

BASIC GUIDE TO SUPPLEMENTS FOR GUT HEALTH

While a good diet and a healthy lifestyle are the foundations for gut health, supplements can also play a supportive role in improving and maintaining a healthy digestive system. A Health Coach can provide you with general information about various supplements, but you should always check with your doctor before taking anything new to verify dosage and if there are any contraindications.

The following supplements have been found to generally support gut health. Remember, what works for one person may not work for the next, so always do your research and pay attention to how you feel.

SUPPLEMENTS THAT SUPPORT DIGESTION:

- **Digestive enzymes**

Digestive enzymes are often supplemented to help break down and digest food. When the body's digestive enzymes are not functioning properly – whether due to stress, inflammation, or some other reason – some practitioners provide them as a temporary fix to help with digestion or to break down hard-to-digest foods.

Digestive enzymes can be derived from fruit isolates, animals, or plants. These supplements can include any combination of enzymes, including proteases to break down proteins, lipases to break down fats, and amylase and other enzymes that help to break down carbohydrates.

- **Betaine HCL/pepsin**

This supplement increases the amount of hydrochloric acid in the stomach to help break down food. This supplement must be taken with some form of protein, which is why pepsin (the enzyme that breaks down protein) is often included. Betaine HCL/pepsin is used for low stomach acid. This supplement must only be taken under the supervision of a medical practitioner, as there are many contraindications. In particular, individuals with ulcers, those who take anti-inflammatory drugs, or anyone who experiences a burning sensation should not take this supplement.

- **Digestive bitters**

Bitters can be foods or herbs with a bitter flavor. These stimulate the body's natural digestive juices and the production of stomach acid. The Standard American Diet pays little attention to bitter flavors, which is why this is more commonly supplemented. Bitter flavors can also curb sugar cravings and balance blood sugar.

SUPPLEMENTS THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY GUT FLORA:

- **Prebiotics**

Prebiotic fiber is food for bacteria. Healthy bacteria promote a healthy gut! Prebiotics are found in many vegetables. But, some individuals may prefer to supplement if they have a hard time getting enough fiber in their diet. Prebiotics can be irritating for individuals with small intestinal bowel overgrowth (SIBO) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

- **Probiotics**

Probiotics can be great for maintaining a healthy gut to protect against infection or to rebuild the gut after a course of antibiotics or some type of disturbance. Diversity is key, so the more variety in the strains, the better. The amount and type of probiotics to take can vary based on the reason why a person is taking them, so it's always best to consult a doctor before starting probiotics.

SUPPLEMENTS THAT NOURISH THE GUT LINING:

- **L-glutamine**

L-glutamine is an amino acid that's used as a building block for repair of a compromised gut. It can help nourish and rebuild the gut lining.

- **Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)**

MSM is active sulfur, which is a mineral that can help reduce inflammation and rebuild tissue. Some practitioners prescribe MSM to be used to help with leaky gut.

- **Mucilaginous herbs**

As their name might imply, these are typically herbs that have a mucus-like quality. They swell in water and can be gel-like. This helps with inflammation of the digestive tract. Mucilaginous herbs can be used to help move stool or soothe irritation. Examples include slippery elm, aloe vera, marshmallow root, and plantain.

- **Magnesium**

This supplement can help with detoxification. Magnesium is often paired with glycinate, an amino acid, which can make it easier to absorb and assimilate. Magnesium oxide softens stools. A popular natural remedy for constipation is Milk of Magnesia.

DISCLAIMER

It's necessary that all clients see a doctor for proper testing and diagnosing before taking any supplements. The information provided in this handout is for educational purposes only and is intended as a resource that clients should bring to a medical professional.