occur in the gut can grow excessively under the right conditions and cause damage to the intestinal lining. Parasites are another type of infection that can damage the intestine.

These bacteria can create a variety of toxins and enzymes that corrupt the lining of the intestine and interfere with normal digestion.

Food Selection

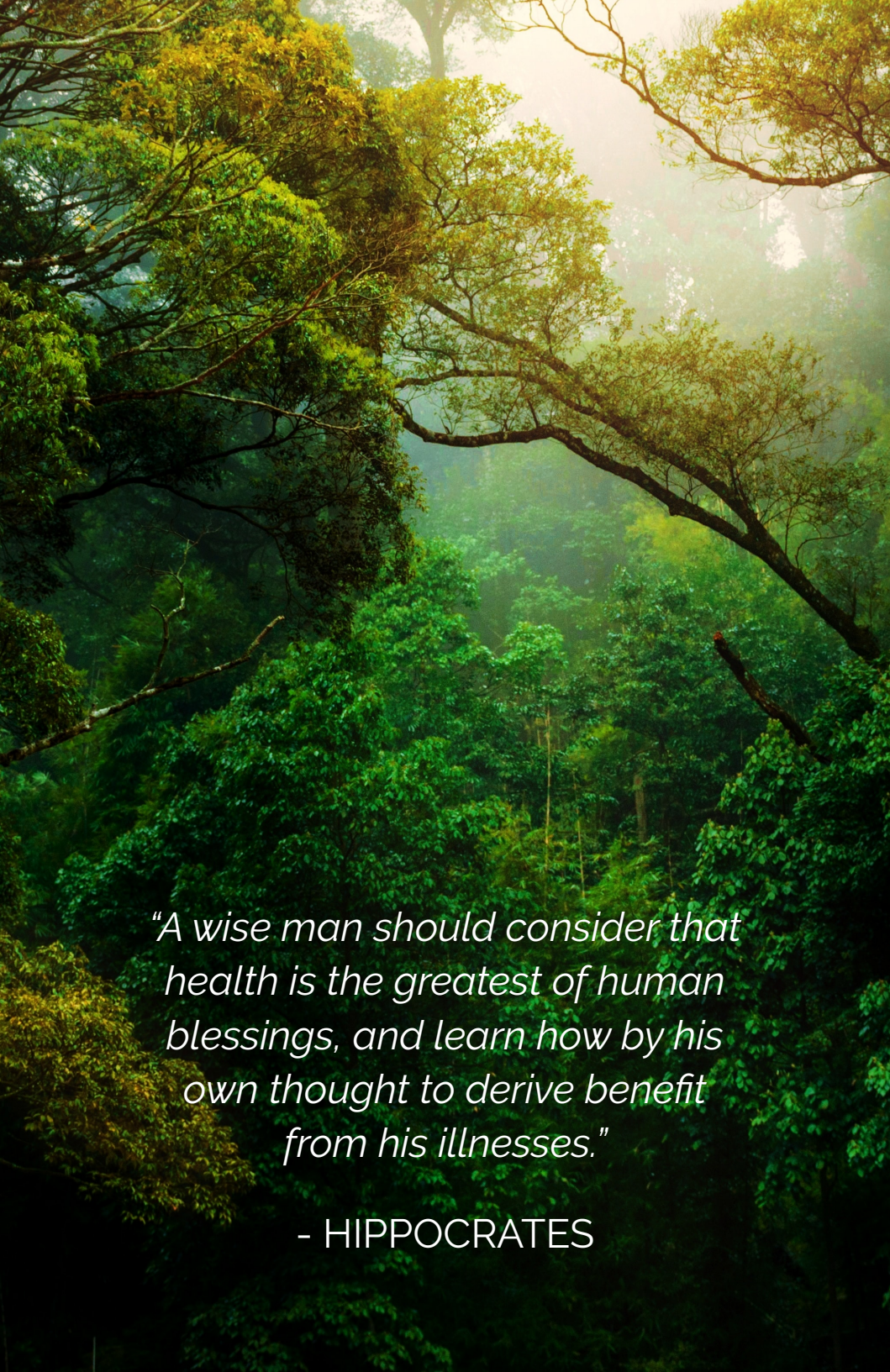
Diet is considered to play the largest role in causing leaky gut.

There are several foods that are commonly considered to be problematic:

- Refined grains
- Refined sugars
- Artificial colorings
- Artificial flavorings
- Preservatives
- Processed foods
- Foods that result in sensitivities or stimulate the immune system. These foods vary from person to person.

