



Healing Digestive Discomfort

A simple solution to stubborn gut issues -
from accurate diagnosis to getting the right treatment



Health By Whole Foods

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Disclaimer

Natalie Bourke is a holistic dietitian specialising in adrenal fatigue/exhaustion caused by over exercising and chronic dieting. In her work she has found that gut health is pivotal to the healing process in all conditions. She also does extensive work with thyroid conditions, balancing hormones and helping women build a healthy relationship with food and their body. She has an honours degree in Nutrition and Dietetics and has extensive clinical experience with functional and holistic medicine. The advice given in this book is not intended to provide medical advice or to take the place of medical advice or treatment from your primary healthcare physician. The facts and information offered are based on a combination of scientific evidence, clinical practice experience and personal experience.



Health By Whole Foods



My Story

Hey there lovely human, I am so glad you decided to (virtually) pick up my book because the information that follows is going to be invaluable to you in your healing journey. In fact, I wish I had known what is laid out below when I was neck deep in digestive issues, feeling helpless and desperate. I am here to tell you that you don't have to suffer. IBS is a symptom, not a diagnosis, and band-aid solutions don't last. How do I know? Because I have been in your shoes sista'!

It all started when I was 18. I decided that piercing my navel was a great idea. How wrong was I? Very wrong. Very, very wrong.

One week later I had a septic (severely infected) belly button and required oral and IV antibiotics. I wasn't too concerned about that at this stage because I had no idea of the impact that antibiotics could have on the gut. So I took the pills and continued to eat my "healthy" diet filled with weetbix, skim milk, wholemeal pasta and fat-free yoghurt wondering why on earth my stomach was in so much pain.

Months passed and I continued to have horrible gut symptoms. I am talking severe bloating, gas that could knock out an army and constipation that lasted weeks at a time. I went to multiple doctors who all told me to take laxatives and eat more fibre which never worked for long, if at all. I was in tears nearly everyday. I couldn't sleep. I didn't enjoy my food anymore and I felt so incredibly uncomfortable. Anyone who has been constipated knows what I am talking about.

The next thing that happened was an X-Ray of my gut which came back showing what they call faecal impaction. Yep. It is as disgusting as it sounds. My poop was stuck in my gut. Right there, sitting in my large intestine, not doing a thing. De-light-ful!

Things continued to get worse from there. I started to experience halitosis which is basically dog breath (as if the smelly farts weren't enough), followed by black tarry stools and significant weight loss. I continued to search for answers and stumbled across a functional medicine practitioner who insisted I do some functional testing for parasites.

Low and behold I had Helicobacter Pylori (a parasite). The healing process was long and I won't bore you with the details but I did everything and anything I could including giving myself a coffee enema with the help of my darling mum. What a trooper. Thanks Mum...

About a year had passed and things did improve but I made the mistake of entering into a very stressful dieting regime, over-exercising and not sleeping adequately far too soon i.e. I ran my immune system ragged before I had fully recovered. This resulted in parasite number two. This time my symptoms weren't quite as bad but I was more intuitive with what was going on and knew how to do some detective work. Again, functional testing was involved and a targeted diet, supplementation and movement protocol followed.

I should mention that along this journey I tried a lot of different tactics to get relief from what the doctors called "IBS". I tried a low FODMAP diet, no carb, gluten free, dairy free, grain free, paleo, primal, GAPS. You name it, I tried it. Some things were successful, some not so successful.

I don't wish my journey upon anyone because there were WAY more consequences than just digestive complaints. My hormones stopped functioning, I got depressed, my skin, hair and nails looked like my 90 year old Grandma's and my quality of life was non-existent. However, I don't regret my journey. Not only have I become deeply passionate and educated about all things gut health and been able to help hundreds of people to regain their digestive health, but I have also grown as a person. I don't expect that everyone can relate to "just having gut issues" as a life-changing series of events. However, I certainly know some of you reading this will be able to relate.

I want you to know there is hope. There is so much hope dear girl and I am here to give you the roadmap to your treatment. In the following pages I will reveal and equip you with an arsenal of tools in your toolkit; these will be essential for you in finding answers to your individual health struggles. Please don't give up. Be patient, ask questions and trust that your body wants to heal.

