

Introduction

Congratulations on picking up *Intestinal Health—A Practical Guide to Complete Abdominal Comfort* and taking this opportunity to discover your own unique personal journey toward understanding digestive health and improving your overall well-being!

This book takes you beyond “settling” for any of the following conditions described by many clients seeking solutions:

“I just got back from a business trip or vacation and my tummy won’t settle down.”

“I get constipated frequently, and when I do have a bowel movement, it is hard like stone or comes out in pebbles.”

“I’ve been gassy and bloated lately and am not sure why that is, but I’d really like to get my belly back into working order.”

“My bowel movements are infrequent, and when they do happen, they’re really skinny.”

“I’m planning to have (or have had) a medical procedure, and, despite home laxative use, the medication is causing increased constipation.”

“I feel like my belly is full all the time. Medical tests just show that I am constipated.”

“My skin is breaking out.”

“I developed diarrhea while I was traveling abroad, took the medication that was prescribed to remedy it, but still don’t feel well.”

Part I

This book is intended for those seeking optimal health and well-being. Your first step lies within the pages of Part I, where you will learn what happens during each of the critical six stages of digestion.

Learning how to increase overall intestinal health, abdominal comfort, and well-being begins with an understanding of the complex process that occurs from the time food enters our mouths to the time waste is eliminated from the anus.

The path to poop is often misunderstood and neglected. Because our bodies are not transparent, it is easy not to think about—or even to ignore—what transpires after we eat. Compounding the problem, the interrelationships between chewing and the many organs and substances that contribute to digestion and intestinal health are quite complex. This intricacy leads even avowed enthusiasts of health and well-being to become overwhelmed and abandon the quest to comprehend it!

Part I is designed to guide you through the digestive system in a comprehensive and easy-to-follow manner. Each chapter is accompanied by illustrations, magnifications, and simple explanations and will gently guide you through the purpose and functions of a single anatomical digestive organ, then conclude with common questions, suggestions, analogies, and recommendations.

WHAT CAUSED MY CANDIDA YEAST OVERGROWTH?

Candida overgrowth is rarely caused by just one thing. Several factors related to imbalance within the body typically occur over time and allow the yeast to overgrow:

- Antibiotics generally kill all bacteria in your system, including the “good” bacteria such as bifidobacteria and acidophilus, both of which inhibit Candida growth.
- Consuming high amounts of dietary sugar in the form of carbohydrates and sugars promotes the growth—and overgrowth—of Candida because it triggers the production of acetaldehyde, a toxic compound that may affect the body’s digestive and hormonal functions.
- Stress affects a hormone called cortisol. This catabolic hormone breaks down certain antibodies that are specific to the mucosal lining of the respiratory system and intestinal tract. As the integrity of this protective mucosal lining is compromised, so is the barrier against fungus, food, and bacteria. If the fungus, food, and bacteria are not contained properly, they seep through the lining and into the bloodstream. When this happens, the body initiates an autoimmune response and multiple health problems may arise. Therefore, managing stress is a key strategy for minimizing Candida overgrowth.
- Hormone changes caused by pregnancy, birth control pills, oral contraceptives, menopause, and hormone replacement therapy may all negatively affect the body’s biological processes that maintain balance or homeostasis and lead to yeast overgrowth.
- Intestinal/microflora imbalances may be caused by poor nutrition, birth control pills and other medications, illness, antibiotics, or stress.

HOW DO I REDUCE MY CANDIDA LEVELS?

If left untreated, a Candida overgrowth may become increasingly more serious and may even enter the bloodstream, a condition referred to as blood invasive candidiasis. Advanced cases may require powerful antifungal drugs prescribed by a physician.

Treatment protocols are based on a person’s age, overall health, and the severity of the infection. There are two common strategies:

SOMETIMES I GO DAYS WITHOUT POOPING. SHOULD I BE CONCERNED? AND IF SO, WHAT SPECIFICALLY SHOULD I DO?

Yes, you definitely should be concerned. This may be indicative of acute or chronic constipation. Either way, the normal functions of the digestive tract have been disrupted—most commonly in the colon, but potentially anywhere along your 30-foot-long digestive tract.