The human body in general, and the immune system specifically, don't reliably recognize these substances as foods. These substances can lead to immune system activity, burden the liver, and lead to inflammation.

Some people are very sensitive to certain foods. One simple way to identify these foods is to do an elimination diet.

A lush green forest with sunlight filtering through the trees. The scene is filled with dense foliage, with a prominent tree branch arching across the upper right. The background is a misty, sunlit forest, creating a serene and natural atmosphere.

"A wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings, and learn how by his own thought to derive benefit from his illnesses."

- HIPPOCRATES

Chapter 5: Elimination Diet

Since the food you consume can have such an impact on your overall health and your gut health, finding the foods that don't agree with your body can be a powerful tool for enhancing your health.

An elimination diet is an experiment of sorts. **It will help you to identify the specific foods that cause negative symptoms when ingested.**

In a nutshell, you eliminate all suspect foods in your diet, and then add them back one at a time. The offending foods are easy to identify with this method.

There are two parts to all elimination diets:

- Elimination
- Reintroduction

Elimination Phase

In the elimination phase, the goal is to eliminate all the foods that could possibly be causing a negative reaction. **It's important to avoid all of these possible irritating foods during this phase.**

You can make your own list of foods to avoid, but the most common culprits include:

- Dairy
- Eggs
- Shellfish
- Soy
- Citrus
- Sugar
- Gluten/wheat
- Artificial colors
- Preservatives
- Artificial sweeteners
- Preservatives
- Nuts

It might seem like there's nothing left to eat, but that's not true. In fact, most of the naturally occurring foods are still available to you, such as:

- Unprocessed meat and fish
- Beans, rice, lentils
- Vegetables
- Non-citrus fruit

This is probably the way your mother always wanted you to eat anyway!

How long does the elimination phase take?
Two to three weeks is recommended. That's enough time for your body to stabilize and reach a baseline state.

After the elimination phase is over, it's important to evaluate yourself. Rate yourself on the following items:

- Sleep quality
- Focus
- Mood
- Physical pain - headaches, joint pain, muscle pain
- Anxiety
- Digestion - stomach pain, bowel habits
- Energy
- Skin quality / blemishes

Use any rating scale you like: A to D, 1-10, 1-5 stars, it's up you.

Now that you have a good starting point, it's time to begin reintroducing foods.

"The winners in life treat their body as if it were a magnificent spacecraft that gives them the finest transportation and endurance for their lives."

- DENIS WAITLEY

Reintroduction Phase

How do you feel?

Most people find that they feel better than they have in a long time. Most of us eat a lot of things our bodies don't appreciate. It seems that the most enticing foods are rarely the foods that maximize our health.

It's time to discover which foods you should be avoiding on a permanent basis. You might be surprised by what you find. But you'll be glad that you've performed this experiment on yourself.

The reintroduction phase is when things become interesting.

Follow this process to reintroduce foods back into your diet:

1. **Choose one food that you've been avoiding and add it back into your diet.** Eat this food a couple of times each day for 2-3 days.
2. **Reevaluate how you feel.** Rate yourself on the same categories you considered at the end of the elimination phase.
3. **Note any changes.** If your ratings went down, you know that you should avoid that food in the future. If you don't notice any changes, that food can be considered safe to eat.

4. **Go back and reintroduce another food. Only add one food at a time.** If you add more than one food and feel worse, how will you know which food is causing negative issues?

5. **Keep experimenting.** You might find that certain nuts are fine, but others are not. Maybe you handle one artificial sweetener but not the others. Be logical and perform the necessary experiments to narrow down the list of foods that might be causing challenges.

This won't take as long as you might think. You probably don't eat as many different foods as you think you do. **In a relatively short amount of time, you can gain knowledge about the foods you eat that can change your life.**

"If we could give every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little and not too much, we would have found the safest way to health."

- HIPPOCRATES

Chapter 6: Food Allergies vs. Sensitivities

There is part of the population that has one or more food allergies. There are far more people that suffer from food sensitivities. Many people claim to be allergic to a food group when they really have a food sensitivity.

What's the difference? Mainly, it's the involvement of the immune system.

For example, there are people that are lactose intolerant. When they consume milk products that haven't had the lactose removed, they experience significant gas, bloating, cramps, and diarrhea. However, this isn't a true allergy. They simply lack the enzyme to digest lactose.

