



# The Naturopathic Approach to Digestive Disorders

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## **Good health starts with good digestion, poor digestion impacts more than you may realize**

### **Good Health Starts with Good Digestion**

Your digestive system is one of the most important systems in your whole body – if your body cannot properly digest and absorb nutrients and eliminate waste products, then it's nearly impossible to achieve optimal health.

Proper gut function is critical to addressing what can be seemingly unrelated conditions. If your gut is not happy, your body is not happy!



### **Poor Digestion Impacts More than you May Realize!**

When something goes wrong during the process of digestion, it often affects not just your gut, but also your immune, hormonal and nervous systems. Even if you eat an ideal diet, you may have impaired nutrient absorption and energy production and digestive issues can furthermore lead to the development of inflammation and allergies.

Common medications taken to suppress stomach acid may actually make digestion worse and often limit your body's ability to absorb nutrients such as calcium or magnesium. Naturopathic physicians are trained to help patients with simple, safe and effective herbal remedies. For example, chewing DGL (or Deglycyrrhizinated Licorice) before meals can be beneficial in reducing the symptoms and the occurrence of acid reflux.

Poor digestive enzyme function can lead to trouble breaking down food, which in turn can contribute to indigestion, gas, bloating, and constipation. Plant-based digestive enzymes have long been a “go-to” remedy for naturopathic physician in solving this problem and often lead to quick results. Fortunately there are a number digestive enzyme remedies available to

individuals, depending on their needs. Naturopathic physicians' advanced medical education enables them help a patient understand which remedy is best for their particular circumstances.

A significant portion of your immune system resides in your digestive track to keep microbes and allergens from getting into our bodies. If your digestive system isn't healthy, neither is this gut immune function, making you prone to immune dysfunction. One of the most effective ways to improve this balance is to utilize probiotics, or beneficial bacteria such as Lactobacillus Acidophilus and Bifidobacterium. Taken with meals, these probiotics have been helpful in both acute and chronic cases of digestive disturbance.

### **Naturopathic Medicine Excels in Working with Digestive Problems**

A holistic approach considers many factors of health and disease, taking into account physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental, social and other factors. Naturopathic physicians seek to discover and address the underlying cause of a disease, as opposed to treating symptoms as isolated and unrelated problems.

Naturopathic doctors receive extensive training in understanding the complexities and interrelations of digestive wellness and overall body health. We are well versed in natural health approaches to specific digestive disorders such as IBS, heartburn, and ulcers as well as less obviously digestive-related conditions such as autoimmune disease, allergies, and migraines.

A particular area of emphasis for many naturopaths includes helping individuals struggling with gluten sensitivity. Gluten is a type of protein that is found in many bread, cereal, and pasta grains such as wheat, rye, barley and spelt. Gluten is a very common food allergy. Research has demonstrated that 40% of Americans have some degree of negative reaction to gluten.

Gluten can be very hard for us to digest and can be one of the main causes of inflammation in the digestive system and the body. Low energy, weight gain or weight loss, skin rashes, and a host of other health problems (even without gastrointestinal symptoms) are common symptoms. Establishing a healthy dietary plan for an individual with Gluten Sensitivity is essential, and is all in a day's work for a naturopathic physician.

### **Digestive Disorders Helped by Naturopathic Medicine:**

- Constipation, diarrhea, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Celiac disease, gluten-intolerance
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease: Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis
- Intestinal dysbiosis (gut microflora imbalances or intestinal candida overgrowth)
- Food allergies
- Leaky gut syndrome
- Ulcers
- Acid reflux / Heartburn / GERD
- Indigestion, gas, bloating

- Pancreatic enzyme insufficiency
- Gall bladder disorders
- Hepatitis, liver congestion or fatty liver (non-alcoholic steatic hepatitis)
- Diverticulosis or diverticulitis

#### **Other Conditions Related to Digestion Helped by Naturopathic Medicine:**

- Auto-immune diseases
- Allergies
- Migraines and headaches
- Fatigue
- Weight gain or loss
- Joint pain, arthritis
- Mental-emotional fogginess

#### **The Naturopathic Approach to Digestive Wellness**

Naturopathic physicians see digestion as a key piece to any naturopathic plan. Different approaches to digestive wellness might include dietary modification, food allergy identification and desensitization, homeopathic remedies, nutritional supplementation, immune support, high-quality probiotics, and additional testing. A holistic and individualized approach is essential for the health of our digestive system as well as the health of our whole body.