If congestion of any kind occurs within the digestive tract, the normal functions of food breakdown and nutrient absorption may be impaired. Toxic waste material may accumulate and numerous health problems may occur. With each additional meal consumed, the toxic buildup may increase. If this pattern is repeated (chronic constipation), diet and lifestyle changes are imperative to prevent serious health problems.

Analogy: “Peek-a-Boo Syndrome”

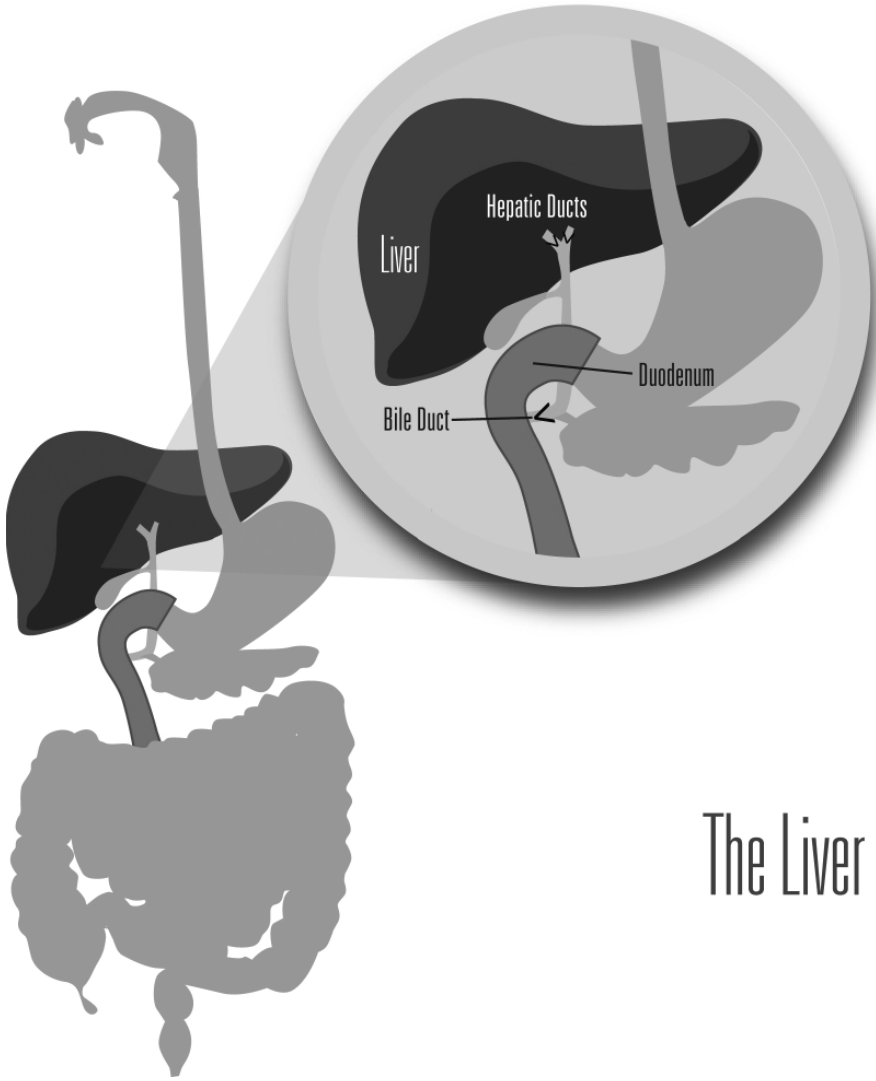
We chew, we swallow, and it’s gone! Well, not exactly. It’s easy to get lulled into the belief that if we cannot see something, there is no need to concern ourselves with it anymore. But the reality is that if you eat something and it does not come out, it is still in there! Eventually, allowing food to stay inside the warm, wet environment that is your digestive tract may, well . . . make the nose wrinkle, that’s for sure!

Our natural instinct is to ignore potential problems and hope they go away. But picture putting food inside a plastic bag and leaving it in a closet, for days—especially “indulgence” foods like alcohol, fried foods, processed foods, and sugary desserts. Yuck! Dis-Ease is undoubtedly brewing.

