

Treating Leaky Gut

Here are some tips that we recommend for patients going on the leaky gut protocol. Leaky gut occurs when you have increased permeability or inflammation of the mucosa or lining of the small intestine. There are a variety of factors that can contribute to leaky gut, including foods (especially gluten), pathogenic microorganisms in the intestinal tract (bacteria, yeast, parasites), and certain medications (i.e. ibuprofen). This increased mucosal permeability can lead to a wide range of inflammatory/autoimmune disorders and digestive symptoms. It is important to realize that you may have a problem caused from a leaky gut without having any significant digestive complaints.

Symptoms and Conditions Associated with Leaky Gut

If you suffer from digestive symptoms, brain fog, headaches, depression, joint aches, skin conditions or fatigue, it may be worthwhile trying a modified elimination diet in conjunction with the leaky gut protocol. Consider trying this diet even if you don't go on the entire leaky gut protocol. As a minimum take a good probiotic supplement at the start. You may feel deprived having to give up some of these foods, but the question you need to ask yourself is- Would I rather be deprived of some of these foods or deprived of my health?

Purpose of an Elimination Diet

The purpose of an elimination diet is to help you identify often subtle and gradual reactions to commonly reactive foods such as: gluten, dairy, soy, corn, eggs, peanuts, sugar and food additives (e.g. MSG, aspartame, artificial flavorings, colors, etc.). You might also consider eliminating anything that you eat daily, crave or "love". These are often foods that one might react to. Focus on what you can eat rather than what you can't eat and this will seem much easier.

Gluten and Leaky Gut

As a minimum, you should go off all gluten. Gluten contributes to leaky gut in just about everyone. Let me begin by defining gluten and explaining why gluten sensitivity is on the rise. Gluten is the protein found in certain grains such as wheat, barley, and rye. You may have heard of celiac disease which is a severe form of gluten sensitivity that is now found to affect one in 100 individuals. That is a rate that is increased from 1 in 3000 thirty years ago.

Non-Celiac Gluten Sensitivity

More recently there has been a new group defined as "non-celiac gluten sensitive"(NCGS) individuals who experience a reaction to gluten and unlike celiac patients they do not have antibodies against various intestinal proteins which defines celiac disease. By some estimates this group may represent up to 30% of the population, but I believe the incidence is actually higher. In my experience, nearly 100% of patients who go off gluten on a trial basis end up

feeling better and really notice adverse symptoms if they reintroduce gluten into the diet later on. Unfortunately, the only way to know for certain if you are a NCGS individual is to try going gluten-free and see how you feel *"All Disease begins in the Gut"* - Hippocrates app. 420 B.C.

Getting Started

Try going on an elimination diet or as a minimum try going "gluten free" and you will likely feel better within 7 days. We recommend staying on the diet for at least 3-4 weeks as it will take about that long to "heal the gut." Some patients may take up to 3 months to reestablish a normal functioning intestinal mucosa. In my experience, everyone who goes through this process feels better in the end. This is a "whole food" diet, which focuses on fresh vegetables, fruit, good fats, and quality protein sources.

Dietary Guidelines

1. Drink plenty of water, preferably filtered. Consider adding some fresh squeezed lemon juice. Drink green tea.
2. Eat lots of vegetables and moderate amounts of low glycemic fruit-preferably organic.
3. Enjoy moderate amounts of high quality protein such as wild fish, chicken, turkey, beef, and lamb. Select from pasture-raised, grass fed, or organic products whenever possible. Avoid processed or cured meats.
4. Eat nuts and seeds with the exception of peanuts (peanuts are actually a legume and are susceptible to mold toxins).
5. Include healthy fats like avocado, coconut oil and extra virgin olive oil.
6. Incorporate fermented foods which are naturally rich in probiotics (e.g. sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha tea, etc.)
7. For milk alternatives, use unsweetened coconut milk, or unsweetened almond milk.
8. To maintain a healthy and stable blood sugar level, eat a combination of protein, fiber, healthy fat at each meal or snack.
9. Eat a wide variety of foods, especially a colorful variety of vegetables and fruit.
10. Allow time for exercise, stress reduction, and adequate sleep.
11. Try this program with a friend or your significant other.
12. Plan ahead by shopping for and prepping foods you CAN eat
13. Buy the highest quality ingredients that your budget will allow

Modified Elimination Diet

Foods to Eliminate

1. Any food that you're allergic to.
2. Gluten-containing grains (wheat, rye, barley) and any prepared foods containing gluten.
3. Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt, ice cream).
4. Soy or any products made from soy, such as soy milk or tofu.
5. Corn and corn products - the vast majority of corn and corn products come from genetically modified organisms (GMO's) which can contribute to leaky gut.

6. Peanuts and peanut butter.
7. Sugar.
8. Eggs (Note that quality eggs are actually healthy for you, however, they are on the list of foods that people frequently react to).
9. Any processed or highly refined foods.
10. MSG and aspartame.

Additional Elimination Considerations for Further Inflammation Reduction

- Gluten-free grains (e.g. rice, quinoa, millet, GF oats, buckwheat, etc.) - contains lectins; begin reintroduction at 2 weeks
- Legumes (e.g., lentils, beans) - reintroduce following grains or at 2 weeks; contain lectins
- Nightshade vegetables (e.g. potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatillos) - can contribute to joint pain
- Coffee/ caffeine - eliminate or at a minimum limit to 1 cup a day
- Alcohol - best to avoid; clear liquors are better

After Elimination

The goal of the elimination diet is to reconnect with how food makes you feel. There is no typical or normal response as each person may differ in terms of how they feel. The key is that you learn to reestablish your connection with food and begin to understand how food may affect you. After 3-4 weeks you might try reintroducing some of the foods that you have eliminated. Begin reintroducing foods one at a time, allowing 3 days between each reintroduction. Some of the foods on the list that I would suggest avoiding forever if you can would include: gluten, soy, any genetically modified organisms (GMO's), MSG, and aspartame. If symptoms persist, further food allergy testing may be warranted.

Your doctor may recommend you take a probiotic. Good brands include: Visbiome, New Chapter, Klare Labs, or Garden of Life. Your doctor may also prescribe Enteragum which is a Bovine derived Immunoglobulin complex.