

The Most Common Mistakes People With Digestive Issues Make

**Julie Davey, RN, MSN,
ANP-C, ACNP-C**



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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 be discussing with nurse practitioner, Julie Davey, The Most Common Mistakes People With Digestive Issues Make. Before I introduce Julie, I want to remind everyone 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.

To introduce 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.

Thanks for being with us, Julie.

Julie Davey: Yeah. Thanks, Rebekah. I'm so excited. These are always so fun for me. My favorite thing to talk about is gut health in general. So I'm excited to be here.

Rebekah Kelley: And you know so much and I always learn extra things. I always think I know, but then when I talk to you, I'm like, oh, I learned something new. So, you always give a little bit of extra light.

Well, let's just hop right into it. What are some specific food-related mistakes that people make and they just don't know it?

Julie Davey: Yeah. I thought about this and I think there are probably three big ones that came to mind first. So, the first one is thinking that gluten free means that you're eating healthy. So, everybody nowadays has heard of being gluten free or going gluten free, right? And a lot of people have tried it and seen great results because the thing with gluten nowadays versus 100 years ago is our food has been hybridized the way that it is, the soil that it's grown in and pesticides that are sprayed on it. That's one of the things that makes a lot of gluten products really unhealthy. But I think a misconception that occurs quite often is, oh, I'm going to go gluten free, so all of these gluten-free products I'm buying, they're super healthy for me. Now, some of them might be. I first want to say, if you are not familiar with products that contain gluten or what doesn't, if you're eating fruits and vegetables and high-quality protein, chicken, fish, grass-fed beef, things like that – that those things do not contain gluten. So you cannot go wrong with a whole foods diet. But there are some really great gluten-free products out there. You just really have to be a good investigator and start to learn how to read food labels, because there are things like brown rice pasta that's gluten free. Let's say you're like, I love pasta, I know it has gluten, I'm never going to be able to eat pasta again. That's absolutely not true. There are some really great substitutes out there. But what I just want to caution people about is, a lot of gluten-free products are highly processed, they lack nutrients, vitamins,

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minerals, fiber, things that our bodies really need. So, if those are the type of foods that you're filling up on and you're thinking, this is gluten free, I'm being healthy... [that's] maybe not the case. Because I've seen people go that route, go gluten free, eat more processed, and they gain weight and they're like, what's going on? You know, I thought I would feel better. I thought I would lose weight. That may be a mistake that people are making. So, if you're listening to this and that's you, hopefully a light bulb went on. And so what I would say to you is, just be, again, a really good investigator, start reading labels, looking to see what is in your food, and try to move away from processed foods.

We're all going to eat things that aren't just fruits and vegetables that maybe come from a box that are somewhat processed, but we want to make sure that that is a limited or a small amount of our diet, and that we're filling it with more, again, fruits, vegetables, high-quality protein. So that, I would say, is a big one.

The second one that really came to mind is, people often want to incorporate fermented foods, which is great because fermented foods have a lot of good probiotics in them. If you don't know what I mean by fermented foods, we're talking about things like sauerkraut, kimchi, fermented veggies, kombucha, kefir, those type things. And I see this a lot. Someone will say, well, you know, I tried that sauerkraut, or I tried that kombucha and oh, it just hurt my stomach. I couldn't tolerate it. I couldn't eat it, and so it must not be healthy for me. It must not be good for me. Most likely, the issue is, especially with the fermented veggies and things like sauerkraut and kimchi, because they have a lot of probiotics, but they also have fiber in them, your body is most likely not used to, sort of like, let's just say a higher dose of those things at once. And so if you eat, let's say, half a cup of sauerkraut, and your stomach's bothering you, it didn't settle well, then it may just be that you need to build that up. So, you start with, like, a tablespoon of sauerkraut with your food. Or you start with four ounces of kombucha and then you just slowly build your way up, because your body has to adjust to these things. You may be overloading it with these probiotics and this fiber that it's not used to. And I would also say, if your gut lining is not strong, if it's perhaps a little leaky, then you're not going to be able to tolerate those foods well. So, it could also be a clue that something may be off that we need to investigate further. So don't give up on fermented foods, but just maybe try those modifications.

And then lastly, the third one is, a lot of people I see, and this used to be me, have sugar cravings, right? I mean, sugar is in, like, literally, unless it's a whole food, almost everything. It's pumped into everything, injected, put into everything. Right? And so a lot of times we start to recognize, okay, I really need to cut back on my sugar. It's not good for me. So, we start to make these substitutions with things like erythritol and xylitol because they don't have calories, right? So we think like, oh, this is great. I'm going to substitute with these things. But what happens with these artificial [sweeteners], because those are really an artificial form of sweeteners, what happens is, those can actually ferment in the gut. And when that happens, it starts to put off these gases, so you start to get a lot of bloating and gas and even cramping and abdominal pain. So, I would caution you against that.