WHAT IS LEAKY GUT AND HOW CAN IT AFFECT ME?

“Leaky gut” is the common name for a condition affecting the lining of the intestines that increases intestinal permeability. This is not a good thing!

So what exactly does this mean? Our digestive tract lining is a barrier that protects our body from unwanted particles, food, and other toxic substances leaking into our body cavity and bloodstream via the intestines. In other words, it acts like a net or tightly woven membrane with very small holes to allow small substances in food matter to penetrate and be used by the body. One of



The Liver

DO THE LIVER AND GALLBLADDER CLEAN THEMSELVES?

Well, if we all ate “perfectly” and chewed our food properly, then perhaps our livers and gallbladders would be able to take care of themselves! In today’s environment and with our less-than-perfect dietary habits, however, our livers need our help.

Part II

NUTRITION

Now that you have an understanding of what takes place during each of the six stages of digestion, our journey continues through Part II, which explores nutrition as it relates to healthy digestion. No calorie counting or strict diet plans here—just plain and simple ideas for feeding your body at a cellular level.

We begin this section with common questions, suggestions, analogies, and gentle everyday solutions that may assist you in improving or correcting digestive and other health issues you may be experiencing.

Next you will find a checklist to complete, which may assist you in determining where you are today on a “healthy food choices” continuum.

Following the checklist is a sample week-long menu plan and healthy recipes to encourage ideal digestion and bowel movements while satisfying your palate.

Because everyone has his or her own story to unravel and rebuild, journaling and personal photos may help you track your own progress and changes. The more dietary and lifestyle changes you choose to implement, the more quickly you may arrive at those “ah-ha” moments that signal core changes on your way to increasing overall intestinal health and well-being.

Let’s begin our discussion of nutrition with the most important substance our bodies cannot live without—*water*! Our bodies consist of more than 65 percent water, and this water needs to be replenished daily. A helpful rule of thumb is to drink at least half your body weight (in ounces) of clean, fresh water each day. Just weigh yourself, divide the number in half, measure out

Intestinal Health Checklist (Continued)

| Type of Food | WORST <i>Go back to Part I, Chapter 1!</i> | FAIR <i>It's a start. You're making progress!</i> | BETTER <i>Not quite there yet. Keep up the good work!</i> | BEST <i>Yes! Perfect health may be yours . . .</i> |
|------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Prepared Salads | Mayonnaise-based macaroni salad, processed | Potato or egg salad with onion, celery, mustard, and processed mayonnaise | Hummus, tabouli, quinoa, rice noodles, salsa, guacamole | Fresh fruit |
| Dressings | Processed cream- and cheese-based, or mayonnaise | Processed oils, with sugar and additives | Unprocessed oil, vinegar, herbs, and sweetener | Unprocessed oil and vinegar, lemon, or squeezed fruits |
| Spreads | Processed butter or margarine | Unprocessed butter | Unprocessed nut butters | Coconut oil or fresh avocado |
| Oils | Hydrogenated or rancid | Non-hydrogenated or fresh | Unprocessed natural oils or butter | Coconut, olive, flaxseed, avocado, fish, or ghee |
| Beverages | Sodas or alcoholic beverages | Canned or bottled juices | Fresh squeezed fruit juice | Clean water |
| Juices | Processed, with additives | Processed, without additives | Unprocessed, with water | Fresh pressed fruit juices |
| Fast-foods | Drive-through | TV dinners | Organic frozen meals | Freshly prepared and assembled with high-quality ingredients |

Part III

CLEANSING

Great work so far! Now that you understand the intricacies of the digestive process and have implemented (or begun to implement) healthy nutritional and lifestyle changes to support your intestinal health, it is time for the next phase of healing your overall health and well-being—cleansing your body of the toxic burden that began *in vitro*. Yes, that’s right, your mother likely started you off, and then your surrounding environment—the air, food, water, emotions, etc.—took over, and over, and over. . . .

It’s not personal! It just is what it is. And what it is, simply, is the world we live in.

