

# DECODING DIGESTION

HOW YOUR GUT SHAPES IMMUNE HEALTH



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# The Immune System & Digestion: Untangling the Root Cause of Chronic Illness

## Peeling Back the Layers of Your Health

Addressing chronic health issues is like peeling an onion. At first glance, it may seem like one big, overwhelming problem. But as you start peeling back the layers, you begin to uncover what's underneath—the root causes that have been driving your symptoms for years. The deeper you go, the more clarity you gain about what your body truly needs to heal.

Do your health issues feel like a never-ending puzzle? The best way to approach them is step by step, just like peeling an onion—layer by layer. The more you uncover, especially with chronic conditions like autoimmune disorders, the closer you get to real healing.

# The Immune System & Inflammation

Your immune system is like your body's personal surveillance team, constantly scanning for invaders like parasites, fungi, or viruses. Some immune cells attack anything suspicious (non-specific immunity), while others, like B and T cells, are specially trained to recognize and destroy certain pathogens. These cells even memorize invaders for future defense (specific immunity).

Inflammation is a necessary process that helps your body fight off infections and heal injuries. For example, if you cut yourself while chopping vegetables, your skin barrier is breached, and inflammation sets in to help close the wound. Your digestive tract plays a similar protective role. When you eat, you might unknowingly ingest tiny bacteria or toxins. If your stomach acid is strong, it can neutralize these threats before they enter your intestines. However, if your stomach acid is weak, your body is more vulnerable to infections and immune overreactions.

# Not All Reactions Are Allergies

Many people assume that if they don't have a severe food allergy requiring an EpiPen, they don't have food sensitivities. However, there are two types of immune reactions:

1. **True Allergies** – Immediate, life-threatening reactions like peanut or shellfish allergies.
2. **Non-Allergic Hypersensitivities** – Delayed immune responses that cause chronic symptoms like fatigue, joint pain, bloating, or brain fog. These reactions typically take 48–72 hours to manifest, making it difficult to pinpoint the exact trigger.

Autoimmune disorders like Hashimoto's thyroiditis, Crohn's disease, celiac disease, gluten sensitivity, and multiple sclerosis (MS) often stem from these hypersensitivities.



# Food Sensitivities & Intolerances

Food sensitivities can develop due to:

- **Poor digestion of proteins** – Undigested food molecules trigger immune responses.
- **Dysbiosis (imbalanced gut bacteria)** – An overgrowth of harmful microbes weakens gut health.
- **Toxin exposure** – Heavy metals, pesticides, and cigarette smoke contribute to immune dysfunction.

Even if you don't experience immediate symptoms, consuming foods your body doesn't tolerate can lead to long-term inflammation and chronic health conditions.



## The Stress Bucket Theory

Everyone indulges in treats like ice cream or fast food occasionally. But what happens when your body's **stress bucket** overflows?

Your stress bucket should fill and empty regularly. When you're healthy, your body can handle small stressors. But when chronic inflammation from food, toxins, or emotional stress builds up, even a minor trigger can tip the balance and cause symptoms.

# Stress Isn't Just Mental

Many people assume stress is just about work or relationships. But **physiological stress**—from processed foods, sleep deprivation, or blood sugar crashes—can wreak havoc on your body.

Picture this: You eat a chocolate cake with a mocha frappuccino in the break room. Initially, you feel energized and productive. But soon after, you crash, and your **pancreas** scrambles to manage the flood of refined sugar. **Your body is now in emergency mode—even if you don't consciously feel "stressed."**

Most of us live chaotic lives, ignoring symptoms like bloating or fatigue until they become unmanageable.



# Autoimmune Diseases & Leaky Gut: The Missing Link

Autoimmune diseases often stem from multiple factors, but a common root cause is **leaky gut** (intestinal permeability).

Your gut lining is like a security gate, allowing nutrients in while keeping harmful substances out. But when digestion is compromised, poorly broken-down food particles pass through, triggering **an immune attack**. This repeated immune activation leads to **chronic inflammation, tissue damage, and the development of autoimmune diseases**. Symptoms will show up in the most vulnerable organs, depending on your genetic predisposition.

# The First Step: Identifying Food Sensitivities

To start healing from autoimmune issues, **you must identify and eliminate foods triggering immune responses.** One simple at-home method is **Coca's Pulse Test**:

1. **Pick a suspect food** – Make a list of foods you suspect cause reactions.
2. **Check your resting pulse** – Find your radial pulse and count beats for 60 seconds.
3. **Taste (but don't swallow) the food** – Chew a bite for 30 seconds.
4. **Check your pulse again** – If it changes by **6 beats or more**, your body may be reacting negatively.

## Elimination Diet: Go All In

Once you identify problem foods, remove them completely for **at least 2 weeks** (ideally 3 weeks to 3 months). No exceptions—every exposure can **set back gut healing**.

- **Plan ahead** – Don't start during vacation or a stressful period.
- **Support gut healing** – Add omega-3s for inflammation, fiber for gut bacteria balance, and L-glutamine for intestinal repair.



# Your Healing Project: Trust the Process

Most people ignore their health until symptoms become unbearable. But healing is a long game.

**Two things I know for sure:**

1. **Healing takes time** – Chronic illness didn't develop overnight. Your body needs **consistent** support to rebuild.
2. **Your body knows how to heal** – When you remove inflammatory triggers and nourish yourself properly, your body will naturally work toward balance.

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