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Now, if you're looking to lower your sugar intake, that's great, because we know that sugar causes a lot of inflammation in the body. We're talking processed, refined sugar. Start to do things like... when you have a sweet tooth or a craving, start to incorporate things like more fruit, or natural forms of sugar like honey or pure maple syrup or dates. Some dark chocolate here and there is certainly fine. So, start to move more towards those types of sugar when you have that craving, and definitely stay away from those artificial sweeteners.

Anything to add, Rebekah, that you thought of?

Rebekah Kelley: I love those. Those are things that are a lot of times really not discussed. And they are sneaky. And I know for me, the fermented foods, I have a lot of histamine issues and I didn't realize I had to actually have someone, like you, flag for me that I had to be really careful with a lot of fermented foods, even vinegars, which you don't even think of. Because you're like, oh, vinegar, vinegar, like even that has a certain fermentation. And I would argue with myself, well, these things are healthy. I shouldn't have a problem with it. But I do think you're right. Sometimes we, individually, we're dealing with so many different kinds of things that sometimes something that should be healthy and good for you can definitely create some additional problems. I love those. Those are great.

Julie Davey: Awesome. Great. So, what other things would you like to discuss?

Rebekah Kelley: Now, one of the things that you had mentioned was there might be certain medications too, that might be something that might cause some issues. Can you share with us what those might be, that we don't even realize, that might be stoking the fire a little bit?

Julie Davey: Yes, absolutely. So, in terms of medications, mistakes related to digestive issues that I think, probably two of the biggest ones that people make are first, taking laxatives chronically. So, if you are constipated, there is a reason that you are constipated. And I'm not talking about the occasional it happens here and there. I'm talking, people saying, oh, well, I only have two bowel movements a week, and that's just normal for me, it's just the way my body is. If I've heard that once, I've heard it a thousand times – it's just the way my body is. In fact, that used to be me. That used to be my mindset because I had tried everything to try and correct the issue, until I really went through some functional medicine testing and uncovered the issue, I was just shooting in the dark. I didn't really know why I was only going to the bathroom a couple times a week. And so I would say, first of all, if that's you, number one, recognize that that is not normal. And the answer is not to take laxatives chronically. Because what's going to happen, your body is going to become accustomed to that, and then you're not going to be able to have a bowel movement without it, and you haven't uncovered why this is happening in the first place. So that's extremely important.

So, if that speaks to you, some things that you can do, I'll just list a few of them. So, we need a lot of water, right? Our bodies are made up of mostly water. So, we need to stay hydrated and

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that really helps to draw water... when we stay hydrated, we help to draw water into the intestines so that we can sort of like bulk up the stool and we can get it to move through. So really, at least half your body weight in ounces a day should be the goal. Half your body weight up to your full body weight in ounces a day should be your goal. So right now, if you're only drinking one glass, eight ounces of water, then start slowly increasing to two glasses, 16 ounces, and just move your way up. It doesn't have to be overwhelming, where you're like, oh my goodness, I'm not going to be able to drink it, that's just a lot of water. Well, take small steps. And the more you start to do things like that, you're going to feel so much better. You're actually going to have more energy when you stay hydrated. So, lots of other benefits, but it definitely will help with constipation.

The other thing that we need to have good bowel movements is fiber. And a lot of people are like, oh, I've tried adding fiber, it makes my stomach cramp, makes me float and have gas and all those things. So I would say go slow, right? Incorporate foods that have fiber in them – fruits and veggies, and you can use fiber supplementation. A lot of fibers are psyllium based and I find that when people start to add a lot of psyllium husk into their diet, that's when they get those symptoms, bloating, gas, if their body's not accustomed to it.

So, one type of fiber, it's really more of a prebiotic fiber that is very gentle and I find doesn't cause those symptoms, it's called acacia fiber. So that might be something that if you don't really feel like you're getting it from your foods, that you could incorporate into your diet.

And another way to check and see, am I getting enough? So, let's answer the question first. What is enough? 25 to 35 grams a day is what we want to be getting. Okay? And the way to know that is, if you've never done this before, it's very insightful. I would track your food for a couple of weeks. It doesn't have to be overwhelming. It's not something you have to do forever, but if you will get on an app like My Fitness Pal, it's totally free. You can download it on your phone, or you can do it on the computer, and you just log in what you're eating. Most of us eat similar things on a weekly basis. So, if you do that for one to two weeks, you're going to be able to see, okay, how much fiber am I actually getting on average? And then you'll know, do I need to make modifications to what I'm eating? Or maybe you're already eating pretty healthy, but still not getting enough fiber. Then incorporate something like the acacia fiber.

