Restoring Your Digestive Health: Natural Solutions for Your Guts Problems
The Gut and IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)

Having problems with one’s gut can be a sign of a more serious problem than just not being able to properly digest food or feeling stuffed after a heavy meal. Although problems with the gut can manifest themselves in different ways, the body will be completely uncomfortable unless a permanent solution is sought to cure its ills.

There are over 35 million people in the United States that suffer with gut problems. Other common and popular names for this condition are leaky gut syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and gastric reflux disease.

This is not an all-encompassing list, but is some of the more common names for the problems with the gut. The all too familiar symptoms that are associated with gut problems are gas and gas pains, usually in the mid-chest area.

Sometimes the gas pains in the chest can be so painful that it is often mistaken for heart attacks or heart problems. Other symptoms include abdominal cramps, constipation, excessive burping or belching and diarrhea. These symptoms can occur with no forewarning and can linger for days, sometimes even weeks, before the realization occurs that there is a problem with the gut.

Listening to the body’s natural cues, symptom mimicking or the general awareness of there being a problem is the first step to take in diagnosing what could potentially be avoided as having gut problems or disorders. There are many natural ways to care for problems in the gut.

Ideally, a person would want to avoid treating the problem with synthetic medications and harsh ingredients, as this could exacerbate the condition. One natural solution that can be used to treat gut problems is through abdominal massage. Abdominal massaging is just what its name suggests.

This technique is often used as a part of physical therapy in some cases and as often as every meal in other cases. Its usage and degree vary from one individual to another. Abdominal massage can certainly help the body feel much better and ease away any discomfort or pain that exists after ingesting meals.

It is also recommended to practice abdominal massage when there is no meal ingesting so that the body will benefit from being massaged in the absence of food from the stomach. It also aids in the acceleration of the
body’s absorption of food while decreasing its absorption of gas. Even if there is a bloating or distended feeling after a meal, an abdominal massage can ease the discomfort.

This practice gently breaks apart gas bubbles and make it easier to release the gas. Start by massaging the abdomen at the base or bottom of the stomach, going in a circular motion. Working from one side of the abdomen to the other side of the abdomen, slowly work up the stomach in the direction of the upper chest area.

Apply gentle pressure to the abdomen while working, as too much pressure may have an adverse affect and actually increase any pain or discomfort. As you are massaging, if you locate a sore spot, which is actually a pocket of gas, press gently but firmly for a few moments until you feel the soreness decrease.

It is recommended to massage gently, using the tips and pads of the fingers. The use of abdominal massaging can be practiced over and over and frequently enough to avoid any further complications and to care for your gut the natural way.

**Herbs and a Healthy Gut**

If you experience discomfort in the gut area, the use of herbs can help tremendously in affecting the problem. Using herbs can work wonders in relaxing the gastrointestinal tract and quieting any stomach or gut spasms.

There are many types of herbs that are used in treating different problems with the body, but the oil from peppermint is a commonly known herb that really works. Peppermint oil is one such herb that has shown tremendous results in helping to solve gut problems the natural way.

Peppermint is an herbal breed mix between watermint and spearmint and is found primarily in Europe and North America. Mint plants such as peppermint and spearmint have a long history of medicinal use. The use of the plants and the oil that is extracted from them date back almost to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

The scientific name for peppermint is derived from the name Mintha, a Greek mythological nymph who transformed herself into the plant, and from the Latin piper meaning "pepper." Peppermint is believed to be a cross (hybrid) between spearmint and water mint. In several medical
studies, it has shown that peppermint oil reduces the pain of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) in over seventy-five percent of its patients. Peppermint oil is a natural oil that works quite successfully as a digestive aid.

This delightful tasting herb also helps to eliminate gas, abdominal bloating, stomach discomfort and abdominal cramps. The oil also helps to improve the body’s blood circulation and works to make the body’s production of digestive fluids work at an optimal pace.

Peppermint oil has also been known to aid in reducing spastic colons. The most popular form of peppermint oil is in the form of the hard candy, peppermint candy. The history behind the idea of the peppermint is rich in its ties to the after dinner mint that we’re accustomed to having. The ancient Romans would be in the habit of ending their large meals by chewing sprigs of peppermint to settle their stomachs.

To gain better results from this herb, it is suggested that it is used in small doses rather than large doses to gain maximum results. If it used in high dosages, it can cause adverse effects include allergic reactions, heartburn, perianal burning, blurred vision, nausea, and vomiting.

In order to experience desirable results and to eliminate any gut problems, it is suggested to drink a cup (about 8-10 ounces) of peppermint tea up to three times daily. The tea can be made easily by steeping one teaspoon or one tea bag of the peppermint oil in one cup of hot water for at least fifteen minutes.

Cover the steeping herbs to hold in the beneficial oils. It is strongly recommended to not use or ingest the peppermint oil or any strong herb if you are pregnant or nursing, or if you have gallstones or severe liver damage, as this can cause adverse reactions as well.

