

The Road to Healthy Aging

“It’s All in Your Gut”

What do Asthma, Psoriasis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Heart disease, Inflammatory Bowel Disease, food allergies, and cancer have in common? INFLAMMATION! Like an unattended fire, chronic inflammation can slowly spread and lead to serious implications for your long-term health. Did you know that inflammation is thought to be the culprit behind the visible signs of aging? If you reduce inflammation in your body, you will not only look and feel younger, but you will significantly lower your risk of chronic disease.

What is Inflammation? It is your body’s response to stress, whether from your diet, lifestyle or environment. When you catch a cold, you may experience inflammation in the form of fever as your body tries to eradicate the virus. Chronic low grade inflammation destroys the balance in your body and you become more susceptible to aging and disease. Inflammatory cells are released into the body for prolonged periods of time that actually attack healthy cells, blood vessels and tissues instead of protecting them. A diet high in sugars, obesity, lack of quality of sleep, over the counter anti-inflammatories, bacteria, viruses and parasites all have been known to stimulate chronic inflammation.

One of the most common syndromes associated with inflammation is The Leaky Gut. Understanding the leaky gut phenomenon, not only helps us understand why allergies and autoimmune diseases develop, but also helps us develop safe and effective therapies to bring the body back to balance. Leaky gut syndrome is a term used when the intestine becomes damaged or inflamed, which causes the wall of the intestine to become more porous or permeable, so that openings develop in the lining of the wall that are normally not there. As a result, undigested food particles, toxins and waste get through to the bloodstream when they normally would be screened out.

When a leak occurs, multiple food particles leak through, causing you to have many different food sensitivities. When this happens, the immune system kicks into high gear to stop these “invaders.” The body produces antibodies against the invaders which got into the blood. If they are not removed right away, these particles settle in different tissues and cause inflammation in various forms. If the inflammation occurs in a joint, Rheumatoid Arthritis can develop. If these antibodies attack the lining of the gut, you can develop colitis or Crohn’s disease. Asthma can be triggered on a delayed basis every time the individual consumes a food which stimulates antibody production. As a result, food sensitivities can easily affect any organ or body tissue caused by Leaky Gut Syndrome.

The symptoms of Leaky Gut tend to be often not easily recognized, and tend to develop over time. Symptoms including constipation, diarrhea, gas, and bloating, are extremely common. Muscle pain as in Fibromyalgia, profound fatigue, feeling run down, multiple chemical intolerances, confusion, memory loss, and brain fog are common as well. An overwhelming number of Chronic Fatigue patients suffer from poor gut health, and until this is corrected, it is difficult to achieve any sustained improvement.

So how do we reverse Leaky Gut Syndrome and lessen inflammation? The primary means of reversing this condition is to alter the diet. which should be as hypoallergenic as possible. Sugar, white flour, gluten-containing grains, food additives, milk and dairy products, are the most common culprits in disguising causes of leaky gut. These food intolerances fester in the gut, and brews low grade inflammation for years. Hidden food sensitivities or intolerances can be determined by blood testing e.g. ALCAT testing. This blood test can determine what foods your body is highly reactive to, moderately reactive to, and non- reactive to, so that you can eliminate those foods that are specifically detrimental to your body. What you might think is healthy, may not be healthy for YOUR body.

Other things that can also be helpful in reducing or reversing Leaky Gut include simple things like chewing your food more thoroughly which helps to improve digestion; Replacing trans fatty acids with healthy fats, such as omega-3 fatty acids and olive oil. Anti-oxidant rich fruits and vegetables are full of fiber and nutrients that can also reduce inflammation. Exercise significantly reduces stress which in turn reduces inflammation and boosts the immune system. Getting a full seven to nine hours of uninterrupted sleep can do wonders to repair and restore your system. .

People with leaky gut usually have incomplete digestion and the use of digestive enzymes can reduce the bloating and gas caused by partially digested food. These enzymes latch on to toxins and escort them out of the body which in turn cleans the blood and relieves the burden on the immune system. Food intolerances usually drop off dramatically when enzymes are used. L-glutamine, an abundant amino acid is essential in healing the intestinal lining more than any other nutrient.

Rebalancing the immune system with probiotics or healthy bacteria (flora) provides a front line in our immune system. Interestingly, 70% of our immune system originates in the gut. These probiotics, particularly Lactobacillus and Bifido bacterium, manufacture B vitamins, and increase the bioavailability of minerals which are required for absorption. Some flora have anticancer properties. A good probiotic will help restore the needed balance among the bacteria, yeast and other organisms. Out with the bad and in with the good. A consistent supply of probiotics is like tending a lawn. You need to kill the weeds, and then keep seeding with "good " grasses. A healthy lawn will need just a little maintenance. However, no maintenance will soon give you a yard overrun with weeds again.

It is certainly interesting that chronic inflammation is at the root of nearly every modern disease on the rise today. However, the opportunity to make everyday choices that limit the fuel for the fire, profoundly lessen your chances of disease. Simply being aware of inflammation is a great start, and by making good choices, you can certainly improve your health for the rest of your life.

Dr. Deborah Sainer received her medical degree from UMDNJ, New Jersey Medical School and is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Emergency Medicine. She has been practicing for over 20 years, including the past 7 years at the Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Center in Centennial, CO., using an integrative approach to health. She is an active member of the American College of Anti-Aging Medicine and the Institute of Functional Medicine. Dr. Sainer has a full time practice, New Spring Integrative Medicine, in Evergreen Colorado, and can be reached at (720) 328-8784.

