

The Digestive System Is the Root of the Plant Called Man

by Chris Morris ND

This week's health articles will help explore why many of us who change our lifestyle and eating habits and start a good program of nutritional support will often just get marginal results. The reason is that so few of us or even our health care providers examine our digestive and eliminative health. By learning the true nature of the body's second brain (also known as your abdomen's enteric nervous system), we learn that the gut is not only responsible for digesting the food we eat into nutrients that can be absorbed by the cells of the body, but as medical research has also shown some 70-80% of the body's immune function is found in the abdomen. And beyond that, the research is now showing that there is an immense neurological component to the digestive system.

Some of the key facts from the neuro-immuno-gastroenterology research reveal:

- The enteric nervous system, or abdominal brain, operates independently of direction from the brain in our heads.
- It is not only a complex system of organs that orchestrates the production of digestive enzymes, but also hormones, and neurotransmitters that support regulatory functions throughout the body.
- There are more nerve cells in the abdominal brain than there are in the spinal column.
- The same type of tissue damage that is found in the brain of patients with neurological disorders like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's reveal identical damage to the neurological tissue of the abdominal brain. (This suggests that if you have a problem in your head you are likely to have a problem in your gut.)
- New studies demonstrate that the mucosal release of serotonin is important not only in signaling within the bowel to initiate peristaltic and sensory reflexes but also in sending messages from the gut to the brain. Few of us realize that 95% of the body's serotonin, the pharmaceutical target for migraine drugs and antidepressants like Prozac, is made in the abdomen.

We believe that underlying dysfunction in the digestive and elimination systems of the body results in the body not being able to make all the necessary enzymes, neurotransmitters and hormones in the proper balance at the proper times. The body's reaction to these "deficient" regulatory cycles results in the pain and suffering we see in clients with migraines, mood disorders, autism and the obvious chronic dysbiosis of the bowel.

Considering the similarities of the brain and the enteric nervous system, and realizing that some brain centered medical problems had their primary manifestation in the gut, we wonder what impact we could have on so many diseases by improving the relative health of the digestive system.

We have millions of intestinal villi and millions more micro-villi, which are tiny finger-like hairs projecting into the small intestine. These villi increase dramatically the surface area of the intestinal lining creating a surface area as large as a tennis court. This semi-permeable barrier is designed to keep unwanted things out of our bloodstream while absorbing the essential nutrients that feed our cells. These villi are covered with a layer of healthy intestinal flora (pro-biotics) that protect us from congesting bio-films and invading colonies of bad bacteria, viruses, and yeast.

The healthy colonies of good bacteria function like an organ vital for healthy life. The four to six pounds of microbes that number in the trillions help to make vitamins, digest food, make antibiotic substances to keep down pathogens, and they function as a major contributor to our immune system. This system is analogous to a well groomed lawn (the healthy bacteria) on top of a thick layer of soil (the villi). When both are intact, the lawn is green and healthy, but if you went and stripped off the grass (this would be the equivalent of using an antibiotic, or engaging in a prolonged consumption of processed foods), a whole cascade of catastrophic events would follow. First, you will get erosion of the top soil, then the soil that's left would be weak and deficient of healthy grass. Weeds would grow or even no plant life at all. Next, as the soil erodes and hardens, cracks would form and toxins would start to seep into the ground water. This would show how the terrain is dying.

This is exactly what happens inside us. First we strip our grass (destroying the good bacteria), then the soil erodes, we weaken and blunt the villi that can no longer support the healthy micro-organisms that maintain a healthy ecology. The cracks develop in the lining of the intestines, and poisons seep into our living fluids (our groundwater), the lymph and blood.

At this point we are deeply immersed in an unhealthy vicious cycle: poor gut flora, eroding villi, cracks in our intestinal walls, poor enzyme products, eating food we can't digest, worse flora, more erosion, worse nutrition, more leaking, worse and worse immune function, more and more toxicity, and finally the diagnosis of auto-immunity or a neurological problem.

Diseases which are the direct result of this process include not only intestinal diseases such as IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, but all the auto-immune problems such as eczema, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and on and on. Now we can begin to understand how a majority of human illnesses start in the gut and must be corrected by treating the gut.

Luckily most of the conditions are reversible, and many individuals can be restored to full health. The therapeutic strategy is fairly simple: reduce inflammation with [Cell Synergy](#), restore the gut flora with probiotics and heal the villi with a vitalizing diet. We heal the villi with a low stress cleansing and alkalizing diet with a particular emphasis on raw and fermented foods. We replant the villi grass with probiotics like [Theralac™](#).

More on Probiotics

Typical probiotic supplements contain only one or two strains of bacteria—which is inadequate considering the numerous strains that work in harmony in your digestive tract. Your body requires more strains to help your digestive system smoothly handle dairy products, carbohydrates, and “trouble foods” like broccoli, beans, and nuts. Also when introduced orally, these delicate bacteria must survive a rough trip through stomach acids and a churning digestive processes in order to get into your intestines.

So what we recommend and what we should look for in a probiotic supplement is a:

- Long shelf life and pre-biotic co-factors to ensure lining implantation
- Enteric coating to survive stomach acid so that it reaches our small intestine and colon
- Multiple strains of aerobic and anaerobic good bacteria

- Chaperone molecules to protect the good bacteria in your digestive tract long enough to be effective

[Theralac™](#) is the most advanced probiotic we've found that meets the criteria above. [Theralac™](#) is an ultra-potent (20 billion colony forming units (CFUs) capsule through expiration), multi-strain (5 strains - 2 for the lg. intestine and 3 for the sm. Intestine), 2 bioactive pre-biotics to enhance probiotic and lining implantation by reducing competitors viability. In a natural acid proof formula to survive the G.I. tract and antibiotics.

And in most chronic and compromised cases we add [TruFlora™](#) and [TruFiber™](#).

[TruFlora™](#) combines powerful probiotic strains and fiber-digesting enzymes in a formulation that can be used alone or rotated with other probiotics to enhance overall probiotic effectiveness. [TruFlora™](#) prevents domination by harmful microorganisms when they are first ingested. The probiotics in [TruFlora™](#) produce bio-cleansing quantities of lactic acid, and enzymes that digest the cell walls of Candida yeast and other microorganisms.

[TruFiber™](#) contains two unique sources of soluble, pre-biotic fiber derived from seeds of the guar plant and insulin which is isolated from chicory plant root. [TruFiber™](#) also contains Fiberase™, a complex of fiber digesting enzymes.

The ratio between the "good" bacteria and the "bad" bacteria becomes one of the critical factors determining our optimal health. Why because healthy flora in the G.I. tract helps to:

- Maintain an ideal "good" to "harmful" bacteria ratio by promoting the optimal environment for the growth of good bacteria
- Support production of vit. K and B vitamins, especially folic acid and biotin
- Promote mineral absorption
- Support protein and carbohydrate digestion via probiotic enzymes
- Aid in metabolism and the breakdown of toxins
- Help maintain appropriate bowel transit time
- Support normal immune response and immune system function by helping to remove toxins
- Produce lactic acid for support of digestive processes and colon pH balance
- Help maintain serum lipid and blood pressure levels in the healthy range

Fermented Foods for Maintenance

For ages, humans have used fermented foods to improve intestinal health. In fact, people of Bulgarian and Asian descent are known for their longevity, and their consumption of fermented foods.

In traditionally fermented foods, the live micro-organisms, also found in probiotic supplements, help to replenish and maintain the friendly bacteria in your intestinal tract. Eaten daily, the probiotics in fermented foods will help ease any current digestive upsets you're experiencing and will also act to maintain the bacterial balance in our gut longer term.