

# Ask Leyla: How can I heal leaky gut?



**Q:** I've recently been diagnosed with a leaky gut. Can you explain what causes this condition? Also, what steps can I take to help heal it?

**A:** The gut has two functions: To digest and absorb nutrients and to keep toxins out.

Leaky gut syndrome begins with exposure to environmental toxins, food additives, pesticides, sugar and other refined carbohydrates, medications such as NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) and alcohol. These exposures lead to dysbiosis in the gut characterized by bacterial and/or fungal overgrowth. ✖

Dysbiosis causes gaps to develop between the brush border cells of the small intestine. The widening of these gaps allows partially digested food particles to inadvertently slip through. Unfortunately, the leakage of food particles can induce an immune response ranging from allergies to arthritis and other inflammatory conditions all the way to full-blown autoimmunity.

To further complicate matters, leaky gut is made worse by use of antibiotics, anti-inflammatory drugs and acid-blocking medications. This becomes a vicious cycle of more dysbiosis and leaky gut.

A qualified nutritionist or other healthcare practitioner will know that the best test to check for leaky gut syndrome is the intestinal permeability test. The dysbiosis test is of great value too (both are urine tests).

The best way to begin the healing process is to eliminate the offenders:

- Food allergens
- Alcohol
- NSAIDS (aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen are examples of OTC medications)
- Commercial produce and meats (nonorganic, non-grass-fed)
- Sugar and junk food
- Additives and preservatives
- Candida (and yeasted foods)

Repair the gut with micronutrients such as zinc, vitamin A and other antioxidants, *demulcent* herbs like licorice, marshmallow and slippery elm, unadulterated food and beneficial amino acids such as L-glutamine. The addition of digestive enzymes is helpful too.

Replenish and reinoculate the gut with beneficial bacteria such as probiotics and prebiotics.

Leaky gut syndrome is more prevalent than ever given our toxic environment, but can be remedied with the proper gastrointestinal support.

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can **listen here**. To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, **subscribe today!**