So, water, fiber. Other things that you can do. Senna is sort of like... it comes from a leaf and there's senna tea that you can get. S e n n a is how that's spelled. And that's sort of considered like a natural laxative. So, if you needed to use something like that every now and then, I would recommend that over a synthetic laxative. And then magnesium is another great thing to incorporate. Most people are deficient in magnesium. One of my favorite products is a product called natural calm, and it's just a powdered magnesium that you can get. And I love to just put it in a little bit of water before bed. It's very calming to the nervous system, so also helps with sleep, but really helps with bowel movements, as well.

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And then lastly, something else you can try – and you can actually just Google this or look up on YouTube – there are different abdominal massages that you can do that help to move the bowels. So, just type something like that in, abdominal massage for constipation, or something like that, and you'll get videos that will show you simply how to do that.

So, if that's something you struggle with, I would recommend avoiding the laxatives and doing some of those more natural things to work on having regular daily bowel movements, because you have to be eliminating toxins from your body on a daily basis, or you're going to feel... you're not going to feel good. And think about the inflammation and the cellular damage that could be doing to your body when you have all these toxins floating around. So, we want to really be eliminating every day. So, that's the first one.

The second one, I would say, is taking antacids frequently. So, how many times do we see this? Oh, my goodness. Uh, you know, I have some heartburn. I mean, this is probably one of the biggest issues in our society, is we pop these antacids, right? I understand when you have heartburn, you want relief. Okay. I get that. But if this is you and you're having this on a frequent basis, there is a reason for it. Again, just like the constipation, you need to get to the underlying root cause and stop really taking a band-aid approach. Because that's all we're doing when we're using laxatives and antacids. It's just a band-aid approach and we're not actually working on the underlying problem. So, what's one of the biggest antacids that is given out and prescribed? Proton pump inhibitors, things like omeprazole, pantoprazole, medications like that. Well, these were originally intended for short-term use for people who had things like ulcers, gastric ulcers. They were intended for up to 6-weeks use, and they have slowly just become used chronically on a long-term basis. And what we have found is long-term use of these causes things like kidney disease, bone fractures, dementia, pneumonia, B12 deficiency. You can even get a bacteria called *C. difficile* from taking these chronically and lowering the acid in your stomach.

So, lastly, I know we probably need to wrap up, but I want to mention why this happens, why actually it's usually a low stomach acid problem, but we think that it's a high acid problem. When you don't have enough stomach acid, you don't digest your food as well as you should. And so undigested food sits on your stomach longer than it should and can then cause reflux back into the esophagus. Well, when any type of food and acid that's mixed with it does come up into the esophagus, it's very delicate. So, it's going to cause those symptoms, even if the actual acid level in the stomach is low. So, that's how it can kind of be counterintuitive. You think, oh, well I have high acid, I'm going to take these antacids. You're actually making the problem worse in most of the cases. So, I would just say, if that's something that you're doing, you really need to look at the underlying cause of why this is happening to you.

Rebekah Kelley: So, then I guess... you've given us such great tips, and so let's say we're trying to solve these problems, right? We're trying to figure out our path to wellness. How do we get on that path? What would you recommend? What would be the steps for getting someone to

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go down those particular paths now that you've enlightened them with this? What would their next steps be?

Julie Davey: Yes. So, first step is always awareness, right? You're aware there's an issue. That's the key to any transformation, is awareness. Next is to start to make these small changes, and you really get curious and ask yourself, what is my body trying to tell me? Because these symptoms, any symptom that you have, is your body crying out for help. Your body's like, hello, something's wrong in here. Something's happening. Help me, let's figure out what it is and let's get a real solution, not a band-aid approach. So, I would say awareness, start to make small changes, like we talked about with the water or doing things more naturally for constipation, whatever your issue is, and then really, this is all about being your own advocate, taking your health into your own hands. So, get curious. If these are symptoms that you are having frequently, then work with someone who can help you get to the root cause and stop using these band-aid approaches.

Rebekah Kelley: I think these are really amazingly valuable insights, Julie. And I find too, I know for me, I had to actually get some help. I had to get some tests to see what was going on. Because sometimes it's hard to know what's going on under the hood, right? So, sometimes you need to do the tests and work with someone like you, obviously, who understands that and kind of helps us on our way to wellness.

And so, to find you, you can be found at [www. JulieAnneWellness.com](http://www.JulieAnneWellness.com). That's J U L I E A N N W E L L N E S S . com. And let me remind you to subscribe and get access to all Humanized videos, podcasts, and transcriptions from all of our thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com. Thanks as always Julie, for being here and sharing your wealth of knowledge.

Julie Davey: Absolutely. Thank you for having me.