

LEAKY GUT SYNDROME

by **dr. lisa hunt** | photo by **dawn kelly**

Leaky Gut Syndrome, or increased intestinal permeability, is generally not recognized by traditional medicine, although clinical evidence indicates this is a real condition affecting the lining of the intestines. The term refers to an abnormal increase in the permeability of the small intestine as the result of damage to the intestinal lining.

The small intestine is the largest organ in the body; two-thirds of the immune system lies within its walls. It continuously activates itself by sampling the molecules that pass through the intestinal lining. Damage to the intestinal lining reduces its ability to protect the internal environment and filter needed nutrients and other biological substances. Incompletely digested proteins, fats, bacterial toxins and waste that are not normally absorbed may “leak out” of the intestines into the bloodstream, triggering an autoimmune reaction, abdominal bloating, excessive flatulence, fatigue, food sensitivities, joint pain and skin rashes.

Causes of the syndrome vary. Possible etiologies include infectious agents (viral, bacterial, protozoan), chronic inflammation, food sensitivity, damage from taking NSAIDS, cytotoxic drugs, radiation, antibiotics, in-

creased or heavy alcohol consumption and general compromised immunity. It may trigger or worsen other disorders such as Crohn’s disease, celiac disease, rheumatoid arthritis and asthma.

Symptoms include pain in multiple joints, chronic skin conditions, chronic diarrhea or abdominal pain, chronic fatigue, or general malaise. Increased levels of antibodies to common food proteins or normal intestinal bacteria may indicate increased intestinal permeability.

Treatment revolves around eliminating anything that might contribute to increased intestinal permeability. Recommended behaviors include cessation of alcohol consumption for at least a month, and elimination of aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (unless required for certain medical conditions). Stool studies for intestinal parasites are also suggested with treatment accordingly.

An anti-inflammatory nutritional plan may help heal the gut, such as avoiding foods with added sugar, refined starches or those made from white flour. Eating appropriate amounts of fruits, vegetables and fiber are suggested. Dietary supplements that can help heal and restore the small intestine’s functional integrity include L-glutamine, probiotics, essential fatty acids, N-acetyl cysteine and fiber supplements.

Dr. Lisa Hunt



Lisa J. Hunt, D.O., is the Medical Director of Valley Wellness Center in Modesto whose mission “is to build on every level of your health to achieve the best quality of life.” She is Board certified in Family Medicine and Holistic and Integrative Medicine. She specializes in anti-aging treatment, natural thyroid replacement, menopause/andropause therapy (including bio-identical hormone replacement), strengthening the immune system, neurotransmitter analysis/replacement and nutritional support guidance.



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