Natalie x

Leaky Gut Syndrome

Definition:

Leaky gut is a condition in which your intestines become hyperpermeable. Think of it like this: You have bouncers (tight junctions in your intestinal lining) who decide which guests (food particles and unwelcome molecules that are coming into your intestines) are allowed into the very important party (your blood stream). When these bouncers (tight junctions) become complacent (“leaky”) in their assessment of who should pass through, it leads to a problematic environment (leaky gut).

Once food particles, yeasts, toxins and other waste products pass into your bloodstream where they don't belong, your immune system mounts a response to get these bad boys out ASAP. Once this happens you may experience a number of undesirable symptoms (see below).

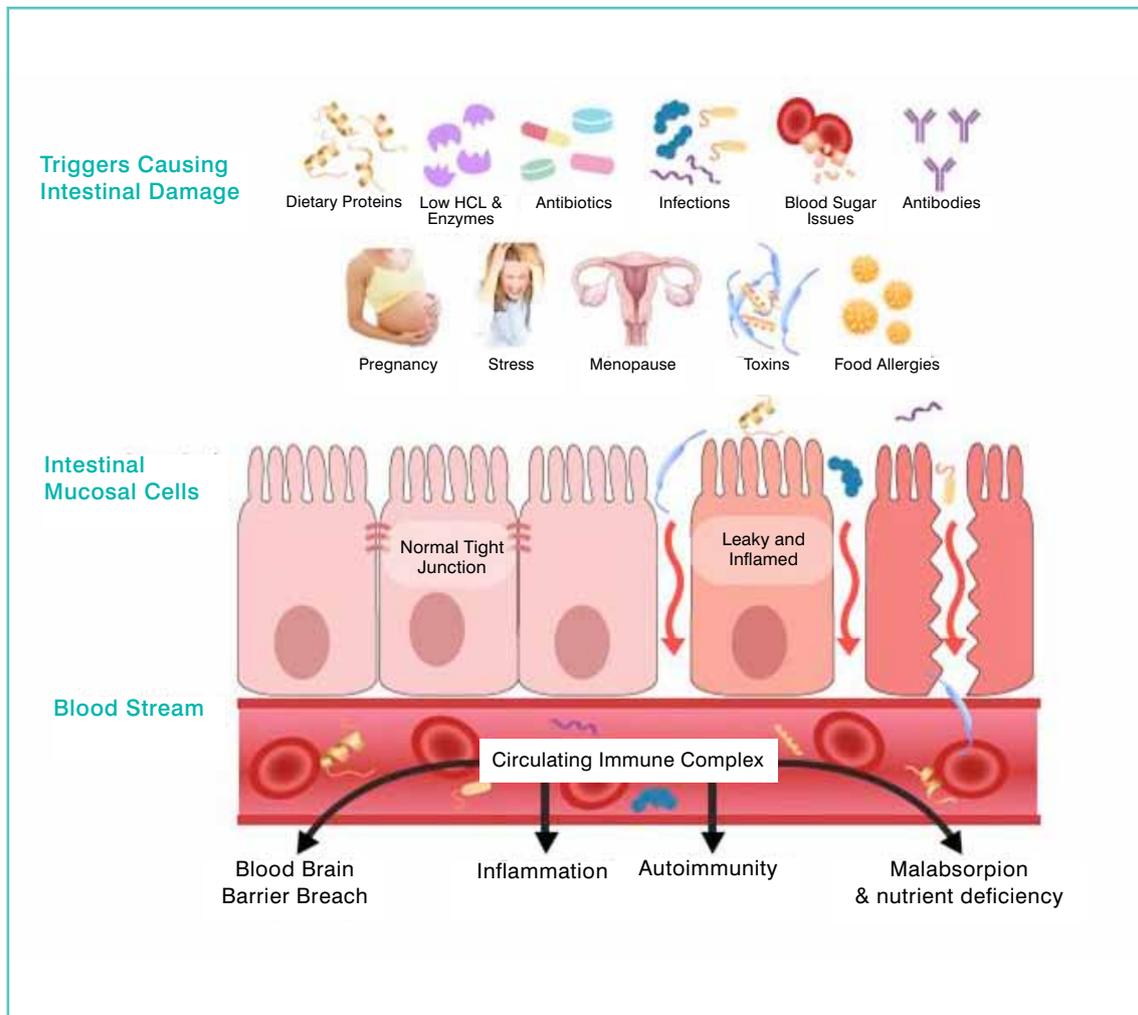


Image from: www.leakygutaid.com

Symptoms & how to diagnose:

I am not encouraging self-diagnosis, however I think it is helpful to point out some of the symptoms of leaky gut to help you along your detective path.

