

Strategies for Better Digestion

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Rebekah Kelley: Welcome to the Humanized podcast, all about personalizing your health. I'm your host, Rebekah Kelley, and today we're going to discuss 10 things you can do right now to improve your gut health with nurse practitioner Julie Davey. I want to remind everyone also to make sure to subscribe and get all the other variety of casts in audio, video and transcription at HumanizedHealth.com. I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor, Village Green Apothecary at MyVillageGreen.com.

A little bit about Julie Davey. She's a nurse practitioner with over 25 years of experience. She's passionate about educating others on the power of food and natural medicine to heal the body. Her clinical practice primarily focuses on GI health, where she utilizes specialty lab testing to help clients get to the root cause of their symptoms. She creates tailored protocols and empowers individuals with the necessary tools to live a healthy and vibrant life.

Julie, thanks so much for being with us today.

Julie Davey: Yeah, Rebekah, thanks for having me. I'm very excited. Obviously gut health is my favorite thing to talk about, so I'm excited to be here.

Rebekah Kelley: Well, I can't wait to hear. And this is our second podcast with you, so I want to encourage everyone to go listen to the first one, which was really interesting. But in this particular one, I know you're going to give us some tips. I know you said some of these things are relatively easy and free. And then you've got some other recommendations for some dietary changes and then maybe some supplement ideas.

But let's start with, are there some things that we can do that either don't cost anything or are really inexpensive to improve our gut health?

Julie Davey: Yeah, absolutely. So I'm going to start with six things that you can do. You could literally start these today and they're easy. They're not going to cost you anything, and they are actually really effective. I remember years ago when I started down my own gut health journey, some of these things, I kind of thought, oh, does that really matter? Does that really work? And so I've tested these out over the years and, promise you, they work and they are important.

So, number one is that we try to eat in a relaxed environment. I mean, how many times are you eating on the go, you're eating in front of your computer while you're working, or you're on the phone, or you're watching TV or whatnot? So, trying to really be intentional about taking time, whether it's 20 minutes, 30 minutes, to just sit. It's going to help your body digest your food much more effectively. And when we're in a relaxed state, it really allows us to produce more digestive enzymes to digest our food. And it also activates our parasympathetic nervous system, which is very important. So that's number one.

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Goes right into that, and that is how can we activate our parasympathetic nervous system even more, while we're eating or as we're going into eating. And one thing that we can do is just take some deep breaths. I mean, honestly, this was one of the things that I was like, okay, that is not going to work. You know? But once I started doing it and incorporating this, you really can see a difference. So if you can just take, it's literally less than a minute. You sit, when you're ready to eat, maybe you're saying the blessing or something, I don't know, in your head, and you're taking just deep breaths in and out – that does something to the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is part of the parasympathetic nervous system, so by activating the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic nervous system, that's called our rest and digest system. So that again helps us to digest our food. Most of us are eating in this sympathetic state where our sympathetic nervous system is activated and that's our fight or flight system, and that actually shunts blood away from your gut, from your digestive tract, so that you don't digest your food as well. So, really important, if you can do that five times, five deep breaths and just see if you notice a difference, it'll actually help you calm down, to be able to sit and relax and eat. So that's number two.

Number three is to chew your food properly. I mean, you can see these are not rocket science, but it's things that we need to be reminded of because it is so incredibly important. There are so many people who don't have good digestive health, who don't digest their food properly as it is, and so we kind of need to really help our body out as much as we possibly can by chewing our food 30 to 40 times per bite, is what's recommended.

It was very interesting. Last night I was actually having dinner with my kids and for whatever reason, my son, I'm always telling him, chew your food more, slow down when you eat. And so he said, I mean, I just chew like three or four times and then swallow. And I'm like, oh my goodness. I was trying to tell him how bad that was for his digestion and how he should be chewing 30 to 40 times. And he said, well, I mean, I'm not going to finish till next week if I do that. [She laughs.] And so, I mean, teenagers are funny. And so I was like, no, trust me. Why do you think I'm always the last person eating? But it really, really does help. And one thing that you can do, I would encourage you to do, that will sort of help you be aware of this, is if you can just put your fork down between each bite, that kind of makes you aware, okay, I need to slow down, I need to chew my food more, not that you have to count, but you get the drift. But that is helpful. Okay, so that's number three.