In comparison to synthetic medicines to treat gut problems, the peppermint oil proved better results with fewer side effects.
A Healthy Colon and the Gut

Many problems that are in the gut start with problems that can be assigned to the colon. In many cases, a person's colon is backed up or constipated which can make bowel movements significantly harder to achieve. In order to cure any problem that is attached to the colon, the natural way to fix it is to ingest certain all natural, low-sugar foods that can make bowel movements easier and more frequent.

The foods have to be natural without refined sugars and no additives or preservatives. If the colon is working properly and at its optimal best, this relieves the gut from having to work excessively harder at digesting food and moving it further down the colon.

The gut then just has the job of digesting the food in it and moving it along. Working harder can make the colon sluggish and cause additional problems to the gut that can become harder to cure. Eating certain foods can benefit the gut by quickly relieving diarrhea and constipation.

A fresh fruit, raw vegetables and limited to no sugar or salt intake is much better on the gut and its food absorption. It is better to eat certain foods than to ingest synthetic medications, which can exacerbate problems within the colon. Diarrhea is when the body loses fluids too rapidly and there is loose stools coming from the colon.

For the treatment of diarrhea, mix one tablespoon of carob powder, which can be found in natural food stores, and one cup of natural applesauce, and eat the entire mixture. The tannins in the carob mixture and the pectin in the apples will quickly and effectively bind your stools. This will also relieve any pain also that accompanied the diarrhea.

Constipation is when there is difficulty in achieving a bowel movement and it usually attributable to dehydration and lack of salts in the body. To treat constipation, eat ten small prunes and drink an eight ounce glass of purified water. Prunes are mild laxatives.

They take about two hours to effectively work and cause a bowel movement. There are certain foods that could make the gut suffer worse if ingested. The main culprits of this are caffeinated products and fatty foods, which may cause diarrhea.

Also, hard to digest foods like dairy products, beans and broccoli can also aggravate and prolong any existing gut problems. Since every individual
body is different, to find out what foods do not agree with your gut, try keeping a food diary and track it for one month.

Write down each food you eat, and note any symptoms that follow. If you make connections between eating a particular food and having stomach problems, stop eating the food for three days.

Take note of any stomach upsets over the three-day period. If you experience improvement, limit this food in your diet or try low-fat versions of problematic high-fat dishes, says Magee.

With the proper mixture of the right fruits, vegetables and sufficient water, many gut problems can be significantly cured without any external choices.

Finding Fiber

Regularly eating fiber will help to normalize your bowel movements. This will help the gut in digesting foods rapidly and aids in thorough and complete digestion.

Fiber is a substance in plants while dietary fiber is the fiber that you can eat or can be ingested. You can find dietary fiber in fresh fruits, raw vegetables and whole grains. Dietary fiber is the part of the plant that your body can't digest, yet, it is an integral part of a healthy diet in avoiding any stomach or gut-related problems.

Dietary fiber adds bulk to your diet and can make you feel full faster, and assists greatly in helping you control your weight. Fiber can help digestion and help prevent constipation. This relieves any pressure from the gut that may be a result of constipation or diarrhea.

Fiber can be found in whole grains, beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables. It is highly recommended to add fiber to your diet slowly as too much fiber introduced into the gut can cause abdominal distress. Also, increasing dietary fiber too quickly can cause excessive gas, bloating and cramps. Dietary fiber adds bulk to your stool and reduces the total time that food sits in your bowels.

It is theorized by some experts that the intake of dietary fiber can decrease the irritable bowel syndrome associated spasms that attempt to push waste out of the body.
Dietary fiber encompasses two very broad classes of fiber. One is soluble and the other is insoluble. The insoluble fiber is generally found in wheat bran and helps to soften stools and make bowel movement significantly easier. The other type is soluble fibers which come from such materials as fruits, barley and oats.

Soluble fiber tends to form gels in the gut, helping to delay the absorption of other food components. This is ideal for overweight people because they will feel fuller longer. Soluble fiber is also good for reducing cholesterol and by carrying bile salts out of the gut.

When soluble fiber reaches the large intestine (colon), the bacteria there breaks down the contents, sometimes accompanied with gas. The recommendation for fiber ingestion is 2/3 insoluble fiber and 1/3 soluble fiber. It's recommended to add fiber gradually to your diet.

Ideally, begin by eating at least two daily servings of fiber-rich fruits and raw vegetables. Good ideas are apples, carrots or salad greens and at least one daily serving of whole grains, like oatmeal. Increase your dietary intake up to five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables and three servings of whole grains daily.

In addition to eating fiber-rich foods, there are other ways to satisfy fiber intake. Sprinkle 1 teaspoon of ground flaxseeds on cereal, or mix 1 teaspoon of the fiber-rich herb psyllium with 8 ounces of water and drink daily. Flaxseeds and psyllium can be found at natural food stores.

You can slowly work up to at least one tablespoon of each fiber daily over a two-week period. Initially, gut symptoms may seemingly get worse, but with consistency in fiber ingestion, you will see improvement within a few days.