Some common symptoms include:

- Multiple food intolerances.
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Susceptibility to illnesses going around
- Chronic diarrhoea or constipation
- Headaches
- Brain Fog
- Fatigue
- Cravings for sugar and carbohydrates
- Skin rashes/redness or flare of up eczema and psoriasis
- Autoimmune disease

Possible causes:

The science is still evolving on the multiple causes of leaky gut. However, I have listed below a few of the most common causes I see in clinical practise:

- Parasite infections
- Candida overgrowth
- Dysbiosis (imbalance of good and bad bacteria in the gut)
- Stress (emotional, physical and environmental)
- Undiagnosed coeliac disease
- Undiagnosed non-coeliac gluten sensitivity
- Overtraining
- The oral contraceptive pill
- Antibiotic use
- NSAIDs
- Chronic infections

Treatment:

The treatment for leaky gut, like with most illnesses/conditions is multifaceted. You need to rule out and/or address all of the above possible causes of your leaky gut to begin with. How? Functional testing is without a doubt the fastest way to get an accurate answer. If you haven't already ruled out coeliac disease, I recommend starting there, then moving onto screening for parasites and dysbiosis via a Comprehensive Stool Analysis with Parasitology (you can order these tests through a Research Nutrition practitioner and/or from Drs Data-see 'resources' section).

I do not recommend starting with food sensitivity testing because if you do have a leaky gut, you will indeed come back with many food sensitivities. These are symptoms of your leaky gut, they are usually not the root cause.

Regardless of whether you decide to undertake some functional testing or not, you should immediately address your sleep, stress management and environmental/chemical load.

You should also take steps to heal your gut lining and microbiome (good bacteria make-up). This can be done through choosing to include/avoid certain foods, and through targeted supplementation. It is best to work with a qualified health practitioner such as a functional medicine practitioner, [holistic dietitian](#), naturopath or integrative GP to help develop a protocol that is right for you.

This book also guides you with many solutions you can start to implement yourself at home. Please see the 'Gut Healing Foods' and 'Supplementation' chapters of this book, as well as the basic 30 Day Elimination Diet.

Non Coeliac gluten sensitivity

Definition:

Well, the title pretty much spells it out. It is a condition in which you react to gluten in some way but do not have Coeliac Disease. It is important to understand that reactions to gluten are not limited to the gut. There have been multiple studies suggesting a link to a number of conditions including type I diabetes, thyroid diseases, and Autism. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)

Some common symptoms related to gluten sensitivity include:

- Eczema
- Psoriasis
- Hormonal Imbalances (PCOS, Endometriosis, Infertility, Hypothalamic Amenorrhea)
- Headaches and Migraines
- Sinus troubles and Hayfever
- Asthma
- Brain fog
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Joint pain or inflammation e.g. Arthritis
- Thyroid conditions and imbalances
- Autoimmune conditions

How to diagnose:

The best way to diagnose this is to eliminate all gluten for at least 60 days and then reintroduce it. If you feel any symptoms such as a change in bowel habits, gas/bloating, skin rashes/redness, changes in mood or concentration, joint pain, poor sleep, hormonal changes, fatigue, headaches or brain fog then it is a pretty good indication that gluten is not doing you any favours!

Please note there are gluten sensitivity tests available too, however even the most accurate forms of testing can produce false negatives (i.e. you are sensitive to gluten but this is missed). Therefore, I see testing for gluten intolerance as a tool in the toolkit but usually it is not my first go to. I wouldn't recommend testing unless it is going to change the outcome of the treatment being prescribed, which in this case it does not. I prefer doing an elimination/reintroduction challenge in almost all cases.