Cleansing—purging your body of toxins—may be an integral part of your journey. When you free your body from having to deal with the ill effects of toxins day after day after day, you may increasingly enjoy enhanced function and more abundant energy and clarity.

As in previous parts, we’ll begin with facts, followed by what and how to cleanse, and methods of cleansing, all coupled with analogies and gentle everyday solutions to implement as you choose.

Remember that it took a long time to get to where you are today, so be patient with yourself and the process and stick with it: Increasing overall intestinal health and well-being could be within your reach!

Our bodies are designed to detoxify daily by engaging the five elimination organs—skin, lungs, kidneys, liver, and colon—to neutralize and eliminate toxins. Toxic or excess foods, beverages, medications, emotions, and

The moral of the story is this: Pay attention to small indicators and take responsibility for addressing potential problems such as intestinal invaders when they arise or *before* you become host to a tent city! Your best defense is a good offense. Take the appropriate steps in a timely manner to ensure that you maintain a clean intestinal environment.

OK, I GET IT. CLEANSING MAY BE GOOD FOR ME! HOW OFTEN SHOULD I CLEANSE?

Once you and your health-care practitioner(s) have evaluated your toxic burden and health status, cleansing and detoxification is an ongoing process you may choose to undertake until your body achieves stasis and you begin experiencing a consistent sense of well-being. Depending on your specific toxic burden, personal commitment, and tolerance, cleansing may take weeks, months, or even years. Patience and persistence coupled with a good support system may be the best strategy.

Analogy: “Mildew in the Shower”

Imagine that you finish your shower, step out, close the curtain, turn off the light and fan, and close the door to your bathroom. Over time, this damp, dark, anaerobic environment may lead to a buildup of mildew on the walls, in the corners, and on the ceiling. Left unattended, this situation may develop into dry rot affecting the walls, floors, and ceiling. In addition, if this dark, damp, anaerobic environment goes unused for a period of time, fungus and critters (parasites) may begin to move in and thrive in this very accommodating environment.

If we clean up the mildew and open the windows so that oxygen may circulate, then clean the shower frequently to avoid buildup, the mildew will not return. However, if we clean up the mildew but continue to keep the bathroom closed, damp, and dark, the mildew, fungus, and critters will return.

The same goes for our intestinal tract. When our digestion slows down due to improper chewing and/or consuming indulgence foods and beverages, soon enough, our insides are bound to develop “mildew in the shower”! The first line of defense is cleansing (just like it is with the shower). Then, along with maintaining a proper diet, drinking adequate water for hydration, taking probiotics for friendly bacteria balancing, and consuming plenty of greens

- Prostate
- Stomach
- Head/neck
- Blood
- Lung
- Colon
- Liver

Let's first review the basics of cancer and then look at precautions you may take to assist in preventing cancer, as well as treatment options should you get cancer.

WHAT IS CANCER, AND HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Normal cells grow, divide to make new cells, and die in an orderly life cycle. When you are young, normal cells divide quickly so that you may grow. As an adult, most cells divide only to replace worn-out or dying cells or to repair injuries. Cancer is a disease (dis-ease) where normal cells grow uncontrolled and, instead of dying, continue to grow and form new, abnormal cells. Over time, abnormal cancer cells may infiltrate and destroy other tissues, cells, and organs in the body, something that normal cells can't do.

In most cases, cancer cells form a tumor (an abnormal lump or collection of cells), but some cancers, like leukemia, circulate through other tissues via the blood and blood-forming organs. It is important to note that not all tumors are cancerous. Benign (noncancerous) tumors may grow very large and press on healthy organs and tissues, but they can't grow into (invade) other tissues or spread to other parts of the body (metastasize) and therefore typically are not life threatening.

In short, cancer cells are abnormal cells that reproduce, multiply, divide, and invade at a fast pace, using our blood supply to support tumor growth. These cells may break free, enter the bloodstream or lymph vessels, and then travel to other parts of the body where they may grow and form new tumors, a process that is called metastasis. Growing out of control and invading other tissues are the characteristics that make a cell a cancer cell.¹³