

Digestive Wellness

Nutrition – Maureen McDonnell, B.S., R.N.
Pathways #42, page 56



Talking Points

- ❖ Maureen McDonnell shares her personal educational path from a young woman who struggled with digestive issues to a nurse and health editor. She shares some of the important knowledge she learned about “how significant the digestive tract was to proper immune function, overall health, and even one’s mental condition.” (56)
- ❖ By working with autistic children and parents, McDonnell was seeing firsthand how “addressing gut issues often brings about tremendous improvements in a child’s cognitive skills (including speech), behavior and general health.” (57)
- ❖ McDonnell walks us through the parts and function of the GI tract, describing the areas that make up the “upper GI” and the “lower GI” and how they function to kill of pathogenic organisms and offer strong defense against bad bacteria and germs.
- ❖ As we age, our “good” acids decrease, compromising digesting and lowering our defenses. Dr. Joseph Mercola has shown the ways in which the pharmaceutical industry has created an even worse problem by attempting to decrease stomach acid through acid inhibitors (Pepcid AC, Prilosec, Zantac, etc). Alternative to decreasing useful stomach acid, Dr. Mercola suggests using “digestive aids like hydrochloric acid (HCL), enzymes and probiotics [which] can actually be powerful tools to maintain a more acidic and beneficial environment in your stomach and intestines that will help your digest system work optimally.”(57)
- ❖ Heal the gut, heal the body! Working with Dr. Sidney Baker, Maureen McDonnell learned to eliminate process foods, control yeast overgrowth (caused often by stress, eating too much sugar and recurrent use of antibiotics), and increase probiotics. Dr. Baker also taught her the role of food sensitivities and allergies in creating an immune response which weakens your overall immune system’s ability to defend itself.
- ❖ Maureen McDonnell learned that “health is not just dependent on what you eat, but also on what you digest and absorb.” We need enzymes such as protease (which break down protein)

and lipases (which break down fat) to even digest all of the nutrient content of our food. To do this, we can increase raw foods and fresh-squeezed organic vegetable juices. If this isn't tolerable, start with a comprehensive digestive enzyme (McDonnell recommends Houston Enzymes, houston-enzymes.com)

- ❖ If gas, bloating and other signs of poor digestion persists, IgG (delayed-reaction) food allergies or sensitivities may be to blame. To identify IgG reaction, the cheapest way is to do an elimination diet for 2 weeks, and slowly re-introduce the food little by little. The common culprits are dairy, gluten, soy, eggs and sugar. Another option is to have a specialty lab perform an IgG food panel – a blood test that must be ordered by a physician.
- ❖ Tips for improve digestion:
 - Sit and relax during meals
 - Avoid processed foods
 - Avoid drinking during meals (especially milk) if you have gas or bloating
 - Add a comprehensive enzyme
 - Add probiotics to crowd out “bad” organisms, eliminate toxins, synthesize vitamins, regulate bowels, etc.
 - Chew food thoroughly
 - Sip strong organic peppermint or ginger tea
 - Eat your largest meal in the day, not at night
 - Avoid sugar, processes carbohydrates (pasta, bread, cookies, cereals, etc)
 - For lower bowel issues, consider adding a high-quality source of omega-3 fatty acids (like fish oil) to reduce inflammation.

Resources

Full references for each article are available at <http://pathwaystofamilywellness.org/references.html>

McDonnell references Michael Gershon's *The Second Brain*. Listen to this great 2011 interview with Michael Gershon - <http://itsrainmakingtime.com/dr-michael-gershon-gut-brain/> (Stream or download)

Adam Hadhazy, “Think Twice: How the Gut’s ‘Second Brain’ Influences Mood and Well-Being.” *Scientific American*, Feb 12, 2010. Web. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/gut-second-brain/>

Pam Ferro, “Healing the Gut of Teenagers... and Beyond.” *Autism File*. 2012 Web. <http://www.autismfile.com/diet-nutrition/healing-the-gut-in-teenagers-and-beyond>

Joseph Mercola, “15 Natural Remedies for the Treatment of Acid Reflux and Ulcers.” Mercola.com. April 28, 2014. Web. <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2014/04/28/acid-reflux-ulcer-treatment.aspx>

Watch Dr. Jonathan Wright discuss how low stomach acid can be bad for your digestive health -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2cZ-MSvI0o>

Saving Our Kids, Healing Our Planet - <http://www.sokhop.com/>