Possible causes:

In order to react to gluten this protein needs to be able to enter your bloodstream. Remember in our chat about leaky gut above I mentioned that essentially your gut and bloodstream should be separate. The food that enters your GI tract should stay there.

In the case of non-coeliac gluten sensitivity there needs to be some degree of intestinal permeability (leaky gut) happening in order to react to gluten in the first place. Therefore the causes of non-coeliac gluten sensitivity are somewhat similar to leaky gut (see above section on 'leaky gut'). A bit of a catch 22 though, and another important thing to note is that gluten promotes the release of zonulin independent of any other potential foods causing your leaky gut. Zonulin is a protein that causes intestinal permeability (leaky gut). ^{6, 7}

Treatment:

Removal of gluten from the diet and the inclusion of gut healing foods and supplements. Managing your stress and ensuring you get optimal sleep each night are also compulsory! Please see the individual sections in this book on each of these areas.



Kombucha
(fermented tea drink)

Kombucha is a fermented tea beverage containing a combination of beneficial bacteria and yeast. It has numerous positive health benefits such as improving digestion, immune function, skin health and detoxification. I recommend consuming about 150mL daily. For pregnant or breastfeeding mummies, I don't recommend that you start drinking kombucha once you become pregnant, however, if you have been drinking this yummy beverage regularly prior to becoming pregnant then it is safe to continue doing so.

Ingredients:

1 litre of filtered water

4 organic black tea bags

¼ cup organic white sugar

(the SCOBY likes the white stuff!)

½ cup ready made kombucha

(either one you have made or a store bought variety)

1 SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture Of Bacteria and Yeast)

this you will need to grab off a friend or the internet

Method:

1. In a large saucepan, bring 1 litre of filtered water to the boil
2. Add sugar into the water, turn off the heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved
3. Add in your tea bags and allow to steep for 10-15 minutes or until the water feels lukewarm to touch
4. Meanwhile, sterilize a large glass bowl with boiling water
5. Once the tea has cooled, add it to the glass bowl
6. Place your SCOBY into the bowl and cover with a muslin or cheesecloth and secure with a piece of string or elastic band
7. Place the glass bowl somewhere cool and dark e.g. in your pantry
8. Leave for 7-10 days, then gently remove SCOBY, pour the tea into a glass bottle and place in the fridge

Notes:

Don't let ANYTHING metal touch the SCOBY (utensils, bowls etc.). This will damage the SCOBY

Almost all (bar about 3%) of the sugar will be eaten up by the bacteria during the fermentation process. Make sure you add ALL of the sugar specified or your SCOBY will die

You can buy large glass bowls and bottles from K-Mart or large supermarkets

You can purchase muslin or cheese cloths from a fabric shop

During hotter months, the tea will ferment faster so definitely check it after 5 days or so. During colder months I wouldn't bother checking it until 7 days has passed

You'll know it is ready because the sweetness will be subtle and it may be a little bit fizzy and/or taste slightly vinegary

If you want to get a little bit fancy and bring in some extra flavour you can infuse your kombucha with some cut up fruit such as passion fruit, peach, mango, apples, or mixed berries. Simply chop the fruit up and pop it into the kombucha once it has finished fermenting and allow it to sit for 2-3 days in the fridge.

Resources

MONASH University
[FODMAP Diet App](#)

Research Nutrition for functional testing
www.researchnutrition.com.au

The Paleo Mom for further information on Autoimmune Paleo and avoiding nightshades
www.thepaleomom.com/what-are-nightshades/

Blue Light Blockers from OptiOz
www.optimoz.com.au/products/uvex-blue-light-blockers

F.Lux for blocking blue light from your screens
www.justgetflux.com/

BioCeuticals Theracurmin -
For the most bioavailable form of curcumin on the market at time of publication
www.bioceuticals.com.au

Book a 1-1 consultation with me via Skype
www.healthbywholefoods.com.au/consult/

Listen to my fortnightly podcast on all things nutrition, movement, and lifestyle
www.healthbywholefoods.com.au/podcasts/

A Gut Feeling for some more amazing gut healing recipes
www.agutfeeling.com.au