


Ask Leyla: Leaky gut

Q: Could you please offer some suggestions on how to heal a leaky gut?

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.

Your qualified health care 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, and both are urine tests.

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

- Food allergens
- Alcohol
- NSAIDS
- Commercial produce and meats (non-organic, non-grass-fed)
- Sugar and junk food
- Additives and preservatives
- Candida

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!