Probiotics and the Gut

The use of probiotics in treating natural gut disorders is increasingly becoming popular and more favorable than the widespread use of synthetic drugs. Probiotics are dietary supplements taken orally that contain bacteria or yeast that can be beneficial to the body by producing lactic acid bacteria.

Lactic acid bacteria is a bacteria that is usually found in decomposing plants and lactic products. This bacteria produces needful lactic acid and is a major contributing metabolic result product of carbohydrate fermentation.
The lactic acid bacteria has been used as a natural substance in the food industry for numerous years.

The ability of the bacteria is somewhat hampered due to its inability to convert sugars, including lactose and other carbohydrates, into lactic acid. This inability to convert sugars gives it the distinct sour taste that you can detect in fermented dairy foods such as yogurt, certain cheeses and certain dairy products. Lactic acid bacteria also acts as a preservative by lowering the pH levels in the body.

This action discourages opportunities for spoilage organisms to grow and lengthens the life of that particular food. Probiotic bacterial cultures are necessary to assist the body’s naturally occurring gut flora to replenish themselves.

Probiotics are sometimes recommended by doctors, and, even often by licensed nutritionists, to patients after having been on antibiotics for an extended period of time. This placement on probiotics serves as part of the treatment for gut related candidiasis.

Candidiasis is a fungal infection or rather, a yeast infection that is located in various parts of the body due to illness. Probiotics are known to help strengthen the immune system. The rationale for probiotics is that the body contains a small resource of microbes, collectively known as the gut flora, flora being the life in the gut or the active part of the gut or stomach system.

The number of flora in all bacterial types can be thrown out of balance by a wide range of circumstances. The use or practice of certain things can be harmful to the bacteria including the use of antibiotics or other drugs, excess consumption of alcohol, stress and factors that increase stress levels, disease, exposure to toxic substances, or even the use of antibacterial soap.

In cases like these, the bacteria that work well with our bodies may decrease in number, an event which allows harmful competitors to thrive. This can prove to be detrimental to our health. Maintenance of a healthy gut flora is essentially dependent upon many factors, especially the quality of food intake.

Proper and clean foods is the key to keeping a healthy gut flora. Eliminating fried or greasy foods also does wonders in keeping the gut flora healthy. Including a significant proportion of probiotic foods in the diet
has been demonstrated to support a healthy probiotic flora and may be a 
more effective and sustainable means of achieving the desirable health 
benefits promised by probiotics. Acidophilus is a general name for a group 
of probiotics, often added to milk or sold as a capsule, which contains one 
or more of the following bacteria which aid in digestion.

**Colon Cleansing**

Since all food substances go through the stomach or gut to the colon, it is 
highly beneficial to keep the gut as ill-free as possible. To effectively do 
this, colon cleansing is recommended as a natural and effective way to 
completely get rid of matter than can cause significant problems if not 
addressed.

Colon cleansing or bowel cleansing is extremely beneficial in helping the 
body to rid itself of harmful substances, including bacteria and foreign 
substances. It is a natural process for the colon to eliminate waste material 
and bacteria and absorb water and mineral salts while maintaining fluid 
and electrolyte balance.

A colon that cannot perform these functions properly, due to impacted 
fecal matter creates extra toxins that spread across the body through the 
absorbed fluids. There are numerous problems that are attributed to 
stomach discomforts including abdominal pain, constipation, diarrhea and 
low energy all can be attributed to an unhealthy bowel.

This is also partly caused by eating and drinking products that form waste 
build up and hardened fecal matter. There are a lot of products that we 
consume is large amounts that we may not even be aware of as causing 
gastrointestinal distress.

Caffeine, sugar, white flour, aspartame, microwave-cooked food, 
hydrogenated fats and deep fried foods, all result in pounds of unneeded 
and unhealthy matter forming in the colon. To rid the body of these 
unwanted accumulations, to cleanse the colon is the natural and easy way.

To begin the colon cleansing process, there are certain amendments that 
must me made to the daily diet. Large improvements in nutrition often bring 
adequate results alone, and the colon starts cleansing naturally. It is 
necessary to ingest sufficient fiber, at least 25-30 grams daily, dissolved in 
water or in food.
Drinking water is also essential for a healthy colon. To stimulate the natural peristaltic action, a person should drink half of his or her weight in ounces of pure non-carbonated water.

To determine how much water is necessary to consume, if your weight is 150 pounds, you should drink 75 ounces of water, which is approximately 2 liters. Consuming sufficient amounts of purified water and ingesting a sufficient amount of fiber, you can expect your colon to be restored to its proper and healthy state over time.

This will help the gut to function at its optimal best.

Herbs are also a great way to perform a mild colon cleansing naturally. Herbal colon cleanses help rid the body of toxins by removing fecal matter, preventing toxin formation, killing the harmful bacteria and parasites, and improving the function of colon muscles to promote natural and regular bowel movements.

When performing colon cleanse as a course, it is advisable to continue taking a fiber with all meals in form of wheat germ, oat bran, or rice bran cereals for breakfast. The more lifestyle changes you perform, eating healthy food such as fruit, vegetables, good supplements, and drinking enough water, the more success you will have in returning your colon to a healthy state.