Number four is to avoid drinking water or drinking anything really with your meals, if you can. Not that you can't have a sip here and there, but it actually dilutes your stomach acid and your digestive enzymes, so it makes it a little bit more difficult or challenging to digest our food. Also, it's important to note the temperature of the liquid that you're consuming because when you consume, let's say it's ice cold water, so ice cold liquid, it actually slows down your digestive tract and it can cause, if you're eating any oily or greasy foods, it can cause those to solidify in your stomach, which then slows down your digestion even more. So that's very important.

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Number five, avoid chewing gum. And I say this because a lot of people I see have bloating. If you have bloating, you probably want to avoid chewing gum. And here's why. We end up actually swallowing more air when we're chewing gum, which causes bloating. But then also, a lot of gums are sugar-free and they contain sweeteners like xylitol and sorbitol, and that can actually ferment in the gut, and then that releases gas and causes potential bloating.

And then the last one is just to take a walk after you eat. Not a fast-paced walk, just get up and move. That actually helps to stimulate digestive enzymes and helps with your digestion.

So let's recap those six. Eat in a relaxed environment. Take some deep breaths before you eat. Chew your food properly. Avoid drinking water and cold liquid with meals. Avoid chewing gum, and take a walk after you eat. So, pretty simple. None of those cost anything. So, very simple.

Rebekah Kelley: Actually, all of those are very enjoyable. Because I do notice that, especially lunchtime, it's very easy to have work and lunch sometimes start to blend together. Setting my fork down. I love that because I will say I'm sometimes, the second bite is going in when I'm not really quite done with the first bite, right? So, I love those. Those are really simple and very mindful. And I do think there is a benefit to being grateful or thankful for your food and taking that moment, because it does shift you right over to being in a much different state than a revved state. So those are beautiful. I love those.

Okay, so then on to what dietary recommendations do you have then for better gut health? What can we do that might change with our diet?

Julie Davey: Yeah, absolutely. So there are actually a few foods that help to stimulate digestion. Things like ginger, arugula, peppermint tea, lemon water, apple cider vinegar. So incorporating any of those is going to be supportive and helpful to your digestion. Probiotics, right? And I'm not talking about supplements here, we're talking about probiotics from food. So consuming things like fermented veggies, sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir, kombucha. Any of those are going to have good probiotics. Yogurt also has some probiotics. You just want to make sure you stay away from anything that's too processed and has added sugars and artificial sweeteners and things like that. And then prebiotics. So, prebiotics are really important. Prebiotics are what feed the probiotics. So some ways that you can get prebiotics in your diet are from things like bananas, asparagus, leeks, onions, garlic – so all of those, again, have prebiotic fiber, which we need to feed the probiotics.

Fiber in and of itself is extremely important. We want to be getting about 25 to 35 grams of fiber, should be your goal. And what I always encourage clients to do is, if you don't know how much fiber you're eating and whether or not you may potentially need an added fiber supplement, just track your food for 2 weeks. Go to MyFitnessPal, which is a free app, if you're not familiar with it, very easy to navigate, you can put it on your phone or on the computer, and it will actually give you lots of insight. If you will just track your food for 2 weeks, because most

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people eat similar things throughout the week, you will be able to see not only are you getting enough fiber, but you can also see are you getting enough protein, carbohydrates, fats, all of those type things. Sugar, are you taking in too much sugar. So it'll give you a lot of information so that you know where to tweak and modify.

I do always recommend, when we're doing a gut healing protocol specifically, I recommend no gluten. And not everyone is sensitive to gluten or certainly not everyone has celiac, but gluten we know is a leading cause of leaky gut and can really damage the gut lining and if we are working on repairing and healing, I always tell my clients if we can avoid gluten during the time that we're working on repairing the gut lining, we're going to have much greater success.

Sugar. Sugar's another thing. You know, refined, processed sugar creates a lot of inflammation in the body, so we want to avoid that. I mean, glucose is certainly important for energy and for our cells to function. But we want to be getting that through things like complex carbohydrates, like fruits, natural sources like honey, pure maple syrup, dates, things like that.

I also recommend, if you are really having a lot of gut issues, I recommend avoiding legumes. So, lentils, peas, beans – and not that those aren't good, have good fiber, have good protein, but if your gut lining is not strong, you're going to have a lot of symptoms with those, most likely. A lot of bloating, gas, maybe constipation. So I just encourage people to, let's hold off on those until we get everything healed.

And so basically, all that to say, really you want to be consuming more of a whole foods diet, of course. I mean, high-quality grass-fed beef, fish, chicken, things like that, and lots of veggies are really important.

So those are kind of the general dietary recommendations that can support your gut health.

