

Your Gut

The GI System

A properly functioning gastrointestinal system is critical for overall health and well-being, yet it is often ignored unless it starts making a lot of commotion.

Consider the following about the gastrointestinal system:

- The gastrointestinal system comprises 75% of the body's immune system.
- There are more neurons in the small intestine than in the entire spinal cord.
- It is the only system in the body that has its own, independently operating nervous system, called the enteric nervous system.
- If you stretched out the gastrointestinal system in its entirety, it would have the surface area of a regulation sized singles tennis court.
- There are over 400 species of microbes living in your gut, totaling over 15 pounds of mass and containing more bacteria than there are known stars in the sky.

If the body allocates this many resources to one particular system, it must be important. In fact, we should start treating our gut with care if we are interested in weight loss, muscle gain or overall health in general.

A Gut Feeling

Actually, we don't really feel our guts. Specifically, we don't often feel gut pain or any other sensations. That's because our guts lack pain sensing receptors (known as nociceptors). As a result, we typically don't know when our gastrointestinal systems have a problem. Instead we have to wait until things get bad enough to present symptoms to us.



If you have symptoms such as:

- gas
- bloating
- burping after meals
- inadequate digestion (feeling like you have a brick in your stomach after you eat)
- undigested food in your stools
- foul smelling stools
- constipation
- diarrhea
- burning in the stomach
- bad breath
- nausea

Then you can be sure you have some type of gastrointestinal dysfunction.

Often, things like hormonal imbalances, migraines, allergies, eczema, and autoimmune disease all can be traced back to GI system problems. Interesting, isn't it?

What To Do

There are many ways a gut problem can manifest; from a compromised immune system, to a problematic stress hormone situation, to an altered sex hormone system, to blood sugar irregularities —These problems can even feed back to cause *more* gut problems.

One of the best ways to stop a vicious GI-related cycle is to control inflammation and identify food sensitivities. Either you've identified them on your own or we can test you here at the office for a comprehensive look at the body's immune reaction to foods. The result is a food elimination diet.

A good elimination diet means removing foods to which many people are sensitive, including:

- wheat and gluten containing foods
- soy
- all dairy products
- corn
- citrus
- the nightshade family of vegetables (i.e. onions, tomatoes, eggplant)
- pork
- eggs
- anything else we think may be causing you issues

This may seem restrictive but I assure you, the people who actually have the persistence to embark on such a program will be glad they did. The effects of a properly followed elimination diet are sometimes nothing short of miraculous.

Reintroduction

Once people have followed three weeks of a strict elimination plan, we then begin reintroducing foods to see which ones cause problems.

To reintroduce a food, we continue following the elimination diet, but add in one food we eliminated. We keep it in the diet for two days and see what happens.

For example, after 3 weeks, we might try reintroducing eggs. We might eat eggs a couple times a day for two days.

We pay careful attention to any symptoms experienced, such as joint pain, headaches, sinus issues, foggy thinking, fatigue, nausea, skin issues, and/or poor sleep. Almost anything can resurface that otherwise disappeared during the previous three weeks.

If there are any "positive" reactions to a food — meaning certain symptoms reappeared — that means the food is a problem and must be avoided for a period of at least 6 months.

I know this process seems simple. But don't negate it just because it's simple. In my clinic, I've seen profound effects. While there is a food sensitivity test available, the gold standard in immunology is a good, old-fashioned elimination diet.

If you have a reaction

If you have a reaction to certain foods, avoid them.

However, you might not have to avoid them for life. It may be that your gastrointestinal system is inflamed, making you sensitive to foods you might otherwise not be. But wait for at least for 6 months before trying them again.

Conclusion

The gastrointestinal system is one of the most underappreciated systems in the body. It has a profound impact on our health, function, and well-being — all of which affect our ability to achieve our physical goals.

Ask how you can be tested right here at the office for food sensitivities.