The bacteria in the colon feast on the lactose which would have been previously absorbed by someone that wasn't lactose intolerant. All of the gas and other side effects are produced by these bacteria.

A true food allergy includes an immune response. It's as if the body views the food as a foreign invader. Antibodies are released by the body to attack the food. The inflammatory response can be quite severe.

Food allergy symptoms include:

- Hives
- Itchiness
- Swelling of throat, tongue, face, or lips
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Dizziness or fainting

In extreme situations, allergic reactions to food can even be life-threatening. There are just a handful of foods responsible for 90% of all food allergies. These are peanuts, milk, soy, eggs, wheat, fish, tree nuts, and shellfish.

Fortunately, only 1-2 percent of the population suffers from one or more food allergies.

Food sensitivities are much more common.

Most people have at least one food that leaves them feeling worse after they ate it than they did before.

Food sensitivity symptoms include:

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Mental fog
- Heartburn, nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, bloating, diarrhea
- Headaches

Food allergies are certainly more serious, but food sensitivities can be quite miserable, too. You might be shocked by how much better you feel simply by avoiding all of the foods that don't agree with your body.

You may be able to determine which foods to avoid with the Elimination Diet process. If you feel like you're still having issues with some foods, talk with your doctor. Nowadays, they can determine most foods that cause a negative reaction within your body with a simple blood test.

Chapter 7: Tips for Enhancing Gut Health

You understand the value of good gut health, but what can you do to boost the health of your gut? Actually, there's a lot you can do. **Thankfully, much of it is quite simple and easy.** A few simple changes in your lifestyle can deliver big results.

Enhance your gut health with these activities:

1. **Eat a natural diet.** The only animals on the planet that eat processed foods are humans and the animals that humans feed. Processed foods are unnatural, and we were never intended to eat them.
2. **Ensure that you consume enough fiber.** It's not necessary to eat huge amounts of fiber but be sure to meet the recommendations. The numbers vary with gender and age but can be easily found online.

- Fiber keeps moving things along in the digestive tract, and soluble fiber is used for food by many of the beneficial bacteria in the gut.
 - **High fiber foods include: Beans, lentils, artichoke, pears, soybeans, broccoli, avocado, apples, prunes, and many seeds.**
3. **Chew well.** Well-chewed food makes fewer demands on the digestive system. It requires a lot of work to digest large pieces of food. The digestive process is much more efficient when food is chewed thoroughly.
 4. **Eat fermented foods. Yogurt, miso, kimchi, kefir, tempeh, sauerkraut, and pickles are just a few examples of foods that can boost gut health.** Eating at least one of these foods each day can do wonders.
 5. **Take probiotics.** Probiotics add good bacteria to your gut and help to kill off

many of the bad bacteria. Be sure to start slowly with the dosing.

6. **Drink plenty of water.** Water is used throughout the body. It helps to digest food. It's used in the production of digesting enzymes. It's not necessary to drink a gallon of water each day, but drink according to thirst. Prioritize the consumption of water over other beverages.
7. **Exercise.** Exercise is good for every part of your body. Regular movement is also good for helping to move food through the digestive tract and maintain regularity.
8. **Get enough sleep.** All aspects of health are boosted by sufficient sleep and rest. Your gut health is no different.
9. **Avoid excess sugar. Sugar throws off the balance of bacteria in the gut.** And sugar is unhealthy in general.
10. **Relax.** Stress kills. It's bad for your gut, digestion, and overall health. Learn

how to relax. It's a learnable skill.

Can you see that these are all behaviors that are under your control? **One of the best ways to enhance your health is to strengthen the health of your gut.** These 10 items can go a long way toward that goal.



"The ingredients of health and long life are great temperance, open air, easy labor, and little care."

- PHILIP SIDNEY

Conclusion

Scientists and the medical community are only beginning to understand the vast influence that the gut has on the rest of the body. The immune system and the nervous system are heavily influenced by gut health.

The bacteria naturally found in the gut play a pivotal role in both health and disease. Heart disease, autoimmune diseases, neurological diseases, and many other states of poor health are believed to be at least partially caused by the bacteria found in the gut.

Gut health can be heavily influenced by the food choices you make each day. **Eating the proper foods and avoiding the foods that disagree with your body can do a lot to enhance your health.**

You might find that many of your current health issues vanish miraculously in just a few short weeks by making your gut health a priority.



*"It is health that is real wealth and
not pieces of gold and silver."*

- MAHATMA GANDHI