Rebekah Kelley: I love that. I also found, I don't know if you've heard of it – Chronometer. Have you heard of that for tracking food? Because they actually allow you to include your supplements, and I do a lot of supplements. You can get a free account for that. So, I did my FitnessPal for a while, so I just wanted to mention it to you because I just discovered it, and I love it. So it's another... I do both of them. But I love that one.

Are there any specific supplements then, because you covered the free things, the dietary things... are there any supplements that maybe we should be looking at that can help us with our gut health?

Julie Davey: Yeah, absolutely. And first of all, thank you for sharing that with me. I'm always interested in learning about new things like that, so I'm definitely going to check that out. So thank you.

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So in terms of supplements, I would say, just right off the top of my head, there are three supplements that really anybody could take that would support their gut health that are not going to be harmful, that could be helpful and good for anyone.

So the first one is probiotics. We do need to really feed our microbiome with the good stuff because, here's one thing for you to kind of think about. Let's say you aren't really sure what the state of your microbiome is, you haven't had any type of gut testing. If you do have something like that, we're going to be able to tell if you have enough good or beneficial bacteria, so we kind of know how many, like the dosage of probiotics we might need, things like that. But just in general, sort of a general dosage is around 10 to 20 billion CFUs a day. That's the units, sort of like the dosage that we look at for probiotics.

But think about this. Our gut is like basically a parking lot and there are only so many spaces. And so when the gut is full of bad bacteria, we want to feed it with good to sort of push out the bad and take over those spaces with good, so to speak. That's just kind of an easy way to think about it.

So, one probiotic that I really like, that I know that you all carry and that they [our viewers] can get on your site is Klaire Labs Probiotic. That one is really good. It has really a good, varied strain and enough CFUs.

The next supplement that I would recommend trying, especially if you're having symptoms of things like bloating, gas, indigestion, I would try some digestive enzymes. Those are only going to be supportive. As we age, we don't make as many digestive enzymes, and if we're eating in a rushed state, we're probably not making enough in our body. So not only do they help you break down food, but they also help with extracting nutrients from the food, and we often need a lot of help with that as well, if our gut is not strong. Pure Encapsulations is a really good brand of digestive enzymes. So that's one you can check out.

And then the third one I would say that would be supportive to everyone is collagen. I mean, collagen's the most abundant protein in the body. And so not only is it great for supporting the gut lining, it's great for joints, skin, hair, nails, all of those things. I believe you all carry Vital Proteins, which I like. Vital Proteins, that's a good brand of collagen.

So, yeah, check those out. Those would be the top three supplements that I would say that could be beneficial to anyone.

Rebekah Kelley: I love... actually, I take most of those. And I love Pure Encapsulations. And I found, like you said, as you get older, digestion, sometimes you just need a little bit of help. And if you're spending all this money on these grass fed... you want to get the maximum nutrition that you can to build a very strong body.

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Do you have a recommendation for when you take these? Is that kind of key? Because I know I have a tendency to take my probiotic at night. That was the recommendation. And then I, of course, take my enzyme with my meal. Usually right before it. So is there a timing thing, and is there a timing as it relates to collagen? Because I haven't been doing that.

Julie Davey: Yeah, so that's a great question. So enzymes you certainly want to take at the beginning of a meal when you start to eat. Probiotics, that can actually vary, and usually I tell people see what it says on the recommendations, because some are with food, some are recommended without food. Time of day doesn't necessarily matter. Often it'll be twice a day. Often I'll have people take twice a day, so morning and night. But the biggest thing I would say is look to see if the particular product that you are taking recommends with food or on an empty stomach. And then collagen doesn't necessarily matter time of day either. I like to take my collagen in the morning. I actually just put it in my coffee. It's such an easy way to get added protein and collagen into something that you're already doing. Or you could do tea, you could put it in a smoothie. Anything like that would work.

Rebekah Kelley: Wonderful. Thanks Julie. Those are really valuable insights. It's always such a pleasure to have you have you share your knowledge, your incredible deep knowledge. It's so important because we eat every day [laughs]. So digestion is something that we use for at least three meals, and then some snacks and ongoing. So thank you so much. Julie Davey can be found at www.JulieAnnWellness.com. I'm going to spell that. J U L I E A N N W E L L N E S S . c o m . Let me remind you to subscribe and get access to all Humanized videos, podcasts, and transcriptions from all of our other thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com. Thanks for being with us. Julie, please come back.

Julie Davey: Thank you so much. I would love to.